

Yorktown Library Book Club – 6:30-7:30 p.m. Wed., February 11, 2026

## Witch Trial Fiction (16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> Century)

### **Hour of the Witch by Chris Bohjalian**

*Summary:* Boston, 1662. Mary Deerfield is twenty-four-years-old. Here in the New World, Mary is the second wife of Thomas Deerfield, a man as cruel as he is powerful. When Thomas drives a three-tined fork into the back of Mary's hand, she resolves that she must divorce him to save her life. But in a world where every neighbor is watching for signs of the devil, a woman like Mary soon finds herself the object of suspicion and rumor. When tainted objects are discovered buried in Mary's garden, Mary must fight to not only escape her marriage, but also the gallows.

### **Everyone Knows Your Mother is a Witch by Rivka Galchen**

*Summary:* The story begins in 1618, in the German duchy of Württemberg. Plague is spreading. Katharina Kepler, an illiterate widow, is accused of being a witch. Known by her neighbors for her herbal remedies and the success of her children, it's enough to make anyone jealous. So, when the deranged and insipid Ursula Reinbold accuses Katharina of offering drink that has made her ill, Katharina is in trouble. Facing the threat of financial ruin, torture, and even execution, Katharina tells her side of the story to her friend and next-door neighbor Simon. This book is based on real historical documents but infused with imagination and sly humor.

### **The Familiars by Stacey Halls**

*Summary:* Young Fleetwood Shuttleworth, mistress of Gawthorpe Hall, is with child. Anxious to provide her husband with an heir, she discovers a hidden letter from her physician that warns she will not survive this pregnancy. Distraught, Fleetwood wanders the grounds, where she meets a local midwife named Alice, who promises she can deliver a healthy baby. But Alice soon stands accused of witchcraft. Frenzy sweeps the countryside, where even woodland creatures, the "familiars," are suspect. Can Fleetwood trust that Alice is really who she says she is? As the two women's fates become intertwined, Fleetwood must prove Alice's innocence. Both their lives are at stake. Only they can save each other.

### **The Mercies by Kiran Millwood Hargrave**

*Summary:* After the men in an Arctic Norwegian town are wiped out, the women must survive a sinister threat. With the menfolk wiped out, the women of the tiny Arctic town of Vardø must fend for themselves. Three years later, a stranger arrives on their shore. Absalom Cornet comes from Scotland, where he burned witches in the northern isles. He brings with him his young Norwegian wife, Ursa. In Vardø, and in Maren, Ursa sees something she has never seen before: independent women. But Absalom sees only a place flooded with a mighty evil. As Maren and Ursa are drawn to one another Absalom's iron rule threatening Vardø's very existence. Inspired by the real events of the Vardø storm and the 1621 witch trials, *The Mercies* is a story of love, evil, and obsession, set at the edge of civilization

### **Weyward by Emelia Hart**

*Summary:* Weaving together the stories of three extraordinary women across five centuries, *Weyward* is an enthralling novel of female resilience. In 2019, Kate flees London for ramshackle Weyward Cottage, inherited from a great-aunt she barely remembers, to flee her abusive partner. But she suspects that her great-aunt had a secret. One that lurks in the bones of the cottage, hidden ever since the witch-hunts of the 17th century. 1619: Altha is awaiting trial for the murder of a local farmer who was stampeded to death by his herd. When Altha was a girl, her mother taught her magic, a kind not rooted in spell casting but in a deep knowledge of the natural world. But unusual women have always been deemed dangerous, and Altha knows it will take all her powers to maintain her freedom. 1942: As World War II rages, Violet is trapped in her family's grand, crumbling estate. Straitjacketed by societal convention, she longs for the robust education her brother receives--and for her mother, long deceased, who was rumored to have gone mad before her death. The only traces Violet has of her are a locket bearing the initial W and the word *weyward* scratched into the baseboard of her bedroom.

### **The Daylight Gate by Jeanette Winterson**

*Summary:* After the Gunpowder Plot of 1605, every Catholic conspirator in England fled to a wild, untamed place far from the reach of London law. On Good Friday, 1612, deep in the woods of Pendle Hill, amid baptismal pools and low, thick fog, a gathering of thirteen is interrupted by the local magistrate. Two of their coven have already been imprisoned for witchcraft and are awaiting trial, but those who remain are vouched for by the wealthy and respected Alice Nutter. Shrouded in mystery and gifted with eternally youthful beauty, Alice is established in Lancashire society and insulated by her fortune. Yet she is also plagued by rumors of a dark and torrid love affair with another woman, the matriarch of the notorious Demdike clan. As those accused of witchcraft retreat into darkness, Alice stands alone as a realm-crosser, a conjurer of powers that will either destroy her or set her free.