



## Aelfric's Readers 2021-2022 Book List

### October

*Klara and the Sun* by Kazuo Ishiguro

memoir by Klara, a solar powered AF (artificial friend), who has been programmed to both giving kindness and recognizing it in others...Her home with a shattered family is as an AF to a fragile daughter, in a community which vaguely resembles our own pandemic lockdown present. Ish recently said in an interview that he finished his book before the pandemic, and did not foresee the coming lockdown.

### November

*West with Giraffes* by Lynda Rutledge

An historical novel based on the incredible true story of an unlikely pair transporting two giraffes across the country during the Depression. The author was inspired by the event, which she discovered while working on a nonfiction piece about the San Diego Zoo, I'll never forget Woody, the young Dust Bowl survivor, and his curmudgeonly older boss. The challenges they endure on the trip end up teaching young Woody indelible life lessons about fate, love, and life. From truck breakdowns to circus con artists, from meeting the woman of your dreams to visions of life in California, this is the kind of laugh, cry, tell-a-friend read that you long for.

### December

*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass* by Lewis Carroll

### January

*Vera* by Carol Edgarian

Set in San Francisco during the great quake and fire of 1906, this wonderfully compelling novel takes us deeply into the heart and mind of an unforgettable fifteen-year-old girl, who must find her way alone through a mother's neglect, through bordellos and corrupt politicians, through the debris and ashes of what was once 'The Paris of the West.'

## February

*Fifty Words for Rain* by Asha Lemmie

...follows Noriko Kamiza, the love child of her married, aristocratic mother and an African American soldier. Left with her scandalized grandparents and kept out of sight in an attic, “Nori” succumbs to her sorry lot—which involves beatings and excruciating chemical baths to lighten her skin—until the unexpected arrival of her half-brother. Akira manages to crack Nori’s world open just enough to give her hope, triggering a nail-biting chain of events as her grandparents conspire to close it yet again.

## March

*Miss Benson’s Beetle* by Rachel Joyce

finds two unlikely English women explorers forging a profound friendship while on the hunt for a rare insect. Joyce’s delightful blend of madcap and moving, with a little mystery thrown in for good measure, is another reminder that the journey is often more life-changing than the destination. The story is set in 1950 when rationing was still in effect in Britain.

## April

*Upstairs at the White House: My Life with the First Ladies* by J. B. West and Mary Lynn Kotz

J. B. West (1912–1983), chief usher of the White House—or executive director of the executive mansion and grounds—was once called “the most powerful man in Washington next to the president.” Discreet and witty, he supervised the large permanent staff that provided for every personal want and need for six presidents (Roosevelt through Nixon) and first ladies, including at state dinners, weddings, and funerals, redecorating the facilities for each family and tending to every special request. He served first as assistant to the chief usher and then as chief usher after retiring as a high-level civilian officer of the US Navy.

## May

*Hamnet* by Maggie O'Farrell

The focus is on Shakespeare's family, particularly his wife, and what the death of their son meant to all of them. We go to London and the Globe Theater only at the end when Shakespeare stages Hamlet for the first time.