book discussion kits

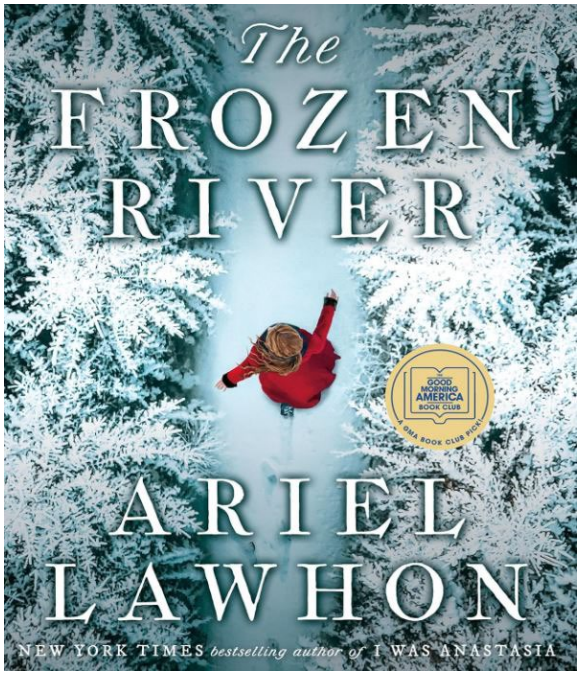
The Frozen River by Ariel Lawhon

Martin County Library System Book Discussion Kit:

The Frozen River by Ariel Lawhon

Included in the Kit:

- Book summary
- Author biography
- Discussion questions
- Recipe suggestions



Book summary

From the New York Times bestselling author of I Was Anastasia and Code Name Hélène comes a gripping historical mystery inspired by the life and diary of Martha Ballard, a renowned 18th-century midwife who defied the legal system and wrote herself into American history.

Maine, 1789: When the Kennebec River freezes, entombing a man in the ice, Martha Ballard is summoned to examine the body and determine cause of death. As a midwife and healer, she is privy to much of what goes on behind closed doors in Hallowell. Her diary is a record of every birth and death, crime and debacle that unfolds in the close-knit community. Months earlier, Martha documented the details of an alleged rape committed by two of the town's most respected gentlemen—one of whom has now been found dead in the ice. But when a local physician undermines her conclusion, declaring the death to be an accident, Martha is forced to investigate the shocking murder on her own.

Over the course of one winter, as the trial nears, and whispers and prejudices mount, Martha doggedly pursues the truth. Her diary soon lands at the center of the scandal, implicating those she loves, and compelling Martha to decide where her own loyalties lie.

Clever, layered, and subversive, Ariel Lawhon's newest offering introduces an unsung heroine who refused to accept anything less than justice at a time when women were considered best seen and not heard. The Frozen River is a thrilling, tense, and tender story about a remarkable woman who left an unparalleled legacy yet remains nearly forgotten to this day.

(Source: https://www.penguinrandomhouse.ca/books/665611/the-frozen-river-by-ariel-lawhon/9780385546874/reading-guide)

book discussion kits

The Frozen River
by Ariel Lawhon

Meet the Author

Ariel Lawhon is a critically acclaimed, New York Times bestselling author of historical fiction. Her books have been translated into numerous languages and have been LibraryReads, One Book One County, Indie Next, Costco, Amazon Spotlight, and Book of the Month Club selections. She lives in the rolling hills outside Nashville, Tennessee, with her husband and four sons. Ariel splits her time between the grocery store and the baseball field.

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Discussion Questions

1. How did life in Hallowell in 1789 surprise you? Did the characters act as you expected for the historical period? What revelations were most interesting to you? How does our contemporary notion of the American dream apply to these characters?
2. Throughout the novel, Martha is frequently called to deliver babies from women of all walks of life. Have you or anyone you know delivered a child with the assistance of a midwife? Which laboring mother did you feel most connected to?
3. "Memory is a wicked thing that warps and twists. But paper and ink receive the truth without emotion, and they read it back without partiality." (p 39) Martha's diary is a critical component of the novel, and a key piece of evidence in

Rebecca's trial. Have you ever kept a diary? If not, did reading The Frozen River influence you to start?

4. Much of the novel's action focuses on the legal process surrounding Rebecca Forster's assault and Martha's testimony. Were you surprised at the way the 18th century judicial process unfolded? Do you think Rebecca's story would have been received differently in a contemporary courtroom?
5. The Ballards are an incredibly closeknit family—did you have a favorite character among Martha and Ephraim's brood? Was there a relationship between one of Martha's children and their suitors that you were particularly cheering for?
6. Experts are few and far between in Hallowell, making Martha and Doctor's medical knowledge all the more important, and making Doctor Page's poor advice especially dangerous. Would you have acted differently in Martha's place to warn the townspeople about Page?
7. Martha and her daughters spend much of the novel immersed in everyday household labor such as making candles, baking bread, weaving, and killing chickens. Were there any 1780s tasks you'd be interested to try for yourself?
8. What did you think of the way Martha and Ephraim's past is revealed in the interstitial chapters? What did those glimpses of their earlier years reveal about them as the 1789 story unfolded? Which moments in their love story struck you most deeply?
9. Martha says the townspeople dislike her. Ephraim disagrees: "They respect you. Perhaps occasionally fear you. It's not the same thing." (p 56) When is it better to be honest than it is to be well liked?

10. Sally and Sarah are set up in opposition to each other throughout the novel, and Martha guesses incorrectly about both of their futures. Did you see those plot twists coming? Would you have acted differently toward either woman if you had been in Martha's shoes?
11. Martha's final confrontation with North has lasting consequences for both of them. Do you think justice was done? What about as regards Rebecca's assault and Burgess's killing? Would you have made the same choice as Martha?
12. If The Frozen River was adapted for film or television, who would you cast in the leading roles? Are there any components of the story you think would be especially striking to see acted out on screen?
13. Did you read the author's note? If so, did it change your evaluation of Martha's life and the story of the "year of the long winter?

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Recipes

Hearty Beef Stew

Ingredients:



- 3 pounds trimmed boneless beef chuck, cut into 1 1/2-inch cubes
- Kosher salt
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 6 tablespoons butter
- 3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 2 large onions, chopped
- 1/4 cup tomato paste
- 3 cups dry red wine
- Two 14 1/2-ounce cans beef broth
- 1 tablespoon dark-brown sugar
- 1 1/2 pounds baby red-skinned potatoes, quartered
- One 10-ounce package baby carrots, rinsed
- 1 pound fresh cremini mushrooms, stemmed, caps thickly sliced
- 3 tablespoons whole-grain mustard
- 3 tablespoons chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley

Directions:

Step 1

Place the meat in a large bowl and season generously with salt and pepper. Melt 4 tablespoons of the butter in a large, heavy Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Working

in batches, toss the meat with the flour; add to the pot, and brown on all sides. Using a slotted spoon, transfer the meat to a plate.

Step 2

Melt the remaining 2 tablespoons butter in same pot over medium-high heat. Add the onions, and sauté until tender, about 6 minutes. Mix in the tomato paste and then the red wine. Bring to a boil, scraping up any browned bits on the bottom of the pot. Add the broth and sugar, then the browned beef and any accumulated juices. Bring to a boil; reduce the heat, and simmer, partially covered, 1 1/2 hours, until the beef is very tender.

Step 3

Add the potatoes and carrots, and simmer, uncovered, until the vegetables are tender, about 25 minutes. Add the mushrooms, mustard, and parsley; simmer until the mushrooms are tender, another 10 minutes. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

(Source: https://www.epicurious.com/recipes/food/views/hearty-beef-stew-375291)

Recipes Continuation

Apple Pie

Ingredients:



- 2 3/4 cups all-purpose flour, divided, plus more for rolling
- 1 1/4 teaspoon salt, divided
- 1/3 cup plus 1½ tablespoons granulated sugar, divided
- 2 sticks (16 tablespoons) unsalted butter, cut into small pieces and frozen for 15 minutes
- 1 tablespoon apple cider vinegar, chilled
- 1 large egg
- 1 tablespoon whole milk
- 3 1/2 pounds Honeycrisp, Braeburn, or Golden Delicious apples, or a mix
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- Coarse sugar, for sprinkling

Directions:

Step 1

In the bowl of a food processor, pulse 2½ cups flour, 1 teaspoon salt, and 1½ tablespoons sugar. Add butter and pulse until coarse, pea-sized crumbs appear, about 10 seconds. With the machine running, add vinegar and ¼ cup ice water and process until the dough just holds together, about 30 seconds. Squeeze a small amount of

dough between your fingers and if it is very crumbly, add more ice water, 1 tablespoon at a time (2 tablespoons maximum). Do not over process.

Step 2

Turn dough out onto a lightly floured surface and push together into a rough ball. Knead a few times to combine, then divide into two equal balls. Flatten each ball into a disc with smooth edges (no cracks), cover with plastic wrap, and refrigerate at least 1 hour (or up to overnight).

Step 3

Preheat the oven to 425°F with one rack on the bottom rung and one rack in the center of oven. Place a rimmed baking sheet on the bottom rack to preheat.

Step 4

On a lightly floured surface, roll out one disc of dough into a 13-inch round. Roll the dough loosely around the rolling pin, and then unfurl it into the 9-inch pie pan. Gently lift and settle the dough into the pan. Trim the excess dough using scissors, leaving a ½-inch overhang, and transfer to the refrigerator. On a floured piece of parchment, roll out the second disc of dough to the same size as the first and refrigerate both crusts for 30 minutes.

Step 5

In a small bowl, whisk together the egg and milk and set aside. Peel, core, and slice the apples into ¼-inch thick wedges. Place apples in a large bowl and mix with ¼ cup flour, ⅓ cup sugar, cinnamon, nutmeg, ¼ teaspoon salt, and lemon. Fill the dough-lined pan with the apple mixture, packing apple slices as tightly as possible.

Step 6

Brush the rim with egg and milk mixture, reserving the excess. Top with the second dough round and press over apples to minimize excess space between apples and crust. Press the top and bottom crusts together and trim the top crust to a 1-inch edge around pan. Tuck top edge under bottom edge and crimp or decorate as desired. Cut five vents in the top crust for steam. Refrigerate pie for 30 minutes to set the crimp.

Step 7

Brush top crust with egg wash and sprinkle with coarse sugar.

Step 8

Place pie on the preheated rimmed baking sheet and bake until the crust begins to turn golden, 20 to 25 minutes. Rotate sheet, move to center rack, and reduce oven to 350°F. Continue baking until the crust is golden brown and you can see the thickened juices bubbling, 40 to 50 minutes more. Cool on a rack 3 to 4 hours to allow juices to set before slicing.

Do Ahead: The pie dough can be made up to 3 days in advance and chilled, or frozen for up to 3 months; thaw before using. The baked pie will keep, loosely covered with aluminum foil, at room temperature for up to 2 days.

(Source: https://www.epicurious.com/recipes/food/views/our-favorite-apple-pie-recipe)