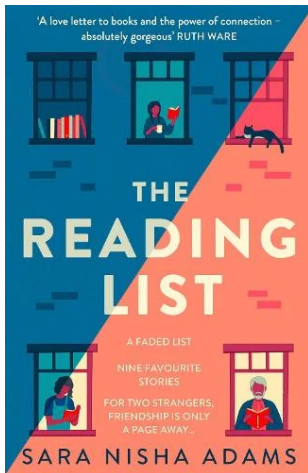


Prison Reading Groups

The Reading List

By Sara Nisha Adams



Mukesh is a retired Indian immigrant and recently widowed. He is trying to navigate his new life without his beloved wife and learns about himself and how much his wife loved the library. This love was passed down to his granddaughter who like her grandmother passed down her love for books. Mukesh sees this as a way of connecting to his granddaughter and visits the library.

Aleisha works at the library and one day finds a crumpled piece of paper in the back of the book *To Kill a Mockingbird*, it is a list of books she has never heard of before, this challenges her to read every book on the list. She finds solace in this as her life at home is painful and the books transport her away from the realities of being a carer for her mum and the emotional struggles that come with the responsibility.

Aleisha and Mukesh meet one day at the library as he found a book that should have been returned and Aleisha sees that he is confused and unsure about what the library can offer. Aleisha passes him the Reading List hoping that it will be a lifeline for him too.

A connection is forged between them as fiction helps them navigate their grief and everyday troubles in the hope that they can find joy again.

Discussion Questions:

1. Did the book inspire you to read any of the books on the Reading List or have you read any of the books on the list.

2. Mukesh's granddaughter's love for books is a way of him connecting with her through books, is there anyone in your life who you share a love of books/reading with?

3. How does the experience of reading help push Mukesh towards Nilakshi, is that what Naima would have wanted for him and how does her letter at the end confirm that?

4. What do you think would become of the characters in the years after the book ends? What would their future hold?

5. Thinking about your own Reading List, which books would be on it and why?

Thank you to our volunteer Sue for choosing the title and creating this resource.