

September Prompt -

Kaleidoscope Book Club

Theme: Dark Academia & Scary Thrills

Get into the fall spirit with horror, gothic tales, mystery, thriller, dark academia, or anything atmospheric and unsettling featuring LGBTQIA+ themes. Read about LGBTQIA+ characters facing supernatural threats, solving mysteries, surviving terror, or wrestling with the pressures and shadows of academic life. Books should center LGBTQIA+ characters or be written by authors from the community. Fiction primarily, but true crime and spooky nonfiction are also welcome. Books from any category—adult, young adult, juvenile—are welcome.

The below titles are all available in print or other physical formats via our catalog - either at your local library or through consortium sharing. Some titles may also be available through our E-book services, Hoopla and Libby. Please note for any given title, we cannot guarantee immediate availability - some may already be checked out or have a waitlist. Happy reading!

Fiction

Dark Academia

Ace of Spades by Faridah Àbíké-Íyímídé

At an elite private school, two Black students find themselves targeted by an anonymous texter who begins exposing secrets and disrupting their carefully controlled lives. [Dark Academia, Thriller, YA] (M/M romance, queer characters). [View in library catalog.](#)

A Lesson in Vengeance by Victoria Lee

After a year away following the death of her girlfriend, Felicity returns to her secluded boarding school and becomes drawn into an investigation of its history of witchcraft and mysterious deaths. [Dark Academia, Gothic, YA,] (sapphic romance). [View in library catalog.](#)

Catherine House by Elisabeth Thomas

Ines enrolls at an extraordinarily exclusive college where students surrender their outside lives for three years of intense study. As she adjusts to the school's unusual rules and isolated

community, its secrets become increasingly difficult to ignore. [Dark Academia, Psychological, Adult] [View in library catalog.](#)

How We Fall Apart by Katie Zhao

When the most popular student at an elite Manhattan high school disappears, four classmates become entangled in an anonymous campaign that exposes their secrets and forces them to investigate what happened. [Dark Academia, Mystery, YA,] [View in library catalog.](#)

If We Were Villains by M. L. Rio

At an elite Shakespeare conservatory, a close-knit group of acting students find their relationships and ambitions unraveling during their final year. Years later, one of them must revisit the events that led to a devastating crime. [Dark Academia, Mystery, Adult] (queer characters) [View in library catalog.](#)

Magic for Liars by Sarah Gailey

A nonmagical private investigator is hired to investigate a suspicious death at an academy for young mages, bringing her back into the orbit of her estranged magical twin sister. [Dark Academia, Mystery, Adult, Novel] (non-binary author, queer characters) [View in library catalog.](#)

Plain Bad Heroines by Emily M. Danforth

A cursed girls' boarding school becomes the subject of a modern horror film, bringing together the school's troubled history, its queer past, and the actresses and writer trying to recreate it. [Dark Academia, Gothic, Adult, =] (sapphic romance, queer characters) [View in library catalog.](#)

Sirens & Muses by Antonia Angress

Four young artists become connected through an elite art school, political tensions, rivalry, and desire as they try to define themselves and their ambitions in the competitive New York art world. [Dark Academia, Literary Fiction, Adult,] (queer relationships) [View in library catalog.](#)

Sleeping Girls Lie by Faridah Àbíké-Íyímídé

After moving to a prestigious boarding school, Sade discovers that her roommate has disappeared and becomes caught in a mystery involving secrets, trauma, and the school's tightly controlled social world. [Dark Academia, Mystery, YA] (queer protagonist, M/M and F/F relationships) [View in library catalog.](#)

Summer Sons by Lee Mandelo

After his closest friend dies just before the two were supposed to reunite at graduate school, Andrew travels to Nashville and finds himself confronting his friend's secrets, a haunted past, and an unsettling presence. [Dark Academia, Southern Gothic, Adult, Novel] (gay/queer characters, queer author) [View in library catalog.](#)

The Incandescent by Emily Tesh

A magical boarding school relies on Dr. Saffy Walden to protect its students from dangerous supernatural forces. When a new threat emerges, Saffy must work alongside the school's formidable demon hunter while managing the demands of teaching and protecting her students. [Dark Academia, Fantasy, Adult] (sapphic romance) [View in library catalog.](#)

The Unmagical Life of Briar Jones by Lex Croucher

Briar, a nonbinary young adult who was never admitted to the prestigious magical school they once dreamed of attending, takes a job there years later and is reunited with their estranged childhood best friend, whose transformation raises difficult questions about magic, power, and responsibility. [Dark Academia, Fantasy, Adult, Novel] (nonbinary protagonist, queer romance)

[View in library catalog.](#)

To Shape a Dragon's Breath by Moniquill Blackgoose

Anequs, a young Indigenous girl who bonds with a rare dragon, is sent to a colonial dragon academy where she must learn a system of magic while protecting the knowledge and traditions of her people. [Dark Academia, Fantasy, YA] (sapphic romance) [View in library catalog.](#)

These Violent Delights by Micah Nemerever

Two isolated young men meet at a university and develop an intense relationship that gradually becomes obsessive, pulling them away from their friends and toward increasingly dangerous choices. [Dark Academia, Psychological Thriller, Adult] (M/M romance, queer characters)

[View in library catalog.](#)

Vicious by V. E. Schwab

Two brilliant college roommates discover that extreme experiences can produce superhuman abilities. Years later, their friendship has become a bitter rivalry as each pursues his own vision of what extraordinary people should become. [Dark Academia, Superhero Fantasy, Adult] [View in library catalog.](#)

Wilder Girls by Rory Power

At a quarantined girls' boarding school on an isolated island, three friends struggle to survive a mysterious disease that has transformed the students and the surrounding environment. When one girl disappears, another begins searching for answers beyond the school's boundaries. [Dark Academia, Horror, YA] (queer characters, sapphic romance) [View in library catalog.](#)

Fantasy/Magical/Witchy

A Marvelous Light by Freya Marske

In an alternate Edwardian England where magic is hidden from the public, an unlikely pair of men investigate a missing magical artifact and a dangerous conspiracy while navigating their complicated partnership. [Historical Fantasy, Mystery, Adult] (M/M romance) [View in library catalog.](#)

Cemetery Boys by Aiden Thomas

Yadriel, a trans boy from a family of Latinx brujos, summons a spirit in an effort to prove himself to his community. Instead of the ghost he intended to find, he summons Julian, a recently deceased classmate who still has unfinished business. [Urban Fantasy, Paranormal, YA, Novel] (trans protagonist, M/M romance) [View in library catalog.](#)

Gideon the Ninth by Tamsyn Muir

Gideon is recruited by the necromancer of the Ninth House to serve as her sword in a deadly competition between the heirs of an immortal emperor. The contestants must solve a series of mysteries while navigating rivalries, ancient magic, and a decaying spaceborne estate. [Science Fantasy, Gothic, Adult, Novel] (lesbian characters) [View in library catalog.](#)

Mooncakes by Wendy Xu and Suzanne Walker

A teenage werewolf reconnects with her childhood friend, a nonbinary witch, as the two become involved in a supernatural mystery involving magic, family, and a dangerous threat to their community. [Fantasy, Graphic Novel, YA] (sapphic romance, nonbinary character) [View in library catalog.](#)

Legendborn by Tracy Deonn

After her mother's death, Bree enrolls in a residential program at UNC–Chapel Hill and discovers a secret society of students who use magic to fight supernatural creatures connected to the Arthurian legend. [Contemporary Fantasy, Dark Fantasy, YA] (queer characters) [View in library catalog.](#)

Lessons in Magic and Disaster by Charlie Jane Anders

A young witch who is studying literature teaches her estranged mother how to use magic while investigating an unusual eighteenth-century book and the secrets surrounding her mother's past. [Contemporary Fantasy, Literary Fiction, Adult, Novel] (trans protagonist, lesbian characters, queer author) [View in library catalog.](#)

The Honey Witch by Sydney J. Shields

Marigold inherits her grandmother's role as the Honey Witch, along with a curse that prevents anyone from falling in love with her. When a skeptical young woman arrives on her island, Marigold finds herself questioning the limits of the curse and her own growing feelings. [Cozy Fantasy, Historical Fantasy, Adult,] (sapphic romance) [View in library catalog.](#)

The Mermaid, the Witch, and the Sea by Maggie Tokuda-Hall

A young pirate and an aristocratic girl cross paths while caught up in a scheme involving pirates, witches, mermaids, and stolen identities. Their escape brings them into conflict with forces seeking to control their lives and futures. [Historical Fantasy, Adventure, YA] (queer romance, gender-nonconforming characters) [View in library catalog.](#)

The Witch Boy by Molly Knox Ostertag

Aster comes from a family where girls become witches and boys become shapeshifters, but he has no interest in following that tradition. When a supernatural danger threatens his family, Aster begins learning magic despite the expectations placed on him. [Fantasy, Coming of Age, Middle Grade, Graphic Novel] (trans/queer themes). [View in library catalog.](#)

This Poison Heart by Kalynn Bayron

Bri inherits a mysterious estate from a relative she barely knew and discovers that she can control plants. As she investigates her new abilities and her family's history, she becomes

involved with an old magical legacy connected to the house. [Fantasy, Mystery, YA] (sapphic romance, queer characters) [View in library catalog.](#)

Horror

A Game in Yellow by Hailey Piper

A couple looking to revive their relationship encounter a strange play whose pages promise an unusual rush when read in small doses. Their experiment draws them into a disturbing world where desire, obsession, and supernatural horror become increasingly difficult to separate. [Cosmic Horror, Psychological Horror, Adult] (lesbian protagonist/couple, queer author) [View in library catalog.](#)

Camp Damascus by Chuck Tingle

A teenager growing up in a seemingly idyllic religious town begins to question the community's celebrated conversion camp and the beliefs surrounding it. As she investigates, she discovers a terrifying reality beneath the town's carefully maintained image. [Horror, Religious Horror, Adult] (queer protagonist, queer author) [View in library catalog.](#)

Her Body and Other Parties by Carmen Maria Machado

This collection brings together stories that move between horror, fantasy, and surrealism while exploring women's bodies, relationships, desire, violence, and the ways society shapes intimate lives. [Horror, Speculative Fiction, Adult, Short Story Collection] (queer author, queer characters) [View in library catalog.](#)

Hemlock by Melissa Faliveno

A woman returns to the rural community she left behind and finds herself confronting buried family histories, local secrets, and unsettling events connected to the place she once called home. [Horror, Gothic, Adult] (queer author) [View in library catalog.](#)

Model Home by Rivers Solomon

A family returns to an abandoned house from their childhood after years apart, forcing them to confront memories and tensions that have never been resolved. The house becomes a setting where family history, identity, and the uncanny overlap. [Horror, Literary Fiction, Adult] (queer author, queer characters) [View in library catalog.](#)

Never Whistle at Night: An Indigenous Dark Fiction Anthology edited by Shane Hawk and Theodore C. Van Alst Jr.

This collection brings together Indigenous writers whose stories draw on cultural traditions, folklore, family histories, ghosts, monsters, curses, and other forms of darkness. Together, the stories explore survival, identity, community, and the consequences of disturbing forces. [Horror, Dark Fiction, Adult, Anthology] (Indigenous authors, queer representation in selected stories) [View in library catalog.](#)

On Sundays She Picked Flowers by Yah Yah Scholfield

After escaping an abusive home, Judith finds refuge in a haunted house in the woods of

southern Georgia. As she becomes increasingly connected to the property's ghosts and history, she is forced to confront the past she hoped to leave behind. [Southern Gothic, Horror, Adult,] (non-binary author) [View in library catalog.](#)

Our Wives Under the Sea by Julia Armfield

After a disastrous deep-sea expedition, Leah returns home to her wife Miri, but the person who comes back is profoundly changed. As Miri tries to understand what happened underwater, their marriage becomes increasingly difficult to recognize. [Gothic Horror, Literary Fiction, Adult,] (lesbian marriage, queer author) [View in library catalog.](#)

Spoiled Milk by Avery Curran

At a girls' boarding school in postwar England, the death of a student is followed by a series of disturbing events that expose the school's repressive culture and buried secrets. [Gothic Horror, Dark Academia, Adult] (lesbian/queer themes) [View in library catalog.](#)

What Moves the Dead by T. Kingfisher

A retired soldier visits a decaying estate after receiving an alarming message from an old friend and finds the household affected by a strange illness. A mycologist and a physician join the investigation as the mystery surrounding the house deepens. [Gothic Horror, Body Horror, Adult, Novella] (nonbinary protagonist) [View in library catalog.](#)

You Weren't Meant to Be Human by Andrew Joseph White

A young man living in a remote community becomes involved with a mysterious being whose arrival challenges his understanding of humanity, faith, and the nature of his isolated world. [Cosmic Horror, Gothic Horror, Adult] (trans author, queer protagonist). [View in library catalog.](#)

Nonfiction

Last Call: A True Story of Love, Lust, and Murder in Queer New York by Elon Green

Green investigates the murders of four gay men in 1990s New York while reconstructing the vibrant queer communities and nightlife of the era. The book has a strong noir atmosphere of bars, detectives, secrets, and a decades-old investigation, while giving substantial attention to the victims and their lives rather than treating them simply as crime statistics. (Queer Author, True Crime, LGBTQ+ History) [View in library catalog.](#)

Queer Magic: LGBTQ+ Spirituality and Culture from Around the World by Tomás Prower

A worldwide exploration of queer spirituality, mythology, magical traditions, deities, historical figures, and contemporary LGBTQ+ spiritual practices. Prower examines traditions that were suppressed, transformed, or rewritten through colonialism alongside contemporary queer spiritual practices. (Queer Author, Spirituality, Folklore) [View in library catalog.](#)