



**ONE BOOK**  
**ONE NORTHBROOK**  
OCTOBER 2021

# THE VANISHING HALF

*a novel*

[www.northbrook.info/one-book](http://www.northbrook.info/one-book)

  
NORTHBROOK  
PUBLIC LIBRARY


# PROGRAMS

Program details on pg. 4


**October 2, 1pm**

**Kickoff & Live Concert** 


**October 7, 2pm**

White Like Her: My Family's  
Story of Race & Racial Passing 


**October 7, 7pm**

Talking with Children about  
Race & Racism 


**October 12, 7pm**

*The Vanishing Half* Book  
Discussion 

**October 13, 7pm**

The Color of Law & Reversing  
Segregation 

**October 19, 10am**

Book Discussion with Nancy  
Buehler: *The Vanishing Half* 


**October 19, 7pm**

**A Conversation with  
Brit Bennett**  


**October 20, 2 & 7pm**

Movie: *Fast Color* 


**October 21, 2pm**

*The Vanishing Half* Book  
Discussion 

**October 22, 5pm**

Middle School Book Discussion:  
*Genesis Begins Again* 


**October 23, 10am**

Drag Queen Story Hour with  
Miss Muffy & Her Palz 

**October 25, 7pm**

Twin Connections 


**October 27, 7pm**

LGBTQ+ Community  
Conversations 

**October 28, 2 & 7pm**

Movie: *The Hate U Give* 

**October 29, 5pm**

Teen Book Discussion:  
*The Vanishing Half* (GR 9-12) 



Live Virtual Program



In-Person Program

## THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS



BankFinancial, Cook and Kocher Insurance Group, Inc., F.E. Moran Fire Protection of Northern Illinois, Fifth Third Bank, First Bank of Highland Park, Moore Landscapes, LLC, Northbrook Bank & Trust CO N.A., Product Architecture + Design, Selden Fox, LTD, Today's Business Solutions Inc.

## ABOUT THE BOOK



The Vignes twin sisters will always be identical. But after growing up together in a small, southern black community and running away at age sixteen, it's not just the shape of their daily lives that is different as adults, it's everything: their families, their communities, their racial identities.

Many years later, one sister lives with her black daughter in the same southern town she once tried to escape. The other secretly passes for white, and her white husband

knows nothing of her past. Still, the fates of the twins remain intertwined. What will happen when their own daughters' storylines intersect?

Weaving together multiple strands and generations of this family, Brit Bennett produces a riveting, emotional family story and a brilliant exploration of the American history of passing. Looking well beyond issues of race, *The Vanishing Half* considers the lasting influence of the past as it shapes a person's decisions, desires, and expectations, and explores some of the multiple reasons and realms in which people sometimes feel pulled to live as something other than their origins.

---

**"Bennett's gorgeously written second novel, an ambitious meditation on race and identity, considers the divergent fates of twin sisters, born in the Jim Crow South, after one decides to pass for white. Bennett balances the literary demands of dynamic characterization with the historical and social realities of her subject matter."**

– The New York Times

---

## ABOUT AUTHOR BRIT BENNETT

Born and raised in Southern California, Brit Bennett graduated from Stanford University and later earned her MFA in fiction at the University of Michigan. Her debut novel *The Mothers* was a *New York Times* bestseller, and her second novel *The Vanishing Half* was an instant #1 *New York Times* bestseller. Her essays have been featured in *The New Yorker*, *The Paris Review* & *Jezebel*.



Photo credit: Emma Trim




# FEATURED PROGRAMS



## One Book Kickoff & Concert

**Saturday, October 2, 1-4pm**

**Outside the library's east entrance—rain or shine.**

Enjoy the New Orleans sounds of acoustic blues duo, Sanctified Grumblers. Attendees will also have the chance to enter to win a signed copy of *The Vanishing Half*. Registration is not required for this drop-in event. 





## A Conversation with Brit Bennett

**Tuesday, October 19, 7-8pm**

**Watch from home or the Auditorium's big screen**

Join us for a live virtual conversation and Q&A with Brit Bennett, author of *The Vanishing Half*.

In addition to being able to watch the live stream at home on Zoom, a limited number of seats will be available for registered attendees to join our "Watch Party" to watch the live stream on the big screen in the library's Auditorium.  

---

### SYMBOL KEY



Live Virtual Program



In-Person Program

**ADA Requests:** To request an accommodation, including captioning or ASL services, please specify the accommodation when you register online or call 847-272-6224 at least 72 hours before the program or event.

## ONE BOOK PROGRAMS

Advance registration is required for all programs, unless noted otherwise.

### One Book Kickoff & Concert (Drop-in)



**Saturday, October 2, 1-4pm, Outside the east entrance**

Enjoy the New Orleans sounds of Sanctified Grumblers and enter to win a signed copy of *The Vanishing Half*. 🧑

### White Like Her: My Family's Story of Race and Racial Passing

**Thursday, October 7, 2-3pm**

Author Gail Lukasik tells the story of her mother's decision to pass for white in the historical context of the Jim Crow South. 🗣️

### Talking with Children About Race & Racism

**Thursday, October 7, 7-8pm**

Learn how to talk to children about racism, injustice, racial identity, and equity. 🗣️

### Evening Book Discussion with Lori Siegel

**Tuesday, October 12, 7-8pm**

*The Vanishing Half* by Brit Bennett. 🗣️

### The Color of Law & Reversing Segregation with Richard Rothstein

**Wednesday, October 13, 7-8pm**

Author Richard Rothstein explains the policies that led to racial segregation in U.S. communities, and how to work toward racial equity. 🗣️

### Nancy Buehler Book Discussion

**Tuesday, October 19, 10-11:30am**

*The Vanishing Half* by Brit Bennett. 🗣️

### A Conversation with Brit Bennett

**Tuesday, October 19, 7-8pm**



Join us for a live virtual conversation and Q&A with Brit Bennett, author of *The Vanishing Half*.

Register to watch the Zoom live stream at home or on the Auditorium's big screen. 🗣️ 🧑



### Movie: *Fast Color*

(Rated PG-13)

**Wednesday, October 20  
2 & 7pm, Auditorium** 🧑

### One Book, One Northbrook Book Discussion

**Thursday, October 21, 2-3pm**

**Civic Room** 🧑

A discussion of *The Vanishing Half* with librarian Tracy Gossage.

**Programs continue on page 6 ➤**




**ONE BOOK**  
ONE NORTHBROOK

# ONE BOOK PROGRAMS

Advance registration is required for all programs, unless noted otherwise.


## **Middle School Book Discussion:** *Genesis Begins Again* (GR 6-8)

**Friday, October 22, 5-6pm**  
**Civic Room**

Students in grades 6-8 are invited to discuss *Genesis Begins Again* by Alicia Williams. 


## **Drag Queen Story Hour With** **Miss Muffy and Her Palz** (Ages 3-8)

**Saturday, October 23, 10-11am**

A literary experience with stories and songs designed for children ages 3-8. 


## **Twin Connections**

**Monday, October 25, 7-8pm**

Do twins feel each other's pain or sense each other's thoughts? Dr. Nancy L. Segal, author of several books on twins, discusses twin connection fact versus fiction. 

## **LGBTQ+ Community** **Conversations**

**Wednesday, October 27, 7-8pm**

Join local speakers as they discuss their personal experiences in the LGBTQ+ community. 




## **Movie: *The Hate*** ***U Give* (Rated PG-13)**

**Thursday, October 28**  
**2 & 7pm, Auditorium** 

## **Teen Book Discussion (GR 9-12)**

**Friday, October 29, 5-6pm**  
**Civic Room**

Teens in grades 9-12 are invited to discuss *The Vanishing Half*. 

## **SYMBOL KEY**

 Live Virtual Program

 In-Person Program

**ADA Requests:** To request an accommodation, including captioning or ASL services, please specify the accommodation when you register online or call 847-272-6224 at least 72 hours before the program or event.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Stella and Desiree grow up identical and, as children, inseparable. Later, they are not only separated, but lost to each other, completely out of contact. What series of events and experiences leads to this division and why? Was it inevitable, after their growing up so indistinct from each other?
2. When did you notice cracks between the twins begin to form? Do you understand why Stella made the choice she did? What did Stella have to give up, in order to live a different kind of life? Do you think Stella ultimately regrets her choices? What about Desiree?
3. Consider the various forces that shape the twins into the people they become, and the forces that later shape their respective daughters. In the creation of an individual identity or sense of self, how much influence do you think comes from upbringing, geography, race, gender, class, education? Have you ever taken on or discarded aspects of your own identity?
4. Kennedy is born with everything handed to her, Jude with comparatively little. What impact do their relative privileges have on the people they become? How does it affect their relationships with their mothers and their understanding of home? How does it influence the dynamic between them?
5. The town of Mallard is small in size but looms large in the personal histories of its residents. How does the history of this town and its values affect the twins and their parents; how does it affect "outsiders" like Early and later Jude? Do you understand why Desiree decides to return there as an adult? What does the depiction of Mallard say about who belongs to what communities, and how those communities are formed and enforced?
6. Many of the characters are engaged in a kind of performance at some point in the story. Kennedy makes a profession of acting, and ultimately her fans blur the line between performance and reality when they confuse her with her soap opera character. Barry performs on stage in theatrical costumes that he then removes for his daytime life. Reese takes on a new wardrobe and role, but it isn't a costume. One could say that Stella's whole marriage and neighborhood life is a kind of performance. What is the author saying about the roles we perform in the world? Do you ever feel you are performing a role rather than being yourself? Consider the distinction between performance, reinvention, and transformation in respect to the different characters in the book.



# FURTHER READING

ADULT BOOKS



YOUNG ADULT BOOKS



YOUTH BOOKS



PICTURE BOOKS

