

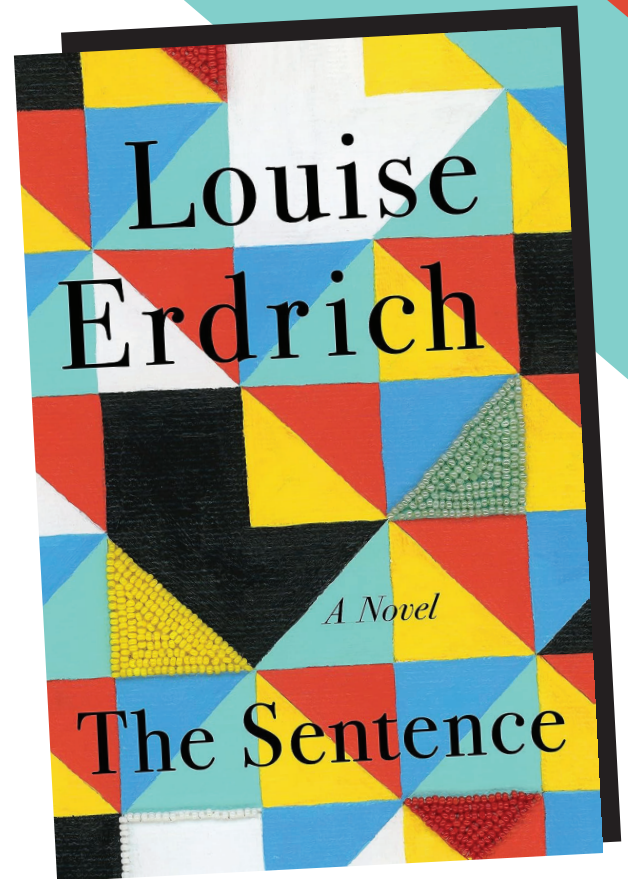
# Wilmette Reads 2024

Adults & Teens • January 2-February 29

# Reader's Guide

*The Sentence*  
by Louise Erdrich

Full details and online reporting:  
[wilmettelibrary.info/wilmettereads](http://wilmettelibrary.info/wilmettereads)



Wilmette Public Library



Wilmette Reads is generously supported by the **Friends of the Wilmette Public Library**, our partner in reading series for many years.

# What We're Reading

## Featured Title

*The Sentence* by Louise Erdrich

# Join a Wilmette Reads Book Discussion

## *The Sentence* Book Discussions

Tuesday, January 16, 10:30-11:30am, Auditorium

Thursday, February 15, 7-8pm, Virtual [R](#)

## Wilmette Reads Book Chat

Wednesday, January 10, 10:30-11:30am, Auditorium

Tuesday, February 6, 2-3pm, Auditorium

Share and discuss your latest favorite books and media with a librarian and your fellow bibliophiles. Get ideas for your TBR list and chat all things bookish.

## Join us for a Reader Celebration!

Friday, February 23, 6pm, Auditorium

Celebrate a season of reading with snacks and activities.



## Discussion Questions for *The Sentence*

"So the word with its yawning c, belligerent little e's, with its hissing sibilants and double n's, this repetitive bumper of a word made of slyly stabbing letters that surrounded an isolate human t, this word was in my thoughts every moment of every day"... says Tookie about the definition of "sentence".

- Discuss the different types of sentences in the book and how they are related. How do they drive the narrative and the characters?
- In what ways are the characters in the book haunted? What do you think Erdrich was trying to communicate when Asma says:

"Think how white people believe their houses . . . are haunted by Indians, when it's really the opposite. We're haunted by settlers and their descendants. We're haunted by the Army Medical Museum and countless natural history museums and small-town museums who still have unclaimed bones in their collections."

- What, if anything, do we owe the dead?
- Half-way through the story, Erdrich gets COVID and BLM protests rock Minneapolis. Would the book still have been effective without these real-world events?
- How does the novel explore the dynamics of cultural respect and appropriation, particularly in the context of the representation and treatment of Native American identities in contemporary American society?
- How does Erdrich use the bookstore as a space of refuge, understanding, and resistance, and how does the store's importance evolve as the narrative unfolds amidst a changing societal backdrop?
- Discuss the power of transformation in the book. What do Tookie's incarceration, her early release, and the transformation of her life afterward reveal about the author's perspectives on systemic injustice, redemption, and the potential for personal growth despite severe adversities?
- How can literature transform a person? Have you ever had that moment of transformation from reading a book...or experienced the glow from having recommended a transformative book?

"The many-hued, finely patterned weave of Erdrich's funny, evocative, painful, and redemptive ghost story includes strands of autobiography...Erdrich's insights into what her city Minneapolis experienced in 2020 are piercing; all her characters are enthralling, and her dramatization of why books are essential to our well-being is resounding." — Booklist (starred review)

## About Louise Erdrich

**Louise Erdrich** is author of the critically acclaimed novels *Love Medicine*, *The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse*, *The Plague of Doves*, and her current novel, *The Round House*.

According to Librarian of Congress James H. Billington, "Throughout a remarkable string of virtuosic novels, Louise Erdrich has portrayed her fellow Native Americans as no contemporary American novelist ever has, exploring—in intimate and fearless ways—the myriad cultural challenges that indigenous and mixed-race Americans face. In this, her prose manages to be at once lyrical and gritty, magical yet unsentimental, connecting a dreamworld of Ojibwe legend to stark realities of the modern-day. And yet, for all the bracing originality of her work, her fiction is deeply rooted in the American literary tradition." Billington chose Erdrich based on the recommendation of a panel of distinguished authors and prominent literary critics.



Erdrich's career spans more than 30 years. She has written multiple novels, starting with *Love Medicine* (1984). She has received the National Book Award and the National Book Critics Circle Award. In addition to awards for her individual works, Erdrich is also the recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship in the Creative Arts (1985), a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Native Writers' Circle of the Americas (2000), and the PEN/Saul Bellow Award for Achievement in American Fiction (2014). Much of Erdrich's writing focuses on Native American history and culture.

Born in Little Falls, Minn., in 1954, Karen Louise Erdrich was the first of seven children raised in Wahpeton, N.D., by a German-American father and a mother who is half French-American, half Ojibwe.

From 1972 to 1976, Erdrich studied English at Dartmouth College and was a member of its first co-ed class. In 1979, Erdrich earned a master of arts degree in the Writing Seminars at Johns Hopkins University. She returned to Dartmouth in 2009 to receive an honorary doctorate in letters and to deliver the commencement address. (Library of Congress)

# Wilmette Reads Booklist

Finished *The Sentence*? Want to explore a different genre? Check out these books our librarians selected that are thematically similar but tonally different.

- *The Neighbor Favor* by Kristina Forest
- *What You Are Looking for is in the Library* by Michiko Aoyama
- *The Lions of Fifth Avenue* by Fiona Davis
- *Words Are My Matter* by Ursula K. Le Guin
- *The Left-Handed Booksellers of London* by Garth Nix
- *The Book Collectors: A Band of Syrian Rebels and the Stories That Carried Them Through a War* by Delphine Minoui

## Looking for More Inspiration?

### Fiction

*Probably Ruby* by Lisa Bird-Wilson  
*These Ghosts Are Family* by Maisy Card  
*This Town Sleeps* by Dennis E. Staples  
*Bad Cree* by Jessica Johns  
*There, There* by Tommy Orange  
*Deacon King Kong* by James McBride  
*Our Country Friends* by Gary Shteyngart  
*Wish You Were Here* by Jodi Picoult

### Nonfiction

*Crazy Brave: A Memoir* by Joy Harjo  
*Heart Berries* by Terese Marie Mailhot  
*White Magic* by Elissa Washuta  
*His Name is George Floyd: One Man's Life and the Struggle for Racial Justice* by Robert Samuels  
*The Rediscovery of America: Native People and the Unmaking of U.S. History* by Ned Blackhawk  
*An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States* by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz  
*Unworthy Republic: The Dispossession of Native Americans and the Road to Indian Territory* by Claudio Saunt  
*The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* by Michelle Alexander

