

Seattle University

ScholarWorks @ SeattleU

---

The Spectator Online

Newspapers

---

1-26-2022

## BookTok Brings Book Club Back

Emma Jaber

*Seattle University*

Liam Lawless

*Seattle University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.seattleu.edu/spectator-online>

---

### Recommended Citation

Jaber, Emma and Lawless, Liam, "BookTok Brings Book Club Back" (2022). *The Spectator Online*. 501.  
<https://scholarworks.seattleu.edu/spectator-online/501>

This News Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Newspapers at ScholarWorks @ SeattleU. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Spectator Online by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks @ SeattleU.



# BookTok Brings Book Club Back

Emma Jaber & Liam Lawless, Arts & Entertainment Editor & Staff Reporter

Every fan base, unique interest and niche rabbit hole has a home on TikTok. One particularly popular facet of the app has been the presence of book reviews and recommendations present on for you pages across the world, which would later be coined BookTok.

BookTok is home to creators who will compile videos of recommendations based on certain genres, and some increasingly popular titles will start to circulate through the algorithm. Barnes & Noble and other bookstores have even put up displays of BookTok reads for easy access to the titles that have recently gone viral.

Seattle University Fourth-year Psychology and Sociology major Ali Shaw didn't read for pleasure for their first three years of undergrad, but has since rekindled her childhood love of reading, finding many recommendations from BookTok creators.

"It totally influences what I read ... this summer, I started listening to audiobooks and it started helping me get back into reading again," Shaw said. "I'll look up a book on TikTok to see what people say about it before I buy it. It's made reading feel fun, like I have other people to talk to about it. I was a really big reader when I was a kid but never in a way where people wanted to talk to me about my books."

Second-year International Studies major Sisi Kehrwieler actively seeks out BookTok's expansive knowledge for recommendations on what to read next. Kehrwieler first noticed how big BookTok is after noticing that the same titles she was seeing in store were appearing on her for you page.

"Sometimes I have to go searching for [Booktok] if I'm thinking about starting a new book," Kehrwieler said.

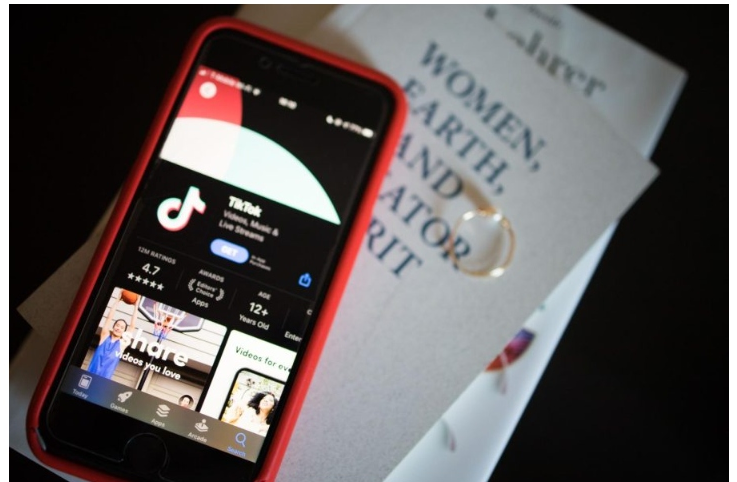
At the end of the year, some creators will do a review of their favorite books released from that year. Since the app continuously gained popularity throughout 2021, these year-end reviews helped Shaw decide how to spend the Elliot Bay gift cards she received for Christmas.

Notably, the recommended genres have opened up new content for Shaw.

"BookTok has been a really great space for queer literature, which I've really enjoyed reading because I hadn't read a lot of queer books, so that's been really fun, and cute and affirming," Shaw said.

It's also a great way to find out more about local independent bookstores, even those across the country.

"My for you page looks like a lot of independent bookstores who have started their own TikToks and have started reviewing books," Shaw said. "I follow this one place that I'm pretty sure is in Pennsylvania, never heard of it in my entire life, but they make really cool fun videos, and I love seeing their stuff. Then, of course, the algorithm feeds me more of that."



Adeline Ong

App store on phone atop stack of books

Driven in part by social distancing, the critics, consumers and creators on Booktok have expanded on the already-immense community of avid readers on social media. Seattle U alumnus Cameron Payne has been publishing book reviews on GoodReads for years, and in the past year started posting on Bookstagram. Although she does not post on BookTok, Payne is an active consumer of the content.

“I think [Booktok] is exciting,” Payne said. “The piece of it that is the coolest to me is that women especially are less afraid to talk about what they’re interested in. It’s a fun platform. Before, it was really cheesy and corny to read romance, but now it’s really trendy and cool, which is fun.”

BookTok and its critics are changing the way readers engage with their favorite authors. With increasingly accessible chains of communication across social media platforms, authors are starting to take note of who their audiences are in new ways.

“There are people doing book reviews on Instagram who have hundreds of thousands of followers and are getting sent archetypes in the mail,” Payne said. “Authors will send out advance copies to others and editors, and now influencers are getting them.”

Only increasing in its reach around the world, BookTok’s surge toward popularity has allowed readers from all over to connect with one another despite social distancing challenges. The community aspect brings people together in ways book clubs might have before the pandemic, and continues to introduce readers to their new favorite books.