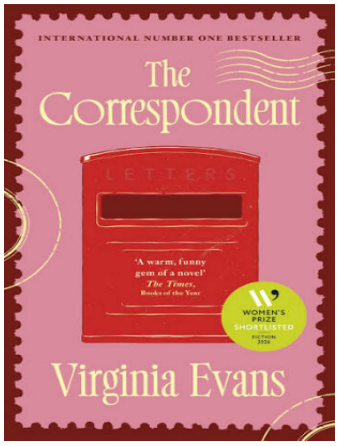
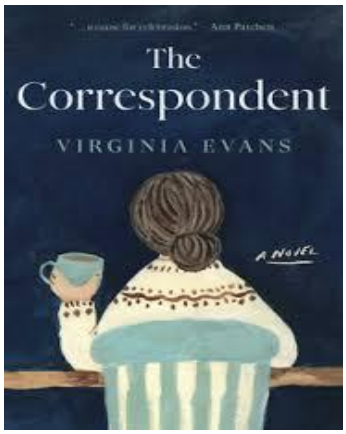
New Castle Public Library Book Group

New Castle Public Library
Wednesday, October 7, 2026
10:30 AM—12:00 PM
Prepared by Dr. Alison McNeal

Virginia Evans: *The Correspondent, 2025*





Virginia Evans Brief Bio:

- B. June 2, 1986 in South Carolina; grew up in Severna, Maryland
- Father managed retirement communities; mother was an event planner
- B.A. in English from James Madison University
- Married Mark Evans and in 2019 they moved to Dublin where she studied for a Master's in Creative Writing at Trinity College.
- Currently lives in Winston-Salem, NC with husband Mark and two children

Interesting Book fact: *The Correspondent* is her 8th book; before it arrived, she had written 7 unsuccessful books (*ie.* she could not find a publisher) over an 18-year period, starting when she was 19. This book has surpassed 2,000,000 copies sold worldwide and translated into 36 languages.

General: Talk about your reading experience of this novel, detailing **one** aspect of the work that stood out for you or that you will remember and why.

Specific Questions: from https://www.beyondthebookends.com/the-correspondent-book-club-questions/

1. Why did Sybil start writing letters as a hobby, and why do you think she continued her correspondence?
2. Did this book make you think differently about how you correspond with people in your life?
3. Do you think handwritten letters are more personal than emails?
4. We learn that Sybil is going blind, but is reluctant to tell her family. Why do you think that is the case?
5. Sybil tells Harry Landy that she is going blind and asks him to keep it a secret. She also confides in him throughout the book. Why do you think she did that?
6. Throughout the book, there is correspondence with Sybil's gardening club. What is the significance of these emails?
7. Mr. Lubek and Mick are both love interests for Sybil throughout the book. What did you think about her learning to date again?
8. What did you think of Evans's portrayal of grief and loss? Do you think this formatting is conducive to an accurate portrayal?
9. Did you find it difficult keeping track of the characters?
10. Sybil goes out of her way to help people like Basam, Dezi, and Harry, yet struggles to connect with her own daughter. Why do you think it's easier to help those farther away from her?
11. Did you have any inkling why Melissa denied Sybil access to auditing the classes?
12. Let's look at how Sybil confronts motherhood and the anxiety that comes with it. Do you think she was a good mother?
13. Sybil in *The Correspondent* and Rocky in *Sandwich* have very different reactions to motherhood and the anxiety that comes with it. Would you say one handles it better than the other?
14. Sybil blames herself for the death of her child, Gilbert. Do you think she was justified? How could she have handled it differently
15. Did you have an idea of who the unsent letters were for?

Book Club Questions for *The Correspondent* from Book Club Questions for The Correspondent by Virginia Evans - Book Club Chat

1. Sybil writes to family, friends, and even famous people and authors. What were some of the memorable letters she wrote and the responses she received?
2. Do you like to write and receive letters? Or did this novel inspire you to start?
3. The story is a love letter to literature. Have you read any of the novels mentioned?
4. What was your overall impression of Sybil when you first started the book? How did it evolve as the story went on?
5. Sybil is quite set in her ways. She's stubborn, quick to judge, and isn't easily swayed or influenced. When did she start to show cracks in her facade?
6. She receives a letter from the past that is unsettling. It's from the son of a man (Dezi) that she helped send to jail, and it completely changed everything for his family. Why did this letter affect Sybil so much?
7. Sybil develops a bond with Henry, the son of a former colleague. Why do you feel the two shared a bond? How did they both help each other?
8. We find out that Sybil had three children, but that her son Gilbert died when he was nine. And that grief impacted every single action Sybil took moving forward. Let's discuss our thoughts about this.
9. Her ex-husband Daan writes her a very heartfelt letter before he passed away from cancer, absolving her of any blame for Gilbert's death. But Sybil couldn't bring herself to respond, which infuriates her daughter. Why didn't Sybil send the letter she was working on to Daan?
10. Sybil was adopted, and she finds out about her birth family and connects with her sister. In what ways were she and Hattie similar?
11. When did Sybil finally realize she had feelings for Theodore?
12. Eventually, Sybil answers Dezi and admits that she was in the wrong, but at the time, she was overwhelmed with grief about losing Gilbert. How did telling the truth to Dezi finally help Sybil move forward with her life?
13. Throughout the novel, Sybil writes her most personal letters to an unknown recipient, and they are never sent. It's revealed that she's been writing to Gilbert this entire time. How did this help her process her grief? When did she finally feel at peace to stop writing letters to Gilbert?
14. What helped her repair her relationship with Fiona?
15. Sybil passes away, and the truth comes out about Sybil's guilt for what happened to Gilbert. Let's discuss this reveal and also the ending.