

Acclaimed authors to give virtual presentations

Separate programs by Brit Bennett, Brandon Taylor presented by Chippewa Valley Book Festival

BY LEADER-TELEGRAM STAFF

EAU CLAIRE — The two authors to be featured in virtual presentations by the Chippewa Valley Book Festival have earned major honors and critical acclaim from publications such as the New York Times and Vanity Fair.

The Book Festival will present Brit Bennett on Friday, Feb. 12, and Brandon Taylor on Friday, March 12. Both programs begin at 7 p.m. and are free to view through the support of festival partners and program sponsors.

Bennett won a Hopwood Award in Graduate Short Fiction as a graduate student in fiction at the University of Michigan. In 2014, she received the Hurston/Wright Award for College Writers. She is a National Book Foundation 5 Under 35 honoree. Bennett's second novel, "The Vanishing Half," was selected one of the best books of 2020 by The New York Times, Washington Post, NPR, People, Time, Vanity Fair, and Glamour. It is listed as No. 1 on the Jan. 31 New York Times best-seller list.

Taylor's novel, "Real Life," was shortlisted for the Booker Prize and named one of the best books of 2020 by, among others, the New York Times, Washington Post, Vanity Fair, the Guardian, Paris Review and VICE.

For more information about the events or to register, go to the festival's website: cvbookfest.org.

Those who register will receive a link via email, which they can click on right before the event starts. They will not have to download software. There will be an opportunity for audience participation through a chat feature. Participants do not have to be from the Chippewa Valley to participate — anyone with internet access may join.

The Book Festival provided further information about the programs in a question-and-answer format.

Brit Bennett's novel introduces race, family and gender issues, and more. Why is this an important discussion right now?

The Chippewa Valley Book Festival has a history of highlighting books that deal with social justice



issues. The social and racial unrest around the country, and the world, in 2020 has only solidified the importance of these topics. People are hungrier than ever to have tough discussions and to listen to diverse perspectives.

Do I need to read the book ahead of the event?

Feel free to read the book in advance or hear what the author has to say and then grab the book after. There's no prerequisite, but those who want to buy the book at a local, independent bookstore can do so at Dotters Books (dottersbooks.com; 715-829-0468). You can find links for buying the books in the event registration information on the Book Festival website.

What can I expect from the event in terms of presentation style?

The event is much like a normal book reading and discussion. After logging in, you'll see the author and the moderator on screen, broadcasting from their homes. They will have a conversation about the book, which includes short readings. There will also be time for audience questions at the end, which can be submitted prior to the event while registering or during the event through a chat window.

Is there any update about the book festival's plans for their annual fall festival?

The shortest, most honest, answer is that we don't know yet. As much as we would love to see our fall festival back up and running in 2021, we have to be mindful of the safety and health of our attendees, authors, and volunteers.

We're hopeful that there will be some version of our festival in October, but whether that will be in person, online, or a combination of the two, only time will tell.

