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## Back on the Porch

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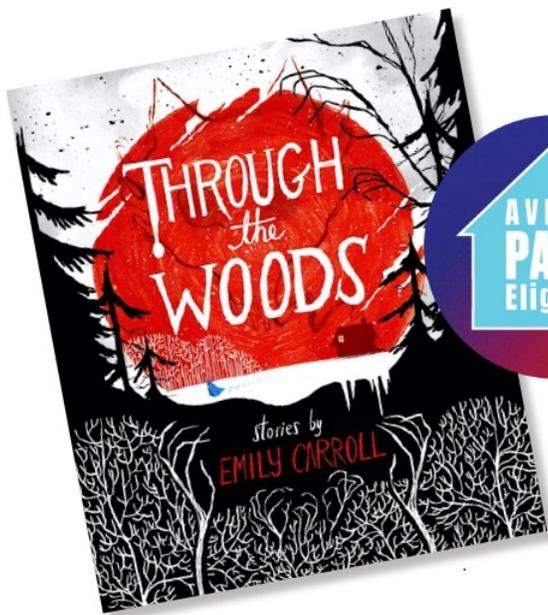
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FRIDAY DECEMBER 3, 2021

## Back on the Porch

By Heidi Gauder and Zachary Lewis

After a pandemic hiatus, Porch Reads — Roesch Library’s popular book club-style reading and discussion program — has returned. Here, we share how it came together — and the excellent results.

## BOOK SELECTION

- **Zachary:** Selecting the book was a little tricky. We wanted to pick a fun, quick read — but we also wanted it to offer some strong substance for discussion. Heidi suggested we choose a graphic novel, and I loved the idea. I’m a fan of graphic novels and manga, and I saw a lot of potential to incorporate questions about visuals into the discussion. I had read *Through the Woods* before and thought it might appeal to students. We were looking at dates close to Halloween, and I thought a collection of spooky fables with some really evocative art would be perfect.
- **Heidi:** Porch Reads was suspended last year because of the pandemic and because I thought it was time to recalibrate. Porch Reads has been a book discussion program since 2005. In the beginning, we recruited faculty to be discussion leaders and offered free books, free food and a small bookstore credit. Nowadays, we participate in the [AVIATE program](#), and the incentive is PATH credit and the free book. Students need to read the book before meeting, so finding a title that they could easily read in a week — or even a day — remained a challenge. *Through the Woods* turned out to be a fantastic choice — both visually appealing and arresting in its approach to storytelling.

## DISCUSSION

- **Zachary:** This was my first Porch Read, so I wasn’t sure what to expect. I’d facilitated book club discussions before, but working with AVIATE programs is different.

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It worked out better than I ever could have imagined. Every student who attended not only read the book — each one was willing to share their own unique insights with the group. I had prepared a list of discussion questions, but it wasn't necessary — the students took each short story and ran with it, sharing what they liked; what they didn't like; themes and motifs they spotted; and the meaning the themes and motifs might have. I was so impressed with this group. It was one of the best book discussions I've been a part of. I'm really looking forward to doing this again!

- **Heidi:** My experience as a program administrator had included recruiting outside faculty to lead the book discussions. Zachary and I decided to handle the facilitation ourselves, and we knew that if the discussion started to drag, we had an approach that would likely liven things up, as students often express very different perspectives on the same books. However, that plan B was entirely unnecessary; the students, with gentle guidance from Zachary, embraced the discussion and did an amazing job talking about and analyzing the book. It was the best Porch Reads discussion I've been able to witness. At the end of the session, we asked the students to create their own two-sentence horror stories. With their permission, we're providing a few samples.

discovers she has something in common with the iconic humorist.

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## PARTICIPANTS' TWO-SENTENCE HORROR STORIES

- **Zoey Harig** (sophomore, human rights): "It consumed me. And I didn't bother to escape."
- **Ashton Hunt** (junior, English and adolescent/young adult English education): "Footsteps slowly creaked as she approached her parents' bedroom at precisely 3 a.m. Turning the doorknob in what felt like slow motion and gripping the ax, she muttered, 'You can never hurt me again.'"
- **Tori Miller** (junior, English): "I didn't mean to push him

down. My little brother's blood coated the sharp rock and dried like fine red nail polish."

- **Sara Herr** (junior, electrical engineering and mathematics): "The crowd of doctors and nurses stared down at me on the table, faces frozen in fear, completely silent. So who was it that was screaming?"

— *Heidi Gauder is a professor in the University Libraries and coordinator of research and instruction. Zachary Lewis is an assistant professor and the student success librarian.*

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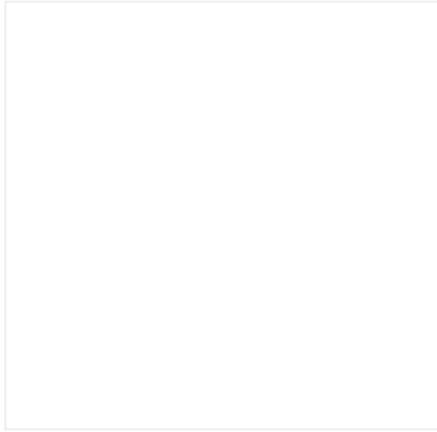
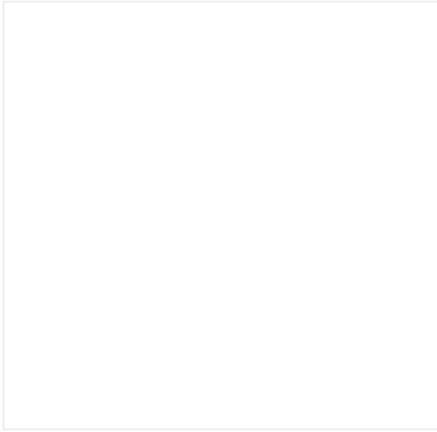
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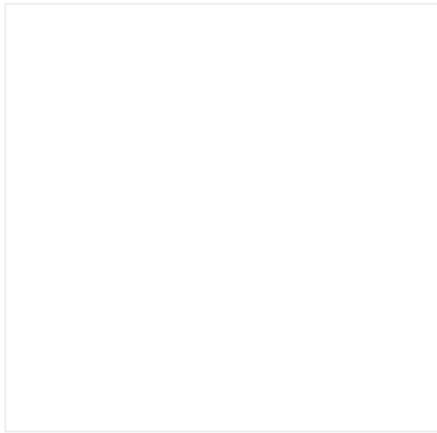
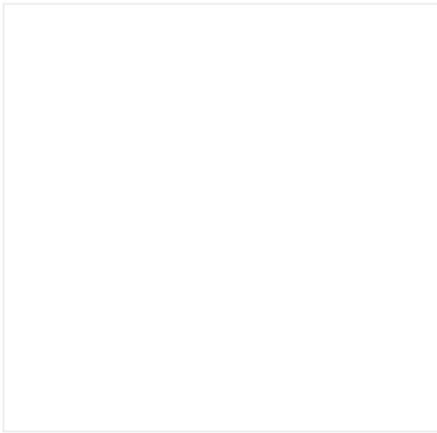


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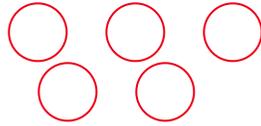
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