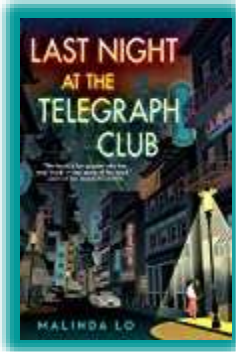


Book Review

Books For Youth - Fiction - Historical Fiction

Last Night at the Telegraph Club

By Malinda Lo.



Jan. 2021. 416p. Dutton, \$17.99 ([9780525555254](#)). Grades 9-12. [REVIEW](#). First published November 1, 2020 (*Booklist*).



For 17-year-old Lily Hu, San Francisco's Chinatown during the 1950s is home to her community and culture. However, despite having friends and loving parents, she

struggles with a sense of belonging. Rather than fixating on boys, like her friends, Lily dreams of working at the Jet Propulsion Lab (where her aunt works) and traveling to Mars. Slowly, Lily realizes that more than her life goals are in play here, as she recognizes that she is attracted to women rather than men. That includes Kath, the other girl in her math class, whose goal is to fly airplanes. After the two connect over an ad for a male impersonator at the Telegraph Club and begin frequenting the establishment, Lily's life changes forever. Fearful of exposing her feelings and of her family being labeled Communists (as a result of the Lavender Scare), Lily is faced with hard decisions about herself and those she loves. Writing beautifully with a knowing, gentle hand that balances Lily's unease and courage, Lo presents a must-read love story in an uncommon setting: the midcentury queer Bay Area at a time when racism, homophobia, and McCarthyism held tight grips on the citizenry. The author's notes are a wealth of historical information and discuss the seed from which this alternately heart-wrenching and satisfying story grew.

— *Jeanne Fredriksen*

Booklist Editors Recommend

Titles similar to *Last Night at the Telegraph Club*

- *Pulp*
- *The Downstairs Girl*
- *Like a Love Story*
- *Someday We Will Fly*