

Book Discussion Kit list Last updated 5/4/2023

ALL THE KING'S MEN – ROBERT PENN WARREN

Winner of the Pulitzer Prize, this classic book is generally regarded as the finest novel ever written on American politics. It describes the career of Willie Stark, a back-country lawyer whose idealism is overcome by his lust for power.

ALL THE LIGHT WE CANNOT SEE – ANTHONY DOERR

A stunningly ambitious and beautiful novel about a blind French girl, Marie-Laure, and a German boy, Werner, whose paths collide in occupied France as both try to survive the devastation of World War II. Deftly interweaving their lives, Doerr illuminates the ways, against all odds, people try to be good to one another.

THE ART OF RACING IN THE RAIN – GARTH STEIN

A heart-wrenching but deeply funny and ultimately uplifting story of family, love, loyalty, and hope—a captivating look at the wonders and absurdities of human life . . . as only a dog could tell it.

BIG LITTLE LIES – LIANE MORIARTY

A murder... A tragic accident... Or just parents behaving badly? What's indisputable is that someone is dead. *Big Little Lies* is a brilliant take on ex-husbands and second wives, mothers and daughters, schoolyard scandal, and the little lies that can turn lethal.

BLUE ASYLUM – KATHY HEPINSTALL

Amid the mayhem of the Civil War, Iris Dunleavy is put on trial by her husband, convicted of madness, and sent to Sanibel Asylum to be restored to a compliant Virginia plantation wife. But her husband is the true criminal; she is no lunatic, only guilty of disagreeing on notions of cruelty and property.

THE BOOK OF FIRES – JANE BORODALE

It is 1752, and seventeen-year-old Agnes Trussel is pregnant with an unwanted child. She flees to London, where she becomes a fireworks maker's apprentice. As she joins him in his quest to make the world's most spectacular fireworks, the clock is ticking on her secret — as well as on her mysterious mentor's own secret plans.

THE BOOK THIEVES – ANDERS RYDELL

By turns fascinating, harrowing, yet ultimately uplifting, this is the story of the Nazis' systematic pillaging of Europe's libraries, and the heroic efforts of the few librarians now working to return the stolen books to their owners in the wake of one of history's most expansive cultural crimes.

CONFEDERATES IN THE ATTIC – TONY HORWITZ

Propelled by his boyhood passion for the Civil War, Horwitz embarks on a search for places and people still held in thrall by America's greatest conflict. The result is an adventure into the soul of the unvanquished South, where the ghosts of the Lost Cause are resurrected through ritual and remembrance.

DEAD WAKE: THE LAST CROSSING OF THE LUSITANIA – ERIK LARSON

On May 1, with WWI entering its tenth month, the luxury ocean liner *Lusitania* made what was to be its last, fateful voyage. The unprecedented attack on a civilian ship, loaded with women and children, shocked the world, and brought additional forces to bear on the original combatants. It is a story that many of us think we know but don't, and Erik Larson tells it thrillingly, switching between hunter and hunted while painting a larger portrait of America at the height of the Progressive Era.

DESTINY OF THE REPUBLIC – CANDICE MILLARD

The extraordinary New York Times bestselling account of James Garfield's rise from poverty to the American presidency, and the dramatic history of his assassination and legacy.

THE DEVIL IN THE WHITE CITY – ERIK LARSON

Erik Larson intertwines the true tale of the 1893 World's Fair and the cunning serial killer who used the fair to lure his victims to their death. Combining meticulous research with nail-biting storytelling, Larson has crafted a narrative with all the wonder of newly discovered history and the thrills of the best fiction.

THE DINNER – HERMAN KOCH

An internationally bestselling phenomenon, the darkly suspenseful, highly controversial tale of two families struggling to make the hardest decision of their lives—all over the course of one meal.

THE DOVEKEEPERS – ALICE HOFFMAN

Nearly two thousand years ago, nine hundred Jews held out for months against armies of Romans on Masada. Based on this tragic event, Hoffman's novel is a spellbinding tale of four extraordinarily bold, resourceful, and sensuous women, each of whom has come to Masada by a different path. All are dove keepers, and all are also keeping secrets—about who they are, where they come from, who fathered them, and whom they love, as their lives intersect in the days of the siege.

THE DROWNING KIND – JENNIFER MCMAHON

Be careful what you wish for... Two stories intertwine around a haunted pool, that supposedly gives life to your wishes. From the woman visiting the pool in the 1920s desperate for a child, to the sister longing for her twin who was taken by suicide, this haunting tale explores what we will do for love.

THE GIRL IN THE BLUE BERET – BOBBIE ANN MASON

Inspired by the wartime experiences of her father-in-law, Bobbie Ann Mason has crafted the haunting and profoundly moving story of an American World War II pilot shot down in Occupied Europe, and his wrenching odyssey of discovery, decades later, as he uncovers the truth about those who helped him escape in 1944.

GONE GIRL – GILLIAN FLYNN

On a warm summer morning in North Carthage, Missouri, it is Nick and Amy Dunne's fifth wedding anniversary. Presents are being wrapped and reservations are being made when Nick's clever and beautiful wife disappears. This is a fast-paced, devilishly dark, and ingeniously plotted thriller.

GRETEL AND THE DARK – ELIZA GRANVILLE

Two intertwining narratives come together to form one exhilarating page read – exploring good and evil, hope and despair. In 1899 Vienna, Josef Breuer encounters his strangest case yet: a mysterious, beautiful woman who claims to be a machine. Years later, in Nazi-controlled Germany, young Krysta finds her world becoming as frightening as any of her fairy tales and relies on the power of her imagination to help her survive.

THE HANDMAID’S TALE – MARGARET ATWOOD

Offred is a Handmaid in the Republic of Gilead, serving in the household of the enigmatic Commander and his bitter wife. She may go out once a day to markets whose signs are now pictures because women are not allowed to read. She must pray the Commander makes her pregnant, for in a time of declining birthrates her value lies in her fertility. Offred can remember a time when her world was very different, a world we all know today.

HIDDEN FIGURES – LEE SHETTERLY

The phenomenal true story of the black female mathematicians at NASA whose calculations helped fuel some of America’s greatest achievements in space.

HOMER & LANGLEY – E.L. DOCTOROW

Homer and Langley Collyer are brothers—the one blind and deeply intuitive, the other damaged into madness, or perhaps greatness, by mustard gas in the Great War. They live as recluses in their once grand Fifth Avenue mansion, scavenging the city streets for things they think they can use, even as the hoarding creates difficulties in their struggle to survive and create meaning to their lives.

HOMER’S ODYSSEY – GWEN COOPER

The adoption of a very special, blind kitten changes Qwen’s life forever, not only opening her world to love in a way she never imagined, but sending her on an adventure with a very challenging, but rewarding pet. From the loneliness of singlehood, through the terror of 9/11 and the discovery of her own partner, Homer the blind cat changes the world for Gwen and many others.

HOTEL ON THE CORNER OF BITTER AND SWEET – JAMIE FORD

The Panama Hotel has been boarded up for decades, but now the new owner has made an incredible discovery: the belongings of Japanese families, left when they were rounded up and sent to internment camps during World War II. The owner’s finding of a parasol sends Henry Lee on a search for a long-lost object whose value he cannot begin to measure.

HOUR OF THE WITCH – CHRIS BOHJALIAN

Boston, 1662. Mary Deerfield is 24 and a faithful, beautiful wife of an abusive husband, who carefully hides his cruelty in front of others. Fearing for her life, she takes a courageous and unprecedented step for a woman in a Puritan colony. She files for divorce. The consequences of this action bring down much more danger than just the anger of her husband.

THE HUNDRED YEAR WALK – DAWN ANAHIS MACKKEEN

Using her grandfather's journals, Dawn MacKeen traces the courageous account of his escape from the Turks during the 1915 Armenian genocide. Their shared story is a testament to family, to home, and to the power of the human spirit to transcend the barriers of religion, ethnicity, and even time itself.

I LET YOU GO – CLARE MACKINTOSH

I Let You Go follows Jenna Gray as she moves to a ramshackle cottage on the remote Welsh coast, trying to escape the memory of the car accident that plays again and again in her mind and desperate to heal from the loss of her child and the rest of her painful past.

THE IMMORTAL LIFE OF HENRIETTA LACKS – REBECCA SKLOOT

Henrietta Lacks, a poor Southern tobacco farmer, was buried in an unmarked grave 60 years ago. Yet her cells – – taken without her knowledge – – became one of the most important tools in medical research, and have been bought and sold by the millions.

IN THE SHADOW OF THE CYPRESS – THOMAS STEINBECK

With superb attention to cultural detail, Steinbeck brings to vivid light the Chinese immigrant experience at turn of the century California, juxtaposing complex ancient rituals against contemporary customs with the grace, passion and authority of a master.

INVISIBLE GIRL – LISA JEWELL

A thriller that explores the hidden lives of families and their observers is a thought-provoking examination of the assumptions we make of the people around us. From the family of seeming perfect parents and children, to the lonely man who become embroiled in in accusations that destroy his life, to the invisible girl who ties them all together, Jewell's twisty tale will keep you guessing.

INVISIBLE: THE FORGOTTEN STORY OF THE BLACK WOMAN LAWYER WHO TOOK DOWN AMERICA'S MOST POWERFUL MOBSTER – STEPHEN L. CARTER

JAWS – PETER BENCHLEY

A quiet, seaside town becomes a place of terror as a huge shark enters its supposedly safe waters and begins killing vacationers. You may know the story from the famous movie, but the novel adds depth and characters as an unlikely band of heroes come together to save their town.

THE KITCHEN BOY – ROBERT ALEXANDER

Drawing from decades of work, travel, and research in Russia, Robert Alexander re-creates the tragic, perennially fascinating story of the final days of Nicholas and Alexandra Romanov as seen through the eyes of their young kitchen boy, Leonka. Now an ancient Russian immigrant, Leonka claims to be the last living witness to the Romanovs' brutal murder. Does he hold the key to the many questions surrounding the family's murder?

THE KITE RUNNER – KHALED HOSSEINI

The unforgettable, heartbreaking story of the unlikely friendship between a wealthy boy and the son of his father's servant, caught in the tragic sweep of history. The Kite Runner transports readers to Afghanistan at a tense and crucial moment of change and destruction.

THE LACUNA – BARBARA KINGSOLVER

In this powerfully imagined, provocative novel, Kingsolver takes us on an epic journey from the Mexico of artists Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo to the America of Pearl Harbor, FDR, and J. Edgar Hoover. This is the poignant story of a man pulled between two nations as well as an unforgettable portrait of the artist—and of art.

THE LAST FLIGHT – JULIE CLARK

Two women. Two flights. One chance for both to disappear.

Clare Cook has what appears to be a perfect life, but behind closed doors she lives in terror of her politically powerful husband and the staff that watch her every move. A chance encounter with a woman named Eva at the airport also desperate to leave her world gives her the opportunity to switch lives. But what does she know of the world she is about to enter? From what was Eva running?

THE LIBRARIAN OF AUSCHWITZ – ANTONIO ITURBE

Yes, there was a “library” of sorts at Auschwitz, a pitiful collection of books in various languages and subjects, sometimes in fragments, that gave the prisoners a glimpse of the world beyond the fence. Guarded carefully, hidden ingeniously by a teenage girl, this tiny representation of freedom gives a different glimpse of the world’s most horrifying place.

THE LITTLE STRANGER – SARAH WATERS

Dr. Faraday, the son of a maid who has built a life of quiet respectability as a country physician, is called to a patient at lonely, crumbling Hundreds Hall, home to the Ayres family for over two centuries. As the Ayres family struggle to keep pace with changing society, Faraday wonders whether they are haunted by something more sinister than a dying way of life?

LONE WOLF – JODI PICOULT

On an icy winter night, a terrible accident forces a family divided to come together and make a fateful decision. With conflicting motivations, emotions, and personal secrets, what will this family decide? And will they be able to live with that decision, after the truth has been revealed.

THE MADONNAS OF LENINGRAD – DEBRA DEAN

An elderly Russian woman now living in America, she cannot hold on to fresh memories, yet her distant past is miraculously preserved in her mind’s eye. Seamlessly moving back and forth in time between the Soviet Union and contemporary America, *The Madonnas of Leningrad* is a searing portrait of war and remembrance, of the power of love, memory and, art to offer beauty, grace and hope in the face of overwhelming despair.

MARY ROSE – GEOFFREY GIRARD

One day, young Mary Rose accompanied her father to a little island to keep him company while he fished. There, on the shore, she suddenly vanished for 33 days, before just as mysteriously returning to the same spot without a scratch. There is something otherworldly about Mary Rose that becomes increasingly strange during her visit home as an adult with her fiancé, who knows there is more to the story. Who is Mary Rose exactly. *What* is Mary Rose?

ME & EMMA – ELIZABETH FLOCK

In many ways, Carrie Parker is like any other eight-year-old—playing make-believe, going to school, dreaming of faraway places. But even in her imagination, she can't pretend away the hardships of her impoverished North Carolina home or protect her younger sister, Emma. But after the sisters' plan to run away from home unravels, Carrie's world takes a shocking turn—and one shattering moment ultimately reveals a truth that leaves everyone reeling.

THE MINIATURIST – JESSIE BURTON

On a brisk autumn day in 1686, 18-year-old Nella Oortman arrives in Amsterdam to begin a new life as the wife of illustrious merchant trader Johannes Brandt, in an unwelcoming household. But Nella's world changes when Johannes presents her with an extraordinary wedding gift: a cabinet-sized replica of their home. To furnish her gift, Nella engages the services of a miniaturist – an elusive and enigmatic artist whose tiny creations mirror their real-life counterparts in eerie and unexpected ways...

MR. GATLING'S TERRIBLE MARVEL – JULIA KELLER

This work documents the machine gun's role in history with a chronicle of how it was used as a key weapon in protecting America's interests overseas. It also profiles the contributions of its inventor, who developed the machine gun in the hopes of reducing military headcount and casualties.

THE MUSEUM OF EXTRA ORDINARY THINGS – ALICE HOFFMAN

Coralie Sardie, the daughter of the sinister impresario behind The Museum of Extraordinary Things, a Coney Island freak show, meets Eddie Cohen, a Russian immigrant, while he's taking pictures. As Eddie becomes embroiled in the mystery behind a young woman's disappearance, he ignites the heart of Coralie. Alice Hoffman weaves her trademark magic, romance, and masterful storytelling to unite Coralie and Eddie in a tender and moving story of young love in tumultuous times.

NEWS OF THE WORLD – PAULETTE JILES

Ex-Confederate officer Captain Jefferson Kyle Kidd makes his living traveling throughout the western territories reading the world's newspapers in public gatherings to the people of these small settlements. Tasked with taking a white girl captured by Kiowa back home to her family, the ex-soldier and the defiant girl must bond together to make their journey safely.

THE NIGHT CIRCUS – ERIN MORGENSTERN

The circus is called Le Cirque des Rêves, and it is only open at night. As two young magicians fiercely compete against one another, they both tumble into love, setting off a domino effect of dangerous consequences, leaving the lives of everyone, from performers to the patrons, hanging in the balance.

THE ORPHAN MASTER'S SON – ADAM JOHNSON

An epic novel and a thrilling literary discovery, *THE ORPHAN MASTER'S SON* follows a young man's journey through the icy water, dark tunnels, and eerie spy chambers of the world's most mysterious dictatorship, North Korea.

A PARCHMENT OF LEAVES – SILAS HOUSE

It is the early 1900s in rural Kentucky, and from the moment Saul Sullivan lays eyes on Vine, a Cherokee, he knows she is meant to be his wife. When Saul leaves Vine behind to work in another county for a year, the wife he leaves behind will never be the same again. The violence that lies ahead for Vine, will not only test her spirit, but also her ability to forgive—both others and herself.

RAIN: A NATURAL AND CULTURAL HISTORY – CYNTHIA BARNETT

Rain is elemental, mysterious, precious, destructive. It is the subject of countless poems and paintings; the top of the weather report; the source of the world's water. Yet this is the first book to tell the story of rain.

THE RED GARDEN – ALICE HOFFMAN

An exquisite prose, Hoffman offers a transforming glimpse of small-town America, presenting more than three hundred years of passion, dark secrets, loyalty, and redemption in a web of tales where characters' lives are intertwined by fate and by their own actions. At the center of everyone's life is a mysterious garden where only red plants can grow, and where the truth can be found by those who dare to look.

RIVER OF DOUBT – CANDICE MILLARD

At once an incredible adventure narrative and a penetrating biographical portrait, *The River of Doubt* is the true story of Theodore Roosevelt's harrowing exploration of one of the most dangerous rivers on earth.

THE SAFE PLACE – ANNA DOWNES

Emily is a mess. She has lost her last temporary job and her apartment in one miserable day, and she is desperate. An apparent windfall save her – the offer to stay on a luxurious, remote French estate and help a wife care for a child. But sometimes, something too good to be true, really is. Superbly tense and oozing with atmosphere, this is the perfect summer suspense novel.

SALT TO THE SEA – RUTA SEPETYS

Winter 1941, in the heart of World War II, four refugees with four unique stories, come together on the road escaping the horrors of war. As thousands desperately flock to the coast in the midst of a Soviet advance, their four paths converge as they attempt to find passage aboard the *Wilhelm Gustoff*, a ship that promises safety and freedom. But not all promises can be kept.

SEABISCUIT: AN AMERICAN LEGEND – LAURA HILLENBRAND

Here is the story of the one of the most famous racehorses of all time with his cast of human characters set against the tumultuous times of 1930s America. As much a story of the jockeys and their challenges as it is about the horse, Hillenbrand brings a lost world to life.

SO COLD THE RIVER – MICHAEL KORYTA

Eric Shaw arrives in Bradford to do a documentary, just in time to be a guest at the town's restored hotel resort. From the start, he begins to experience visions and hallucinations, and discovers that something besides the hotel has been restored – a long-forgotten evil that will stop at nothing to regain its lost glory.

THE STARS ARE FIRE – ANITA SHREVE

An exquisitely suspenseful new novel about an extraordinary young woman tested by a catastrophic event and its devastating aftermath—based on the true story of the largest fire in Maine’s history.

STATION ELEVEN – EMILY ST. JOHN MANDEL

An audacious, darkly glittering novel set in the eerie days of civilization’s collapse, *Station Eleven* tells the spellbinding story of a Hollywood star, his would-be savior, and a nomadic group of actors roaming the scattered outposts of the Great Lakes region, risking everything for art and humanity.

STIFF: THE CURIOUS LIVES OF HUMAN CADAVERS – MARY ROACH

Mary Roach’s books are known for their humanity and their humor, and this fascinating examination of the life of cadaver after animated life is over is fascinating. From fighting crime by donation to the infamous Body Farm, to preparing surgeons for new procedures and protecting the traveling public as crash test victims, death does not mean the end of useful existence.

STUFF MATTERS – MARK MIODOWNNIK

Miodownik entertainingly examines the materials he encounters in a typical morning. This is an eyeopening adventure deep inside the everyday materials that surround us, packed with surprising stories and fascinating science.

THE SWERVE – STEPHEN GREENBLATT

One of the world’s most celebrated scholars, Stephen Greenblatt has crafted both an innovative work of history and a thrilling story of discovery, in which one manuscript, plucked from a thousand years of neglect, changed the course of human thought and made possible the world as we know it.

THE TERROR – DAN SIMMONS

Based on the true story of the last two ships who explore the Northwest passage from Europe to Asia, Dan Simmons combines a haunting historical tale with an Inuit legend in a novel that explores the limits of human endeavor. The *Terror* and the *Erebus* set sail in the 1840s but never returned home. The fate of these two ships is a mystery to this day.

THE THIRTEENTH TALE – DIANE SETTERFIELD

A young book collector and biographer is sent to the home of a famous, reclusive author to collect one, last story – the author’s own. This gothic masterpiece of family secrets switched identities and mystery is wrapped within a novel that celebrates the stories we love.

TRUCK – MICHAEL PERRY

Hilarious and heartfelt, *Truck: A Love Story* is the tale of a man struggling to grow his own garden, fix his old pickup, and resurrect a love life permanently impaired by Neil Diamond. In the process, he sets his hair on fire, is attacked by wild turkeys, and proposes marriage to a woman in New Orleans. The result is a surprisingly tender testament to love.

TULIP FEVER – DEBORAH MOGGACH

In 1630s Amsterdam, tulipomania has seized the populace. But for wealthy merchant, Cornelis Sandvoort, it is his beautiful wife, Sophia, who stirs his soul. He commissions a painting of Sophia, which leads to a grand deception revolving around ambitions, passions, and dreams. As the lies multiply, events move toward a thrilling and tragic climax.

TURN OF MIND – ALICE LAPLANTE

A New York Times bestseller, *Turn of Mind* is a literary thriller about a retired orthopedic surgeon suffering from dementia and accused of killing her best friend. With unmatched patience and a pulsating intensity, Alice LaPlante's debut novel brings us deep into a brilliant woman's deteriorating mind, where the impossibility of recognizing reality can be both a blessing and a curse.

A WALK IN THE WOODS – BILL BRYSON

The Appalachian Trail stretches from Georgia to Maine and covers some of the most breathtaking terrain in America—majestic mountains, silent forests, sparkling lakes. Bryson entertains us with his adventures along the trail as he attempts to walk it in its entirety,

WATER FOR ELEPHANTS – SARA GRUEN

Jacob Jankowski, a ninety something, disillusioned circus veteran, Marlena, the star of the equestrian act in love with the wrong man and Rosie, the circus elephant that can't follow instructions, come together to form a surprising friendship. The bond that grew among this unlikely trio was one of love and trust, and ultimately, it was their only hope for survival. Surprising, poignant, and funny

WHERE THE LOST WANDER – AMY HARMON

The Oregon Trail, 1853. Naomi May never expected to be widowed at twenty, but eager to leave her grief behind she travels with her family for the West. On the trail she makes a connection with John Lowry, a half-Pawnee man struggling to live in two worlds. As tragedy brings them together and tears them apart, both will discover their place in this new world. Thoughtful, evocative, and brilliantly representing both the White and Native worlds, this is a journey you will want to take.

THE WORLD THAT WE KNEW – ALICE HOFFMAN

In Berlin, at the time when the world changed, Hanni Kohn knows she must send her twelve-year-old daughter away to save her from the Nazi regime. Unwilling to send her daughter alone, she enlists the help of a renowned rabbi to create a rare and mystical Jewish creature, a golem, to accompany and protect her child. Their fates are then linked, and their journey begins. This powerful novel explores the lengths we will go to protect those we love.

THE YARD – ALEX GRECIAN

1889, London. Jack the Ripper's reign of terror is finally over, but a new one is just beginning. Walter Day, the newest detective of the "Murder Squad" concludes that the squad is being targeted after the bizarre murder of one of its own. Together with the forensic pathologist, Dr. Bernard Kingsley, they discover that the biggest surprise is the killer's motive