

Book Discussion Kits (Fiction)

[Things Fall Apart](#)

by Chinua Achebe

Achebe's first novel chronicles the life of Okonkwo, the leader of an Igbo (Ibo) community, from the events leading up to his banishment from the community for accidentally killing a clansman, through the seven years of his exile, to his return. The novel addresses the problem of the intrusion in the 1890s of white missionaries and colonial government into tribal Igbo society. It describes the simultaneous disintegration of its protagonist Okonkwo and of his village. The novel was praised for its intelligent and realistic treatment of tribal beliefs and of psychological disintegration coincident with social unraveling.

Approximate number of books in kit: 10

[The Dressmaker](#)

by Kate Alcott

A spirited young maid on board the Titanic captures the attentions of two men including a kindhearted sailor and an enigmatic Chicago millionaire and barely escapes with her life before witnessing media scorn targeting her famous designer mistress.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[Daughter of Fortune](#)

by Isabel Allende

An orphan raised in Valparaiso, Chile, by a Victorian spinster and her rigid brother, Eliza Sommers follows her lover to California during the Gold Rush of 1849 and meets a Chinese herbalist, who becomes her soul mate, on the journey.

Approximate number of books in kit: 11

[Portrait in Sepia](#)

by Isabel Allende

Lacking all memory of the first five years of her life because of a brutal trauma, Aurora del Valle is raised by her regal grandmother Paulina and eventually seeks to confront the mystery of her past.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[Alias Grace](#)

by Margaret Atwood

Based on a sensational trial that made headlines throughout the world, a nineteenth-century housemaid endures life imprisonment for the murders of her employer and mistress, murders she may not have committed, while a doctor tries to help her recover her memories of the past.

Approximate number of books in kit: 10

[The Blind Assassin](#)

by Margaret Atwood

Iris describes the 1945 death of her sister, who drives her car off a bridge, followed, two years later, by the death of her husband, in a story that features a novel-within-a-novel about two unnamed lovers who meet in a dark backstreet room.

Approximate number of books in kit: 11

[Pride and Prejudice](#)

by Jane Austen

Elizabeth Bennett is young, clever and attractive, but her mother is a nightmare and she and her four sisters are in dire need of financial security and escape in the shape of husbands. The arrival of nice Mr. Bingley and arrogant Mr. Darcy in the neighborhood turns all their lives upside down.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[The Sea](#)

by John Banville

Following the death of his wife, Max Morden retreats to the seaside town of his childhood summers, where his own life becomes inextricably entwined with the members of the vacationing Grace family.

Approximate number of books in kit: 7

[The Elegance of the Hedgehog](#)

by Muriel Barbery

The lives of fifty-four-year-old concierge Rene Michel and extremely bright, suicidal twelve-year-old Paloma Josse are transformed by the arrival of a new tenant, Kakuro Ozu.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[The Sense of an Ending](#)

by Julian Barnes

Follows a middle-aged man as he reflects on a past he thought was behind him, until he is presented with a legacy that forces him to reconsider different decisions, and to revise his place in the world.

Approximate number of books in kit: 10

[What We Keep](#)

by Elizabeth Berg

A touching, compassionate novel of childhood and family by the author of Joy School follows one woman on a cross-country journey to see her long-estranged mother, which sparks memories of the summer she turned twelve.

Approximate number of books in kit: 7

[The Sandcastle Girls](#)

by Chris Bohjalian

A historical love story inspired by the author's Armenian heritage finds early 20th-century nurse Elizabeth Endicott arriving in Syria to help deliver food and medical aid to genocide refugees, a volunteer service during which she exchanges letters with an Armenian engineer and widower.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[Tortilla Curtain](#)

by T.C. Boyle

The lives of two very different couples--wealthy Los Angeles liberals Delaney and Kyra Mossbacher, and Candido and America Rincon, a pair of Mexican illegals--suddenly collide, in a story that unfolds from the shifting viewpoints of the various characters.

Approximate number of books in kit: 9

[Moloka'i](#)

by Alan Brennert

Seven-year-old Rachel is forcibly removed from her family's 1890s Honolulu home when she contracts

leprosy and is placed in a settlement, where she loses a series of new friends before new medical discoveries enable her to reenter the world.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[March](#)

by Geraldine Brooks

In a story inspired by the father character in Little Women and drawn from the journals and letters of Louisa May Alcott's father Bronson, a man leaves behind his family to serve in the Civil War and finds his marriage and beliefs profoundly challenged by his experiences

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[Cold Sassy Tree](#)

by Olive Ann Burns

Modern times come to a conservative Southern town in 1906 when the proprietor of the general store elopes with a woman half his age, and worse yet, a Yankee.

Approximate number of books in kit: 7

[Possession](#)

by A.S. Byatt

Roland Michell and Maud Bailey, two rather unfulfilled young literary scholars, unexpectedly become figures of romance as they discover a surprising link between the two poets on whom they are authorities. Byatt deftly plays with literary genres--Romantic quest, campus satire, detective story, myth, fairy tale--as Maud and Roland become deeply involved in the unfolding story of a secret relationship between the Victorian poets Randolph Henry Ash and Christabel LaMotte.

Approximate number of books in kit: 10

[Margot](#)

by Jillian Cantor

In this excellent re-imagining of Anne Frank's sister's experience in post-war America, Margie Franklin, a.k.a. Margot Frank - a young woman working as a secretary at a Jewish law firm in Philadelphia, finds her carefully constructed life falling apart when her sister, Anne Frank, becomes a global icon.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[The Emperor of Ocean Park](#)

by Stephen L. Carter

After the death of his father, the accomplished, flamboyant, and controversial Judge Oliver Garland, his son Talcott, a law professor, must unravel the truth about his father's life, a quest that brings him face to face with old scandals, family secrets, and justice gone wrong.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[The Yiddish Policemen's Union](#)

by Michael Chabon

In a world in which Alaska, rather than Israel, has become the homeland for the Jews following World War II, Detective Meyer Landsman and his half-Tlingit partner Berko investigate the death of a heroin-addled chess prodigy.

Approximate number of books in kit: 9

[Girl with a Pearl Earring](#)

by Tracy Chevalier

A poor seventeenth-century servant girl knows her place in the household of the painter Johannes Vermeer, but when he begins to paint her, nasty whispers and rumors circulate throughout the town.
Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[The Virgin Blue](#)

by Tracy Chevalier

A dark, mysterious tale that weaves the stories of two women in two different centuries into an increasingly complex web-twentieth-century Ella, who dreams in blue when she moves to southwestern France, and sixteenth-century Isabelle, Ella's ancestor, who had been persecuted as a suspected witch.

Approximate number of books in kit: 9

[The Ghost Bride](#)

by Yangsze Choo

When she agrees to become a ghost bride for the wealthy Lim family's son, who recently died under mysterious circumstances, Li Lan must dive into a shadowy parallel world of the Chinese afterlife to find the truth.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[Caramelo](#)

by Sandra Cisneros

During her family's annual car trip from Chicago to Mexico City, Lala Reyes listens to stories about her family, including her grandmother, the descendant of a renowned dynasty of shawl makers, whose magnificent striped shawl has come into Lala's possession.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[Little Bee](#)

by Chris Cleave

A tale of a precarious friendship between an illegal Nigerian refugee and a recent widow from suburban London, a story told from the alternating and disparate perspectives of both women.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[The Alchemist](#)

by Paulo Coelho

An Andalusian shepherd boy named Santiago travels from his homeland in Spain to the Egyptian desert in search of treasure buried in the pyramids. Along the way he meets a Gypsy woman, a man who calls himself king, and an alchemist, all of whom point Santiago in the direction of his quest. What starts out as a journey to find worldly goods turns into a meditation on the treasures found within.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[Disgrace](#)

by J.M. Coetzee

Written with austere clarity, Disgrace explores the downfall of one man and dramatizes with unforgettable, almost unbearable vividness the plight of South Africa—a country caught in the chaotic aftermath of the overthrow of Apartheid.

Approximate number of books in kit: 10

[The Orchardist](#)

by Amanda Coplin

When two feral girls--one of them very pregnant--appear on his homestead, solitary orchardist Talmadge, who carefully tends the grove of fruit trees he has cultivated for nearly half a century, vows to save and protect them.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[Pope Joan](#)

by Donna Woolfolk Cross

Rebelling against medieval strictures forbidding the education of women, young Joan assumes the identity of her murdered brother and is initiated into the monastery of Fulda, where she distinguishes herself as a great Christian scholar before relocating to Rome and becoming a powerful force in religious politics.

Approximate number of books in kit: 11

[Crow Lake](#)

by Mary Dawson

In the rural farm country of northern Ontario, the lives of members of two families--the farming Pye family and the Morrisons, zoologist Kate Morrison and her three brothers--are brought together and torn apart by misunderstanding, resentment, family love, and tragedy.

Approximate number of books in kit: 10

[Sarah's Key](#)

by Tatiana de Rosnay

On the anniversary of the roundup of Jews by the French police in Paris, Julia is asked to write an article on this dark episode and embarks on an investigation that leads her to long-hidden family secrets and to the ordeal of Sarah.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[Good Harbor](#)

by Anita Diamant

Follows the growing friendship between fifty-nine-year-old Kathleen, recently diagnosed with breast cancer, and the slightly younger Joyce, increasingly distant from her teenage daughter and struggling to write a second novel.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[The Red Tent](#)

by Anita Diamant

The story of Dinah, a tragic character from the Bible whose great love, a prince, is killed by her brother, leaving her alone and pregnant. The novel traces her life from childhood to death, in the process examining sexual and religious practices of the day, and what it meant to be a woman.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao](#)

by Junot Diaz

Living with an Old World mother and rebellious sister, an urban New Jersey misfit dreams of becoming the next J.R.R. Tolkien and believes that a longstanding family curse is thwarting his efforts to find love and happiness.

Approximate number of books in kit: 9

[The Language of Flowers](#)

by Vanessa Diffenbaugh

Discovering the symbolic meanings of flowers while languishing in the foster-care system, eighteen-year-old Victoria is hired by a florist when her talent for helping others is discovered, a situation that leads her to confront a painful secret from her past.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[The Mistress of Spices](#)

by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni

Tilo, an Indian clairvoyant, becomes queen of the pirates who kidnapped her for her powers, and she gains immortality and the skills of a mistress of spices, which she uses to help mortals before falling in love with Raven.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[A Northern Light](#)

by Jennifer Donnelly

In 1906, sixteen-year-old Mattie, determined to attend college and be a writer against the wishes of her father and fiancé, takes a job at a summer inn where she discovers the truth about the death of a guest.

Approximate number of books in kit: 7

[The Cartographer of No Man's Land](#)

by P. S. Duffy

A Nova Scotian pacifist, assured a job as a cartographer in London, joins the war effort in 1916 in search of his beloved missing brother-in-law, leaving his son to fend for himself in their grieving fishing village.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[Justine](#)

by Lawrence Durrell

The Egyptian city of Alexandria once boasted the world's greatest library, home to scholars dedicated solely to the pursuit of knowledge. But on the eve of World War II, the obsessed characters in this mesmerizing novel find that their pursuits lead only to bedrooms in which each seeks to know-and possess-the other.

Approximate number of books in kit: 10

[The Girl Who Fell From the Sky](#)

by Heidi W. Durrow

After a family tragedy orphans her, Rachel, the daughter of a Danish mother and a black G.I., moves into her grandmother's mostly black community in the 1980s, where she must swallow her grief and confront her identity as a biracial woman in a world that wants to see her as either black or white.

Approximate number of books in kit: 10

[The Garden of Evening Mists](#)

by Tan Twan Eng

Seeking solace in the Malaysian plantations of her childhood after grueling World War II experiences, criminal prosecutor Yun Ling Teoh discovers a Japanese garden and its enigmatic tender, an exiled Japanese royal gardener who reluctantly accepts her as an apprentice. By the author of *The Gift of Rain*.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[Peace Like a River](#)

by Leif Enger

Set in 1950s rural Minnesota, Enger weaves spirituality into this coming-of-age quest novel. The family's search for one of its sons is at once a heroic quest, a tragedy, a love story, and a haunting meditation on the possibility of magic in the everyday world.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[Love Medicine](#)

by Louise Erdrich

The lives and destinies of the Kashpaw and the Lamartine families intertwine on and around a North Dakota Indian reservation from 1934 to 1984, in a tale of survival, tenacity, tradition, injustice, and love.

Approximate number of books in kit: 8

[The Round House](#)

by Louise Erdrich

When his mother, a tribal enrollment specialist living on a reservation in North Dakota, slips into an abyss of depression after being brutally attacked, 14-year-old Joe Coutz sets out with his three friends to find the person that destroyed his family.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[Middlesex](#)

by Jeffrey Eugenides

A young girl discovers she's actually a hermaphrodite in her teen years. This is a story of her family's history beginning with their escape from Greece as well as her own experiences growing up in Detroit in the 1960's.

Approximate number of books in kit: 11

[One Thousand White Women: The Journals of May Dodd](#)

by Jim Fergus

A vivid portrait of the American West follows May Dodd as she leaves the East Coast asylum to which she had been committed by her high-society family, heads west, and, with the help of a government program, ends up marrying a chief of the Cheyenne nation.

Approximate number of books in kit: 10

[Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Cafe](#)

by Fannie Flagg

Cleo Threadgood, 86, shares a lifetime of memories of Whistle Stop, Alabama, where the social scene centered on its one cafe with Evelyn Couch, a younger woman who is looking for meaning in her life.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[Everything is Illuminated](#)

by Jonathan Safran Foer

Follows a young writer as he travels to the farmlands of Eastern Europe, where he embarks on a quest to find Augustine, the woman who saved his grandfather from the Nazis, and, guided by his young Ukrainian translator, he discovers an unexpected past that will resonate far into the future.

Approximate number of books in kit: 8

[Hotel on the Corner of Bitter and Sweet](#)

by Jamie Ford

When artifacts from Japanese families sent to internment camps during World War II are uncovered in Seattle, Henry Lee embarks on a quest that leads to memories of growing up Chinese in a city rife with anti-Japanese sentiment.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[The Corrections](#)

by Jonathan Franzen

What appears as a typical Midwestern family is anything but, as preparations are made for an ideal family holiday. Alfred, the father is losing his fight to control Parkinson's disease and dementia. His wife, Enid is no longer in control of her household and feels her choices slipping away. Their three grown children are struggling with their own lives. But for this Christmas, Enid is determined to bring them together for the perfect family holiday.

Approximate number of books in kit: 10

[Cold Mountain](#)

by Charles Frazier

Inman, a wounded Confederate soldier, walks away from the ravages of the Civil War back home to Ada, his prewar sweetheart. Inman's odyssey through the devastated landscape of the soon-to-be-defeated South interweaves with Ada's struggle to revive her father's farm.

Approximate number of books in kit: 11

[A Virtuous Woman](#)

by Kaye Gibbons

She was the 20 year-old daughter of Carolina gentry. He was a 40 year-old skinny tenant farmer. They didn't fall in love so much as they simply found each other and held on for dear life.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[The Three Junes](#)

by Julia Glass

Reveals the interconnected lives, loves, and relationships of different generations of the McLeod family over the course of three crucial summers.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[Evensong](#)

by Gail Godwin

Narrates the life of a young female Episcopal priest in High Balsam, a small, economically distressed Smoky Mountain town, which is shaken up by the arrival of three strangers

Approximate number of books in kit: 7

[The Lake of Dead Languages](#)

by Carol Goodman

Returning to the Heart Lake School for Girls as a Latin teacher to start a new life with her daughter, Jane is haunted by past tragedy and terrifying memories when she begins receiving menacing messages.

Approximate number of books in kit: 10

[The Cookbook Collector](#)

by Allegra Goodman

While executive Emily questions her choices about her career and a long-distance relationship with a successful man, her environmental activist sister, Jessamine, struggles with her own doubts about her beliefs and love affair.

Approximate number of books in kit: 7

[Reliable Wife](#)

by Robert Goolrick

Ralph Truitt, a wealthy businessman with a troubled past who lives in a remote nineteenth-century Wisconsin town, has advertised for a reliable wife; and his ad is answered by Catherine Land, a woman who makes every effort to hide her own dark secrets.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time](#)

by Mark Haddon

Despite his overwhelming fear of interacting with people, Christopher, a mathematically-gifted, autistic fifteen-year-old boy, decides to investigate the murder of a neighbor's dog and uncovers secret information about his mother.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[Mrs. Kimble](#)

by Jennifer Haigh

Follows twenty-five years in the life of Ken Kimble as seen through the eyes of his three wives, from Birdie, who struggles with his abandonment; to heiress Joan, who is recovering from a personal loss; to Dinah, who suffers from an unhappy past.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[Chocolat](#)

by Joanne Harris

When the beautiful and mysterious Vianne moves to Lansquenet and opens a chocolate shop across from the church, the inhabitants of the tiny village find themselves torn between the solemn law of religion and the joyful rewards of Vianne's confections.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[Plainsong](#)

by Kent Haruf

An unlikely extended family is formed when a high school teacher helps a pregnant student make a home with two elderly bachelor ranchers.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[Stones from the River](#)

by Ursula Hegi

Spanning both World Wars, this novel is narrated by dwarf Trudi Montag, the town gossip, historian and librarian, who chronicles the lives of the ordinary residents inhabiting small rural town in Germany and the growing impact of the Nazi regime on their lives.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[Into The Forest](#)

by Jean Hegland

A delicately wrought modern fable about values, both of individual and of society, tells the moving story of two sisters struggling to survive while too much technology and information overwhelms the world around them.

Approximate number of books in kit: 8

[Catch-22](#)

by Joseph Heller

Presents the contemporary classic depicting the struggles of a United States airman attempting to survive the lunacy and depravity of a World War II airbase.

Approximate number of books in kit: 8

[Loving Frank](#)

by Nancy Horan

Fact and fiction blend in a historical novel that chronicles the relationship between seminal architect Frank Lloyd Wright and Mamah Cheney, from their meeting, when they were each married to another, to the clandestine affair that shocked Chicago society.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[How to Be Good](#)

by Nick Hornby

Katie, a liberal, urban mother and doctor from North London, finds her life turned upside down when her husband, David, undergoes an outrageous spiritual transformation, in a hilarious novel about marriage, parenthood, religion, and morality.

Approximate number of books in kit: 11

[The Kite Runner](#)

by Khaled Hosseini

Story of the friendship between two boys growing up in Kabul during the final days of the monarchy. When Amir is forced to flee with his prominent and wealthy father for a new life in California, he leaves behind Hassan, the son of his father's servant. Amir cannot, however, leave the memory of Hassan behind him.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[Their Eyes Were Watching God](#)

by Zora Neal Hurston

Meet the unforgettable Janie Crawford, an articulate black woman in the 1930s. This story traces Janie's quest for identity, through three marriages, on a journey to her roots.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[When We Were Orphans](#)

by Kazuo Ishiguro

Christopher Banks, an English boy born in early 20th century Shanghai, is orphaned at age nine when both his parents disappear under suspicious circumstances. He grows up to become a renowned detective, and more than 20 years later, returns to Shanghai to solve the mystery of the disappearance.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[The Snow Child](#)

by Eowyn Ivey

A childless couple working a farm in the brutal landscape of 1920 Alaska discover a little girl living in the wilderness, with a red fox as a companion, and begin to love the strange, almost-supernatural child as their own.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[Ahab's Wife](#)

by Sena Jeter Naslund

Seeking adventure, Una Spenser runs away, masquerades as a boy, and joins a whaling ship which begins a life for her of adventure and trials which enables Una to grow into a strong and intelligent woman.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[Enemy Women](#)

by Paulette Jiles

An unforgettable story of family, love, and war follows Adair, the daughter of modest farmers in the Missouri Ozarks who is wrongly accused of "enemy collaboration" by the Union militia, as she falls in love with her interrogator, a Union major who orchestrates her escape, and embarks on a perilous journey to find her family.

Approximate number of books in kit: 9

[Waiting](#)

by Ha Jin

An ambitious and dedicated Chinese doctor, Lin Kong finds himself torn between two very different women--the educated and dynamic nurse with whom he has fallen in love and the traditional, meek, and humble woman to whom his family married him when they were both very young.

Approximate number of books in kit: 11

[The Orphan Master's Son](#)

by Adam Johnson

The son of a singer mother whose career forcibly separated her from her family and an influential father who runs an orphan work camp, Pak Jun Do rises to prominence using instinctive talents and eventually becomes a professional kidnapper and romantic rival to Kim Jong Il. By the author of Parasites Like Us.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[The Known World](#)

by Edward P. Jones

When a plantation proprietor and former slave--now possessing slaves of his own--dies, his household falls apart in the wake of a slave rebellion and corrupt underpaid patrolers who enable free black people to be sold into slavery.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry](#)

by Rachel Joyce

Harold Fry is convinced that he must deliver a letter to an old love in order to save her, meeting various characters along the way and reminiscing about the events of his past and people he has known, as he tries to find peace and acceptance.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[Broken For You](#)

by Stephanie Kallos

Two very different women, each with her own dark secrets--wealthy, reclusive septuagenarian Margaret Hughes, living alone with her vast collection of priceless antiques, and Wanda Schultz, a brokenhearted young woman in search of her wayward boyfriend--find new meaning and redemption in their growing friendship with each other.

Approximate number of books in kit: 11

[The Secret Life of Bees](#)

by Sue Monk Kidd

When Lily's "stand-in mother" insults the racists in town, Lily knows it's time to leave. They end up being taken in by a trio of black beekeeping sisters who lead her to the single thing her heart longs for most.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[The Bean Trees](#)

by Barbara Kingsolver

Taylor Greer hits the road wanting only to get as far away from Kentucky as possible, ending up in Arizona with a 3-year-old Cherokee girl she has inherited from a woman in a bar.

Approximate number of books in kit: 10

[The Poisonwood Bible](#)

by Barbara Kingsolver

A fanatical evangelical Baptist preacher takes his wife and four daughters to the Belgian Congo, where the family's fate intersects with that of the newly independent war-torn country.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[The Prodigal Summer](#)

by Barbara Kingsolver

Three stories of human love are woven together within a larger tapestry of lives amid the mountains and farms of southern Appalachia. Over the course of one humid summer, this novel's intriguing protagonists face disparate predicaments but find connections to one another and to the flora and fauna with which they necessarily share a place.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[The Lacuna](#)

by Barbara Kingsolver

Harrison William Shepherd, a highly observant writer, is caught between two worlds--in Mexico, working for communists Diego Rivera, Frida Kahlo, and Leon Trotsky, and later in America, where he is caught up in the patriotism of World War II.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[History of Love](#)

by Nicole Krauss

Sixty years after a book's publication, its author remembers his lost love and missing son, while a teenage girl named for one of the book's characters seeks her namesake, as well as a cure for her widowed mother's loneliness.

Approximate number of books in kit: 8

[Girl In Translation](#)

by Jean Kwok

Emigrating with her mother from Hong Kong to Brooklyn, Kimberly begins a double life as a schoolgirl by day and sweatshop worker at night, an existence also marked by her first crush and the pressure to save her family from poverty.

Approximate number of books in kit: 7

[Interpreter of Maladies](#)

by Jhumpa Lahiri

A debut collection of short fiction blends elements of Indian traditions with the complexities of American culture in such tales as "A Temporary Matter," in which a young Indian-American couple confronts their grief over the loss of a child, while their Boston neighborhood copes with a nightly blackout.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[Blue Shoe](#)

by Anne Lamott

When she stumbles upon a small rubber blue shoe left behind in her deceased father's car, Mattie Ryder, a recently divorced mother of two young children struggles to uncover the truth about her dysfunctional upbringing. In the process, she finds the foundation for a new relationship with her mother and the potential for a new life.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[The Girls](#)

by Lori Lansens

At the approach of her thirtieth birthday, Rose Darlen attempts to pen her autobiography while remembering the joys and challenges of her life with her conjoined twin sister, Ruby.

Approximate number of books in kit: 11

[Turn of Mind](#)

by Alice LaPlante

Implicated in the murder of her best friend, Jennifer White, a brilliant retired surgeon with dementia, struggles with fractured memories of their complex relationship and wonders if she actually committed the crime.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[Astor Place Vintage](#)

by Stephanie Lehmann

Amanda Rosenbloom, owner of a struggling vintage clothing shop, finds the journal of a woman who lived in New York one hundred years ago and discovers a secret that inspires her to stop living in the past and take control of her future.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[Motherless Brooklyn](#)

by Jonathan Lethem

Lionel Essrog has always respected Frank Minna, who helped him out when he was young, and when Frank is found dead, Lionel and his friends, the Minna Men, scour the streets of Brooklyn in search of the killer.

Approximate number of books in kit: 8

[Garden of Stones](#)

by Sophie Littlefield

After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Lucy Takeda and her mother, Miyako, are rounded up and taken to the Manzanar prison camp where they endure abuse and harsh living conditions until Miyako makes the ultimate sacrifice.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[One Hundred Years of Solitude](#)

by Gabriel Garcia Marquez

The story of the Buendia family, set against the background of the evolution and eventual decadence of a small South American town.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[Love in the Time of Cholera](#)

by Gabriel Garcia Marquez

Set on the Caribbean coast of South America, this love story brings together Fermina Daza, her distinguished husband, and a man who has secretly loved her for more than fifty years.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[The Life of Pi](#)

by Yann Martel

Possessing encyclopedia-like intelligence, unusual zookeeper's son Pi Patel sets sail for America, but when the ship sinks, he escapes on a life boat and is lost at sea with a dwindling number of animals until only he and a hungry Bengal tiger remain.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[Let the Great World Spin](#)

by Colum McCann

In 1974 Manhattan, a radical young Irish monk struggles with personal demons while making his home among Bronx prostitutes, a group of mothers shares grief over their lost Vietnam soldier sons, and a young grandmother attempts to prove her worth.

Approximate number of books in kit: 8

[All the Pretty Horses](#)

by Cormac McCarthy

John Grady Cole, 16, leaves Texas for Mexico in 1950 and becomes an essential vaquero in a hacienda's program.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[The Heart is a Lonely Hunter](#)

by Carson McCullers

In a small Georgia mill town during the depression, four misfits form a group that revolves around a deaf-mute whose sole companion has been sent to an insane asylum.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[Thousand Pieces of Gold](#)

by Ruthanne Lum McCunn

Lalu Nathoy's father called his thirteen-year-old daughter his treasure, his "thousand pieces of gold," yet when famine strikes northern China in 1871, he is forced to sell her. Polly, as Lulu is later called, is sold to a brothel, sold again to a slave merchant bound for America, auctioned to a saloonkeeper, and offered as a prize in a poker game. This biographical novel is the extraordinary story of one woman's fight for independence and dignity in the American West.

Approximate number of books in kit: 7

[Atonement](#)

by Ian McEwan

In a crumbling English mansion in 1935, young Briony tells a lie that sends a man to jail. Five years later, a soldier retreats during World War II. These story threads come together in the book's surprising conclusion.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[The Paris Wife](#)

by Paula McLain

Follows the life of Ernest Hemingway's first wife, Hadley, as she navigates 1920s Paris.

Approximate number of books in kit: 11

[While I Was Gone](#)

by Sue Miller

When an old housemate settles in her small town, the fabric of Jo's life begins to unravel: seduced again by the enticing possibility of another self and another life, she begins a dangerous flirtation that returns her to the darkest moment of her past and imperils all she loves.

Approximate number of books in kit: 9

[The World Below](#)

by Sue Miller

After being diagnosed at nineteen with tuberculosis in 1919, a young woman is sent to a sanitarium, where she rediscovers the pleasures of unfettered youth and falls in love with a doomed man, in a novel that follows the lives of two women of two very different generations.

Approximate number of books in kit: 7

[The Thousand Autumns Of Jacob De Zoet](#)

by David Mitchell

Dispatched to the influential Japanese port of Dejima in 1799, ambitious clerk Jacob de Zoet resolves to earn enough money to deserve his wealthy fiancée, an effort that is challenged by his relationship with the midwife daughter of a samurai.

Approximate number of books in kit: 7

[A Gate at the Stairs](#)

by Lorrie Moore

In the Midwest just after the September 11 attacks, twenty-year-old Tassie Keltjin comes of age amid such challenges as racism, the War on Terror, and cruelty in the name of love, as she leaves her family's farm to attend college and takes a part-time job as a nanny.

Approximate number of books in kit: 8

[Gap Creek](#)

by Robert Morgan

Set in South Carolina in the early part of the twentieth century, this novel is a compassionate tale of poverty-stricken lives in Appalachia, centered around Julie Harmon who carries on with the farm after her father and brother die.

Approximate number of books in kit: 11

[The Bluest Eye](#)

by Toni Morrison

Eleven-year-old Pecola Breedlove, an African-American girl in an America whose love for blonde, blue-eyed children can devastate all others, prays for her eyes to turn blue, so that she will be beautiful, people will notice her, and her world will be different.

Approximate number of books in kit: 11

[Home](#)

by Toni Morrison

Presents the story of embittered Korean War veteran Frank Money, who struggles against trauma and racism to rescue his medically abused sister and work through identity-shattering memories.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[Netherland](#)

by Joseph O'Neill

Abandoned amid the offbeat inhabitants of the Chelsea Hotel when his English wife and son return to London following September 11th, Hans, a banker originally from the Netherlands, struggles to find himself in his adopted country.

Approximate number of books in kit: 11

[The Tiger's Wife](#)

by Tea Obreht

Struggling to understand why her beloved grandfather left his family to die alone in a field hospital far from home, a young doctor in a war-torn Balkan country takes over her grandfather's search for a mythical ageless vagabond while referring to a worn copy of Rudyard Kipling's "The Jungle Book."

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[Anil's Ghost](#)

by Michael Ondaatje

In the bloody sectarian upheaval that ripped Sri Lanka apart in the 1980s and '90s, the enemy is difficult to identify. The protagonist, Anil Tissera, a native Sri Lankan, left her homeland at 18 and returns to it 15 years later only as part of an international human rights fact-finding mission.

Approximate number of books in kit: 11

[When the Emperor Was Divine](#)

by Julie Otsuka

A story told from five different points of view chronicles the experiences of Japanese Americans caught up in the nightmare of the World War II internment camps.

Approximate number of books in kit: 8

[The Buddha in the Attic](#)

by Julie Otsuka

Presents the stories of six Japanese mail-order brides whose new lives in early twentieth-century San Francisco are marked by backbreaking migrant work, cultural struggles, children who reject their

heritage, and the prospect of wartime internment.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[My Name is Red](#)

by Orhan Pamuk

In sixteenth-century Istanbul, a furor erupts when the Sultan hires a group of artists to illuminate a great book in the European style at a time in which all figurative art is considered Islamic heresy, but the situation becomes worse when one of the miniaturists vanishes.

Approximate number of books in kit: 11

[Snow](#)

by Orhan Pamuk

Losing touch with his creative nature by years of lonely political exile, Turkish poet Ka returns to Istanbul to attend his mother's funeral and learns about a series of suicides among pious girls forbidden to wear headscarves, a story that brings him face-to-face with militant Islam, a new romance, and his own atheism.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[Bel Canto](#)

by Ann Patchett

In the Vice President's house in an unnamed South American country, what begins as an elegant dinner party turns into a kidnapping that goes awry when the President the terrorists are intent on capturing misses the dinner. When the government refuses to give in to their demands, the hostage situation continues for a number of weeks during which a pleasant domesticity, enlivened by opera singing, begins to blur the lines between captive and captor.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[State of Wonder](#)

by Ann Patchett

A researcher at a pharmaceutical company, Marina Singh must step out of her comfort zone when she is sent into the heart of the Amazonian delta to check on a field team that has been silent for two years--a dangerous assignment that forces Marina to confront the ghosts of her past.

Approximate number of books in kit: 10

[The Tenderness of Wolves](#)

by Stef Penney

When her teenage son disappears in the aftermath of a brutal murder, a determined mother sets out from her snow-covered nineteenth-century settlement to find him, an effort that is hampered by vigilante groups and the harrowing forces of nature.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[Out Stealing Horses](#)

by Per Petterson

After a meeting with his only neighbor, sixty-seven-year-old Trond is forced to reflect upon a long-ago incident that marks the beginning of a series of losses for Trond and his childhood friend, Jon.

Approximate number of books in kit: 10

[Still Life With Bread Crumbs](#)

by Anna Quindlen

Abandoning her expensive world to move to a small country cabin, a once world-famous photographer bonds with a local man and begins to see the world around her in new, deeper dimensions while evaluating second chances at love, career and self-understanding.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[Tell the Wolves I'm Home](#)

by Carol Rifka Brunt

Her world upended by the death of a beloved artist uncle who was the only person who understood her, fourteen-year-old June is mailed a teapot by her uncle's grieving friend, with whom June forges a poignant relationship.

Approximate number of books in kit: 10

[Housekeeping](#)

by Marilynne Robinson

Ruth, a young girl struggling to overcome haunting family memories in a town which will not let her forget, gradually grows close to Sylvie, the sister of her dead mother.

Approximate number of books in kit: 9

[The True and Outstanding Adventures of the Hunt Sisters](#)

by Elisabeth Robinson

Unemployed actress Olivia Hunt leaves Hollywood to return home at the request of her younger sister, Madeleine, and finds herself struggling to help her sister, keep her parents under control, and reconnect with an old boyfriend.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[The God of Small Things](#)

by Arundhati Roy

This Booker Prize-winning novel, praised for its "extraordinary linguistic inventiveness," is set in India in the late 1960s, as young twins grapple with complex family relationships and emotions following a tragedy.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[The Catcher in the Rye](#)

by J.D. Salinger

In an effort to escape the hypocrisies of life at his boarding school, sixteen-year-old Holden Caulfield seeks refuge in New York City.

Approximate number of books in kit: 9

[Shanghai Girls](#)

by Lisa See

Forced to leave Shanghai when their father sells them to California suitors, sisters May and Pearl struggle to adapt to life in 1930s Los Angeles while still bound to old customs, as they face discrimination and confront a life-altering secret.

Approximate number of books in kit: 10

[Peony In Love](#)

by Lisa See

In seventeenth-century China, three women become emotionally involved with The Peony Pavilion, a famed opera rumored to cause lovesickness and even death, including Peony, the cloistered daughter

of a wealthy scholar, who succumbs to its spell only to return after her death as a "hungry ghost" to haunt her former fiance, who has married another.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[Dreams of Joy](#)

by Lisa See

A continuation of "Shanghai Girls" finds a devastated Joy fleeing to China to search for her real father while her mother, Pearl, desperately pursues her, a dual quest marked by their encounters with the nation's intolerant Communist culture.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[The Thirteenth Tale](#)

by Diane Setterfield

Having spent sixty years creating a series of alternate identities for herself, enigmatic Vida Winter pens a painful letter to young Margaret Lea when the latter begs her to disclose the truth about her secretive birth.

Approximate number of books in kit: 11

[The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society](#)

by Mary Ann Shaffer

In January 1946 writer Juliet Ashton receives a letter from a stranger, a founding member of the Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society. And so begins a remarkable tale of the island of Guernsey during the German occupation, and of a society as extraordinary as its name.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[The Stone Diaries](#)

by Carol Shields

In this Pulitzer Prize winning book, Daisy Goodwill attempts to understand her place in the world as she nears the end of her life. She narrates her own biography, from her birth in Manitoba in 1905 when she loses her mother to childbirth, through her college years, her marriages and her work as a newspaper columnist.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[Sea Glass](#)

by Anita Shreve

When Honora and Sexton Beecher are rendered penniless by the crash of the stock market, Sexton is forced to work in a nearby mill that is plagued by violence, and as they try to reconstruct their lives, they are confronted by passions of every kind.

Approximate number of books in kit: 6

[The Weight of Water](#)

by Anita Shreve

A double narrative set on and around an island off the coast of New Hampshire. A vacationing woman investigates the house and environs where a murder took place more than 100 years ago.

Approximate number of books in kit: 7

[We Need to Talk About Kevin](#)

by Lionel Shriver

Eva Khatchadourian writes to her estranged husband Frank, trying to solve what went wrong in raising

their son Kevin after he kills seven classmates and a teacher in his high school in upstate New York.
Approximate number of books in kit: 10

[Balzac and the Little Chinese Seamstress](#)

by Dai Sijie

Two boys are sent to the countryside to be re-educated in this fable set during China's Cultural Revolution. They discover hope through forbidden western literature, but find hope can be cruel and corrupting.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[Major Pettigrew's Last Stand](#)

by Helen Simonson

Forced to confront the realities of life in the 21st century when he falls in love with widowed Pakistani descendant Mrs. Ali, a retired Major Pettigrew finds the relationship challenged by local prejudices that view Mrs. Ali, a Cambridge native, as a perpetual foreigner.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[I Capture the Castle](#)

by Dodie Smith

In a classic English story, Cassandra Mortmain chronicles in her diary what happens to her eccentric family when a young American man inherits the local estate. The bittersweet love story that ensues is far more complicated than she ever imagines.

Approximate number of books in kit: 10

[A Tree Grows in Brooklyn](#)

by Betty Smith

Armed with her idealism and determination, young Francie Nolan struggles to escape from the poverty of life in a Brooklyn tenement during the early 1900s.

Approximate number of books in kit: 11

[White Teeth](#)

by Zadie Smith

Set in post-war London, this novel of the racial, political, and social upheaval of the last half-century follows two families--the Joneses and the Iqbals, both outsiders from within the former British empire--as they make their way in modern England.

Approximate number of books in kit: 11

[Last Girls](#)

by Lee Smith

Thirty-five years after a trip down the Mississippi on a raft with their classmates, four women are reunited to cruise the river once again where they plan to release the ashes of a fellow rafter, Margaret "Baby" Ballou.

Approximate number of books in kit: 8

[The Art of Racing in the Rain](#)

by Garth Stein

Nearing the end of his life, Enzo, a dog with a philosopher's soul, tries to bring together the family, pulled apart by a three year custody battle between daughter Zoe's maternal grandparents and her father Denny, a race car driver.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[How Evan Broke His Head and Other Secrets : a novel](#)

by Garth Stein

When his son's mother dies and leaves him a single parent to Dean, a fourteen-year-old boy he has never met, Evan Wallace is forced to confront his music career and his epilepsy.

Approximate number of books in kit: 10

[East of Eden](#)

by John Steinbeck

The biblical account of Cain and Abel is echoed in the history of two generations of the Trask family in California.

Approximate number of books in kit: 7

[The Grapes of Wrath](#)

by John Steinbeck

Depicts the hardships and suffering endured by the Joads as they journey from Oklahoma to California during the Depression.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[The Help](#)

by Kathryn Stockett

Limited and persecuted by racial divides in 1962 Jackson, Mississippi, three women, including an African-American maid, her sassy and chronically unemployed friend, and a recently graduated white woman, team up for a clandestine project.

Approximate number of books in kit: 10

[Olive Kitteridge](#)

by Elizabeth Strout

The world of Olive Kitteridge, a retired school teacher in a small coastal town in Maine, is revealed in stories that explore her diverse roles in many lives, including a lounge singer haunted by a past love, her stoic husband, and her own resentful son.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[Cane River](#)

by Lalita Tademy

Follows four generations of African American women from slavery to the early twentieth century as they struggle for economic security and the future of their families along the Cane River in rural Louisiana.

Approximate number of books in kit: 9

[The Bonesetter's Daughter](#)

by Amy Tan

When Ruth Young comes across a stack of letters in Chinese calligraphy written by her ailing mother, she discovers the truth about her mother's life as the daughter of the famous bonesetter in the village of Xian Xin, China.

Approximate number of books in kit: 11

[The Secret History](#)

by Donna Tartt

A transfer student from a small town in California, Richard Papen is determined to affect the ways of his Hampden College peers, and he begins his intense studies under the tutelage of eccentric Julian Morrow.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[The Good Thief](#)

by Hannah Tinti

Growing up in a New England orphanage unaware of his family and how he lost his left hand as an infant, twelve-year-old Ren is terrified of the future until a young man shows up claiming to be his long-lost brother.

Approximate number of books in kit: 9

[The Fellowship of the Ring](#)

by J.R.R. Tolkien

In ancient times the Rings of Power were crafted by the Elven-smiths, and Sauron, the Dark Lord, forged the One Ring, filling it with his own power so that he could rule all others. But the One Ring was taken from him, and though he sought it throughout Middle-earth, it remained lost to him. After many ages it fell into the hands of Bilbo Baggins, as told in THE HOBBIT. In a sleepy village in the Shire, young Frodo Baggins finds himself faced with an immense task, as his elderly cousin Bilbo entrusts the Ring to his care. Frodo must leave his home and make a perilous journey across Middle-earth to the Cracks of Doom, there to destroy the Ring and foil the Dark Lord in his evil purpose.

Approximate number of books in kit: 10

[The Two Towers](#)

by J.R.R. Tolkien

Recounts the deeds of the individual members of the Fellowship of the Ring after being divided by an attack of the orc-soldiers, following Frodo and his servant Samwise on their continuing quest to destroy the Ring of Power in the Mountain of Fire.

Approximate number of books in kit: 10

[Anna Karenina](#)

by Leo Tolstoy

This classic novel tells of the doomed love affair between the sensuous and rebellious Anna and the dashing officer, Count Vronsky. Tragedy unfolds as Anna rejects her passionless marriage and must endure the hypocrisies of society. Set against a vast and richly textured canvas of nineteenth-century Russia, the novel's seven major characters create a dynamic imbalance, playing out the contrasts of city and country life and all the variations on love and family happiness.

Approximate number of books in kit: 9

[The Language of Threads](#)

by Gail Tsukiyama

Pei travels with a young orphan named Ji Shen to 1930s Hong Kong, where they receive help from a British woman, but experience the chaos of the Japanese occupation.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[The Samurai's Garden](#)

by Gail Tsukiyama

In 1938, on the eve of World War II, a young Chinese man suffering from tuberculosis travels to his family's summer home in Japan, where his encounters with a lovely Japanese girl and four local

residents prove to be memorable.

Approximate number of books in kit: 11

[The News from Paraguay](#)

by Lily Tuck

Pursued by the future dictator of nineteenth-century Paraguay, Irish courtesan Ella Lynch struggles with isolation and displacement in spite of her power as his mistress, and witnesses the nation's victimization in the wake of her lover's arrogant ambitions.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[The Amateur Marriage](#)

by Anne Tyler

Marrying quickly during World War II after falling in love at first sight, a mismatched couple discovers that their very different personalities and approaches to life are taking a toll on their lives, their relationship, and their family.

Approximate number of books in kit: 9

[Back When We Were Grownups](#)

by Anne Tyler

In this deeply moving novel a woman of fifty-three tries to find out who she truly is, compared to who her world believes she is.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[Ladder of Years](#)

by Anne Tyler

Forty-year-old Delia Grinstead, mother of three almost-grown children, impulsively walks away from her marriage and sets off into the unknown to begin an entirely new life, but suddenly she discovers that she is accumulating fresh responsibilities.

Approximate number of books in kit: 10

[The Hummingbird's Daughter](#)

by Luis Alberto Urrea

When sixteen-year-old Teresita, the illegitimate and beloved daughter of a powerful late-nineteenth-century rancher, arises from death possessing the power to heal, she is declared a saint and finds her family and faith tested by the impending Mexican civil war.

Approximate number of books in kit: 7

[Cutting for Stone](#)

by Abraham Verghese

Twin brothers born from a secret love affair between an Indian nun and a British surgeon in Addis Ababa, Marion and Shiva Stone come of age in an Ethiopia on the brink of revolution, where their love for the same woman drives them apart.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[Beautiful Ruins](#)

by Jess Walter

Follows a young Italian innkeeper and his almost-love affair with a beautiful American starlet, which draws him into a glittering world filled with unforgettable characters.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[The Ginger Tree](#)

by Oswald Wynd

A young Scottish woman, in 1903, travels to Peking to marry a British military attachee. She becomes a scandal to the British community by having an affair with Count Kuriha, a Japanese soldier. She is shunned by her own people, and not really accepted by the Japanese either. We are given the account of a hard, lonely, but fascinating life in an alien culture.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[The Shack](#)

by William Paul Young

Four years after his daughter is abducted and evidence of her murder is found in an abandoned shack, Mackenzie Allen Philips returns to the shack in response to a note claiming to be from God, and has a life-changing experience.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[The Shadow of the Wind](#)

by Carlos Ruiz Zafon

A boy named Daniel selects a novel from a library of rare books, enjoying it so much that he searches for the rest of the author's works, only to discover that someone is destroying every book the author has ever written.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[The Book Thief](#)

by Markus Zusak

Trying to make sense of the horrors of World War II, Death relates the story of Liesel--a young German girl whose book-stealing and story-telling talents help sustain her family and the Jewish man they are hiding, as well as their neighbors.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12