

Book Discussion Kits (Historical Fiction)

[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

[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: 9

[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: 8

[Behind the Scenes at the Museum](#)

by Kate Atkinson

A family saga chronicles a century of life as four generations of Yorkshire women move through two World Wars, coronations, secrets, heartbreak, and happiness, all seen through the eyes of an inimitable narrator named Ruby Lennox.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[The Birth of Venus](#)

by Sarah Dunant

Turning fifteen in Renaissance Florence, Alessandra Cecchi becomes intoxicated with the works of a young painter whom her father has brought to the city to decorate the family's Florentine palazzo.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[The Califfs of Baghdad, Georgia](#)

by Mary Helen Stefaniak

Eleven-year-old Gladys Califf and her Depression-era community are turned upside down when

a worldly teacher, who is fascinated with all things Arabian, moves into the small town.

Approximate number of books in kit: 7

[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: 8

[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: 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

[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

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

by Annie Barrows

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: 11

[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: 7

[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: 11

[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

[Martin Dressler: The Tale of an American Dreamer](#)

by Steven Millhauser

A young entrepreneur in late-nineteenth-century New York City, Martin Dressler rises from helper in his father's cigar store as an elusive dream and his love for two sisters comes to life in the Grand Cosmo, an extravagant hotel.

Approximate number of books in kit: 5

[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: 8

[The Piano Teacher](#)

by Janice Y.K. Lee

It is 1942, and Will Trusdale, an Englishman newly arrived in Hong Kong, has fallen headlong into a passionate relationship with Trudy Liang, a beautiful Eurasian socialite. But when WWII strikes, Will is sent to an internment camp, while Trudy remains outside. Trudy is forced to form dangerous alliances with the head of the Japanese gendarmerie, whose desperate attempts to locate a priceless collection of Chinese art lead to a chain of terrible betrayals. Ten years later, Claire Pendleton comes to Hong Kong and meets the enigmatic Will. As long-buried secrets start to emerge and she begins to understand the true nature of the world she has entered, Claire learns that sometimes the price of survival is love.

Approximate number of books in kit: 11

[The Pillars of the Earth](#)

by Ken Follett

Set in twelfth-century England, this epic of kings and peasants juxtaposes the building of a magnificent church with the violence and treachery that often characterized the Middle Ages.

Approximate number of books in kit: 9

[The Plot Against America](#)

by Philip Roth

In a novel of alternative history, aviation hero and isolationist Charles A. Lindbergh defeats Franklin Roosevelt in the 1940 presidential election, negotiating a cordial accord with Adolf Hitler, accepting his conquest of Europe and anti-Semitic policies, and igniting a storm of fear for Jewish families throughout America.

Approximate number of books in kit: 7

[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: 5

[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: 9

[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

[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 Lalu 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: 6

[Year of Wonders](#)

by Geraldine Brooks

Young Anna Frith, a vicar's maid, is faced with the loss of her family, the disintegration of her local community, and a passionate, illicit love as she and her village confront the horrors of the plague, in a historical novel based on real-life events in seventeenth-century England.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12