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: 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

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: 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

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

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

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: 10

The Dovekeepers
by Alice Hoffman
A tale inspired by the massacre of hundreds of Jewish people at Masada presents the stories of a hated daughter, a baker's wife, a girl disguised as a warrior, and a medicine woman who keep doves and secrets while Roman soldiers draw near.
Approximate number of books in kit: 10

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 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

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: 10

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 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 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: 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

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

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

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: 11

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: 7

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

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 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

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

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: 7

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: 7

Wolf Hall
by Hilary Mantel
Assuming the power recently lost by the disgraced Cardinal Wolsey, Thomas Cromwell counsels a mercurial Henry VIII on the latter's efforts to marry Anne Boleyn against the wishes of Rome, a successful endeavor that comes with a dangerous price.
Approximate number of books in kit: 5