

Book Discussion Kits (Memoir)

[Animal, Vegetable, Miracle](#)

by Barbara Kingsolver

When Kingsolver and her family move from suburban Arizona to rural Appalachia, they take on a new challenge: to spend a year on a locally produced diet, paying close attention to the provenance of all they consume. "Our highest shopping goal was to get our food from so close to home, we'd know the person who grew it. Often that turned out to be ourselves as we learned to produce what we needed, starting with dirt, seeds, and enough knowledge to muddle through. Or starting with baby animals, and enough sense to refrain from naming them."

Approximate number of books in kit: 9

[The Color of Water](#)

by James McBride

A young African-American man describes growing up in an all-black Brooklyn housing project, one of twelve children of a white mother and black father, and discusses his mother's contributions to his life and coming to terms with his confusion over his own identity.

Approximate number of books in kit: 9

[Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight](#)

by Alexandra Fuller

An intimate memoir of growing up in Africa during the Rhodesian civil war of 1971 to 1979 describes her life on farms in southern Rhodesia, Milawi, and Zambia, detailing her hardscrabble existence with an alcoholic mother, frequently absent father, and three lost siblings, as well as her fierce love for Africa.

Approximate number of books in kit: 10

[Dreams From My Father](#)

by Barack Obama

In this lyrical, unsentimental, and compelling memoir, the son of a black African father and a white American mother searches for a workable meaning to his life as a black American. It begins in New York, where Barack Obama learns that his father--a figure he knows more as a myth than as a man--has been killed in a car accident. This sudden death inspires an emotional odyssey, first to a small town in Kansas, from which he retraces the migration of his mother's family to Hawaii, and then to Kenya, where he meets the African side of his family, confronts the bitter truth of his father's life, and at last reconciles his divided inheritance.

Approximate number of books in kit: 10

[Eat, Pray, Love](#)

by Elizabeth Gilbert

Traces the author's decision to travel the world for a year after suffering a midlife crisis and divorce, a journey that took her to three places in her quest to explore her own nature and learn

the art of spiritual balance.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[Farewell to Manzanar](#)

by Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston

The American-born author describes her family's experience and impressions when they were forced to relocate in a camp for the Japanese in Owens Valley, California, during World War II.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[The Glass Castle](#)

by Jeannette Walls

The second child of a scholarly, alcoholic father and an eccentric artist mother discusses her family's nomadic upbringing from the Arizona desert, to Las Vegas, to an Appalachian mining town, during which her siblings and she fended for themselves while their parents outmaneuvered bill collectors and the authorities.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[Heart of a Woman](#)

by Maya Angelou

This engaging book chronicles the changes in Maya Angelou's life as she enters the hub of activity that is New York. There, at the Harlem Writers Guild, she rededicates herself to writing, and finds love at an unexpected moment. Reflecting on her many roles--from northern coordinator of Martin Luther King's history-making quest to mother of a rebellious teenage son--Angelou eloquently speaks to an awareness of the heart within us all.

Approximate number of books in kit: 7

[A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius](#)

by Dave Eggers

A moving memoir of a college senior who, in the space of five weeks, loses both of his parents to cancer and inherits his eight-year-old brother. This is an account that manages to be simultaneously hilarious and wildly inventive, as well as a deeply heartfelt story of the love that holds a family together.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[Julie and Julia](#)

by Julie Powell

The author recounts how she escaped the doldrums of an unpromising career by mastering every recipe in Julia Child's 1961 classic, "Mastering the Art of French Cooking," a year-long endeavor that transformed her life.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[The Life and Times of the Thunderbolt Kid](#)

by Bill Bryson

The author describes his all-American childhood growing up as a member of the baby boom generation in the heart of Iowa, detailing his rich fantasy life as a superhero known as the Thunderbolt Kid and his remarkably normal 1950s family life.

Approximate number of books in kit: 5

[Little Heathens](#)

by Mildred Armstrong Kalish

An evocative memoir of growing up in the heart of the Midwest during the Great Depression describes life on an Iowa farm during a time of endless work, resourcefulness, family and kinship, and no tolerance for idleness or waste.

Approximate number of books in kit: 9

[The Measure of a Man](#)

by Sidney Poitier

The acclaimed actor reveals the depth, passion, and intellectual fervor that have driven his life and career, citing the elements of his childhood that gave him his sense of worth, family, and ethics and how these qualities are essential to spiritual development.

Approximate number of books in kit: 7

[Mennonite in a Little Black Dress](#)

by Rhoda Janzen

A poet describes how, after her husband left her for a relationship with a man and she subsequently was seriously injured in a car crash, she returned home to her close-knit Mennonite family and came to terms with her failed marriage and her choices in life.

Approximate number of books in kit: 9

[A Million Little Pieces](#)

by James Frey

A memoir of drug and alcohol abuse and the rehabilitation experience examines addiction and recovery through the eyes of a man who had taken his addictions to deadly extremes, describing the battle to confront the consequences of his life.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[My Life in France](#)

by Julia Child

A memoir begun just months before Child's death describes the legendary food expert's years in Paris, Marseille, and Provence and her journey from a young woman from Pasadena who cannot cook or speak any French to the publication of her legendary Mastering cookbooks and her winning the hearts of America as "The French Chef."

Approximate number of books in kit: 7

[Reading Lolita in Tehran](#)

by Azar Nafisi

Lolita in Tehran? Yes, and plenty of other Western classics, read and discussed by a group of women who met secretly with Nafisi, an instructor at the University of Tehran until she was expelled in 1997 for shunning the veil and left the country.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[Safe Passage](#)

by Ida Cook

Reveals how two decidedly ordinary Englishwomen and sisters, Ida and Louise Cook, decided, after hearing an aria from Madame Butterfly, to save their earnings and go "undercover" as eccentric opera fans to rescue dozens of people from the Nazis.

Approximate number of books in kit: 5

[Tender at the Bone](#)

by Ruth Reichl

Ruth Reichl's deliciously crafted non-fiction memoir, *Tender at the Bone*, is the story of a life determined, enhanced, and defined in equal measure by a passion for food, unforgettable people, and the love of tales well told.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[Under the Tuscan Sun](#)

by Frances Mayes

Popular poet and author Frances Mayes transports you to the spectacular Tuscan countryside with her memoirs. She explores the fascinating people, landscape, and history of Italy--and seasons them with hearty recipes.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

[The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts](#)

by Maxine Hong Kingston

A man fleeing from the repressive social conformity required by China's communist government journeys into the remote mountain regions of southwest China in search of meaning in his life and the elusive Soul Mountain.

Approximate number of books in kit: 9