

Book Discussion Kits (Fiction)

[Above All Things](#)

by Tanis Rideout

A tale inspired by the life and mysterious fate of George Mallory traces the experiences of his wife, Ruth, who in 1924 maintains a hopeful vigil in war-ravaged England during Mallory's fateful third expedition to reach the summit of Mount Everest.

[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.

[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.

[All the Light We Cannot See](#)

by Anthony Doerr

From the highly acclaimed, multiple award-winning Anthony Doerr, the stunningly beautiful instant New York Times bestseller about a blind French girl and a German boy whose paths collide in occupied France as both try to survive the devastation of World War II.

[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.

[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.

[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.

[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.

[Beautiful world, where are you](#)

by Sally Rooney

Beautiful World focuses on four characters--the two best friends and the two men with whom they test tentative new romantic relationships.

[The Beekeeper's Apprentice](#)

by Laurie R. King

Chance meeting with a Sussex beekeeper turns into a pivotal, personal transformation when fifteen-year-old Mary Russell discovers that the beekeeper is the reclusive, retired detective Sherlock Holmes, who soon takes on the role of mentor and teacher.

[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.

[Big Little Lies](#)

by Liane Moriarty

Big Little Lies is a brilliant take on ex-husbands and second wives, mothers and daughters, schoolyard scandal, and the dangerous little lies we tell ourselves just to survive.

[Birnam Wood](#)

by Eleanor Catton

This novel uses the title's Shakespearean allusion to explore themes of ambition, betrayal, and the consequences of choices, set against the backdrop of a modern environmentalist group and a tech mogul's secretive project.

[Black cake](#)

by Charmaine Wilkerson

Black Cake is a novel about two estranged siblings, Byron and Benny, who discover their mother's hidden past after her death. Eleanor Bennett leaves her children a voice recording and a traditional Caribbean black cake made from a family recipe. The recording tells the story of a young swimmer who flees her island home after being suspected of murder. The siblings' journey to discover the truth takes them from the Caribbean to London to California and ends with the black cake.

[Blackouts](#)

by Justin Torres

This is a novel that explores queer history and identity through the memories of two men in a mentor-mentee relationship.

[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.

[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.

[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.

[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.

[Brooklyn](#)

by Colm Toibin

Hauntingly beautiful and heartbreaking, Colm Toibin's sixth novel, Brooklyn, is set in Brooklyn and Ireland in the early 1950s, when one young woman crosses the ocean to make a new life for herself.

[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.

[Burial Rites](#)

by Hannah Kent

Based on a true story, tells the tale of a young woman in Iceland in 1829 who was accused of murder and sent to an isolated farm to await execution and tells the farmer's family her side of the story.

[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.

[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.

[The Circle](#)

by Dave Eggers

Hired to work for the Circle, the world's most powerful Internet company, Mae Holland begins to question her luck as life beyond her job grows distant, a strange encounter with a colleague leaves her shaken, and her role at the Circle becomes increasingly public.

[Circling the Sun](#)

by Paula McLain

Paula McLain, author of the phenomenal bestseller *The Paris Wife*, now returns with her keenly anticipated new novel, transporting readers to colonial Kenya in the 1920s. *Circling the Sun* brings to life a fearless and captivating woman--Beryl Markham, a record-setting aviator caught up in a passionate love triangle with safari hunter Denys Finch Hatton.

[Cloud Cuckoo Land](#)

by Anthony Doerr

It tells story of Aethon, a man who goes looking for a "utopian city in the sky" called Cloud Cuckoo Land. Along the way, he has many adventures (transformed into a donkey, captured, escapes, transformed into a fish, eaten by a sea creature, transformed into a crow, etc.) before he finally finds Cloud Cuckoo Land.

[The Color Purple](#)

by Alice Walker

The lives of two sisters--Nettie, a missionary in Africa, and Celie, a southern woman married to a man she hates--are revealed in a series of letters exchanged over thirty years.

[A Constellation of Vital Phenomena](#)

by Anthony Marra

In December 2004 in a rural village in Chechnya, failed doctor Akhmed harbors the traumatized eight-year-old daughter of a man abducted by Russian forces and treats a series of wounded refugees while exploring the shared past that binds him to the child.

[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.

[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.

[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.

[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.

[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.

[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.

[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.

[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.

[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.

[Entangled life](#)

by Merlin Sheldrake

Entangled Life reveals the hidden intelligence and ecological importance of fungi, exploring their chemical communication, networks, symbiosis, and profound effects on humans and ecosystems.

[Erasure](#)

by Percival Everett

The plot of Erasure is an intriguing one. Monk is a black American academic and writer of high brow novels which do nothing commercially. At times he seems to live in the shadow of his grandfather, father and siblings who, on the surface of things, all appear to have been more successful than he is.

[Euphoria](#)

by Lily King

Frustrated by his research efforts and depressed over the death of his brothers, Andre Banson runs into two fellow anthropologists, a married couple, in 1930s New Guinea and begins a tumultuous relationship with them.

[Exposure](#)

by Helen Dunmore

It's London, 1960. The Cold War is at its height, and a spy may be a friend or neighbor, colleague or lover. Two colleagues, Giles Holloway and Simon Callington, face a terrible dilemma over a missing top-secret file. At the end of a suburban garden, in the pouring rain, Simon's wife, Lily, buries a briefcase containing the file deep in the earth. She believes that in doing so she is protecting her family. What she will learn is that no one is immune from betrayal or the devastating consequences of exposure. A master of the literary war novel as seen through the lens of individuals impacted by war's effects, in *Exposure*, Helen Dunmore pulls back the veneer of 1960's London life to reveal just how the betrayals and paranoia of the Cold War infiltrate even families. This is a propulsive novel of forbidden love and intimate deceptions from one of our finest writers.

[The five wounds](#)

by Kirstin Valdez Quade

The Five Wounds follows middle-aged Amadeo, his estranged pregnant daughter Angel, and terminally-ill mother Yolanda, over a single year, as they struggle to redeem themselves by correcting previous missteps, cobble together a worthwhile future out of a broken past, and simply coexist under the same roof.

[Flight behavior](#)

by Barbara Kingsolver

"Flight Behavior," signifies the sudden, large-scale migration of monarch butterflies to a specific area due to climate change, acting as a metaphor for the protagonist's personal transformation and newfound awareness of environmental issues.

[The frozen river](#)

by Ariel Lawhon

Ariel Lawhon's *The Frozen River* is a historical mystery that illuminates the resilience and courage of women like Martha Ballard, weaving together a murder investigation, social justice, and life in 1789 Maine.

[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*.

[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.

[Gilead](#)

by Marilynne Robinson

This book is a novel about a preacher in the late 1950s who writes letters to his son before he dies.

[The Girl Next Door](#)

by Ruth Rendell

When bones are discovered in a tin box inside the tunnel a group of long-time friends played in as children, they reunite to recall their adventures in the tunnel for the detective investigating the case.

[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.

[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.

[The Golem and the Jinni](#)

by Helene Wecker

Combines elements of Jewish and Arab folk mythology in the story of two supernatural creatures, Chava, a golem brought to life by a disgraced rabbi, and Ahmad, a jinni made of fire, who form an unlikely friendship on the streets of turn-of-the-century New York.

[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.

[Gordo](#)

by Jaime Cortez

Shedding profound natural light on the inner lives of migrant workers, Jaime Cortez's debut collection ushers in a new era of American literature that gives voice to a marginalized generation of migrant workers in the West.

[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.

[Great believers](#)

by Rebecca Makkai

Set in two time periods, the first in 1980s Chicago and the second in 2015 Paris, the book throws readers into the thick of--and the aftermath of--the 1980s AIDS crisis.

[Harlem shuffle](#)

by Colson Whitehead

Harlem Shuffle is a set of three loosely-related stories about furniture salesman and reluctant crook Ray Carney. He wants to lead an honest life, but that's not easy as a Black man in 1960s Harlem. So due to necessity and unfortunate circumstances, he keeps getting pulled into dodgy business.

[The Healer of Fox Hollow](#)

by Joann Rose Leonard

Layla acquires the ability to heal people after a horrifying incident leaves her mute at five years of age, but she starts to question her skill and true place in the community after falling in love and suffering another tragedy as an adult.

[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.

[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.

[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.

[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.

[The house of broken angels](#)

by Luis Urrea

The House of Broken Angels takes place in San Diego over the course of two days and spans seven decades of memories. It follows the de la Cruz family, particularly patriarch Big Angel and his siblings, as they attend their mother's funeral and Big Angel's final birthday party. As the two events unfold, the characters reflect on their family history, personal struggles, and philosophies on life.

[How much of these hills is gold](#)

by C. Pam Zhang

An electric debut novel set against the twilight of the American gold rush, two siblings are on the run in an unforgiving landscape--trying not just to survive but to find a home.

[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.

[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.

[I who have never known men](#)

by Jacqueline Harpman

A dystopian novel about 40 women and a young girl imprisoned in a bunker with silent guards.

[The Inheritance of Loss](#)

by Kiran Desai

In a crumbling house in the remote northeastern Himalayas, an embittered, elderly judge finds his peaceful retirement turned upside down by the arrival of his orphaned granddaughter, Sai, but their world--and Sai's romance with her handsome Nepali tutor--is threatened by a Nepalese insurgency. By the author of Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard.

[The Invention of Wings](#)

by Sue Monk Kidd

Traces the lives of a wealthy Charleston debutante who longs to break free from the strictures of her household and the urban slave who is placed in her charge as a child before finding courage and a sense of self.

[James](#)

by Percival Everett

A 2024 historical fiction novel that re-imagines Mark Twain's "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn" from the perspective of the enslaved character Jim, offering agency, intelligence, and a powerful counter-narrative to the original.

[Klara and the sun](#)

by Kazuo Ishiguro

Klara and the Sun tells the story of Klara, a companion robot (called an "AF" or "Artificial Friend"). Told through Klara's eyes, the book opens with her in the store, waiting to be purchased. She eventually goes home with a sweet but sick girl named Josie and her mother. As Klara learns about the world around her, Ishiguro reveals to us a semi-dystopian world in the not too distant future. And Klara finds herself discovering truths about people, difficult decisions they must make, and the complexities of love.

[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.

[The Kurdish Bike](#)

by Alesa Lightbourne

"Courageous teachers wanted to rebuild war-torn nation." With her marriage over and life gone flat, Theresa Turner responds to an online ad, and lands at a school in Kurdish Iraq. Befriended by a widow in a nearby village, Theresa is embroiled in the joys and agonies of traditional Kurds, especially the women who survived Saddam's genocide only to be crippled by age-old restrictions, brutality and honor killings. Theresa's greatest challenge will be balancing respect for cultural values while trying to introduce more enlightened attitudes toward women - at the same time seeking new spiritual dimensions within herself. The Kurdish Bike is gripping, tender, wry and compassionate - an eye-opener into little-known customs in one of the world's most explosive regions - a novel of love, betrayal and redemption.

[Lady Tan's circle of women](#)

by Lisa See

The story explores the lives of women in a patriarchal society, their friendships, and the challenges they face navigating societal expectations while pursuing their passions.

[Lessons in chemistry](#)

by Bonnie Garmus

The novel explores themes of gender inequality, feminism, and the power of education.

[The life impossible](#)

by Matt Haig

The life impossible is a novel about a grieving widow, Grace Winters, who inherits a house in Ibiza and discovers a magical, mystical world connected to the island.

[The Light Between Oceans](#)

by M.L. Stedman

Moving his young bride to an isolated lighthouse home on Australia's Janus Rock where the couple suffers miscarriages and a stillbirth, Tom allows his wife to claim an infant that has washed up on the shore, a decision with devastating consequences.

[The lion women of Tehran](#)

by Marjan Kamali

"The Lion Women of Tehran" is a historical fiction novel exploring friendship, resilience, and women's empowerment across decades of Iran's political upheaval, centering on the lifelong bond between Ellie and Homa.

[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.

[Little fires everywhere](#)

by Celeste Ng

When a custody battle divides her placid town, straitlaced family woman Elena Richardson finds herself pitted against her enigmatic tenant and becomes obsessed with exposing her past, only to trigger devastating consequences for both families.

[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.

[A Man Called Ove](#)

by Fredrik Backman

A feel-good story in the spirit of *The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry* and *Major Pettigrew's Last Stand*, Fredrik Backman's novel about the angry old man next door is a thoughtful exploration of the profound impact one life has on countless others.

[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.

[The marriage portrait](#)

by Maggie O'Farrell

The Marriage Portrait by Maggie O'Farrell is a historical fiction novel about Lucrezia de' Medici, the third daughter of the grand duke of 16th century Florence, who is forced to marry the Duke of Ferrara at age 15. The novel explores themes such as marriage at a young age, abuse and control, and the dark personality of Alfonso II d'Este, Duke of Ferrara.

[Martyr!](#)

by Kaveh Akbar

The novel explores themes of identity, legacy, and the search for meaning through the eyes of Cyrus Shams, a young Iranian-American grappling with addiction, loss, and a fascination with martyrdom.

[Mary Coin](#)

by Marisa Silver

An extraordinarily compassionate and wise novel, *Mary Coin* imagines the life of Dorothea Lange's iconic "Migrant Mother." What emerges, in Silver's nuanced, resonant telling, is a poignant exploration of a single life that touches many others, and a powerful, moving portrait of America during the Great Depression.

[Mexican gothic](#)

by Silvia Moreno-Garcia

Mexican Gothic is a 2020 feminist Gothic novel by Silvia Moreno-Garcia that follows Noemí Taboada, a young socialite who travels to El Triunfo in 1950s Mexico to rescue her cousin, Catalina. The novel is set in a mansion called High Place, which represents the family's decline, and is filled with ghosts and other haunted elements.

[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.

[The Museum of Extraordinary Things](#)

by Alice Hoffman

The daughter of a curiosities museum's front man pursues an impassioned love affair with a Russian immigrant photographer, who after fleeing his Lower East Side Orthodox community, has captured poignant images of the infamous Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire.

[My name is Lucy Barton](#)

by Elizabeth Strout

"My Name Is Lucy Barton" is the story of a writer reckoning with the legacy of a scarred family life and slowly coming to terms with the costs and the rewards of her art.

[Nightcrawling](#)

by Leila Mottley

Nightcrawling details the story of seventeen-year-old Kiara Johnson, a young Black teenager who turns to sex work to pay her family's rent and care for the abandoned nine-year-old boy next door.

[North woods](#)

by Daniel Mason

A historical fiction novel that explores the interconnectedness of nature and humanity over centuries, focusing on a specific house and its surrounding land in western Massachusetts.

[The Ocean at the End of the Lane](#)

by Neil Gaiman

Presents a modern fantasy about fear, love, magic, and sacrifice in the story of a family at the mercy of dark forces, whose only defense is the three women who live on a farm at the end of the lane.

[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.

[Ordinary Grace](#)

by William Kent Krueger

New Bremen, Minnesota, 1961. The Twins were playing their debut season, ice-cold root beers were selling out at the soda counter of Halderson's Drugstore, and Hot Stuff comic books were a mainstay on every barbershop magazine rack. It was a time of innocence and hope for a country with a new, young president. But for thirteen-year-old Frank Drum it was a grim summer in which death visited frequently and assumed many forms. Accident. Nature. Suicide. Murder.

[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.

[Orphan Train](#)

by Christina Baker Kline

Close to aging out of the foster care system, Molly Ayer takes a position helping an elderly woman named Vivian and discovers that they are more alike than different as she helps Vivian solve a mystery from her past.

[This other Eden](#)

by Paul Harding

This Other Eden by Pulitzer Prize-winning author Paul Harding is a historical fiction novel that reimagines the true story of a racially diverse fishing community that was evicted from their homes off the coast of Maine in 1912.

[Our missing hearts](#)

by Celeste Ng

Celeste Ng's "Our Missing Hearts" is a story centered around children who have been separated from their parent for political reasons. In Ng's world, the government can seize children from parents if alleged "subversive" behavior is exposed to children in the home.

[Our Souls at Night](#)

by Kent Haruf

In the familiar setting of Holt, Colorado, home to all of Kent Haruf's inimitable fiction, Addie Moore pays an unexpected visit to a neighbor, Louis Waters. Her husband died years ago, as did his wife, and in such a small town they naturally have known of each other for decades; in fact, Addie was quite fond of Louis's wife. His daughter lives hours away, her son even farther, and Addie and Louis have long been living alone in empty houses, the nights so terribly lonely, especially with no one to talk with. But maybe that could change? As Addie and Louis come to know each other better--their pleasures and their difficulties--a beautiful story of second chances unfolds, making Our Souls at Night the perfect final installment to this beloved writer's enduring contribution to American literature.

[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.

[The Overstory](#)

by Richard Powers

The Overstory, winner of the 2019 Pulitzer Prize in Fiction, is a sweeping, impassioned work of activism and resistance that is also a stunning evocation of--and paean to--the natural world. From the roots to the crown and back to the seeds, Richard Powers's twelfth novel unfolds in concentric rings of interlocking fables that range from antebellum New York to the late twentieth-century Timber Wars of the Pacific Northwest and beyond. There is a world alongside ours--vast, slow, interconnected, resourceful, magnificently inventive, and almost invisible to us. This is the story of a handful of people who learn how to see that world and who are drawn up into its unfolding catastrophe.

[Pachinko](#)

by Min Jin Lee

In the early 1900s, teenaged Sunja, the adored daughter of a crippled fisherman, falls for a wealthy stranger at the seashore near her home in Korea. He promises her the world, but when she discovers she is pregnant--and that her lover is married--she refuses to be bought. Instead, she accepts an offer of marriage from a gentle, sickly minister passing through on his way to Japan. But her decision to abandon her home, and to reject her son's powerful father, sets off a dramatic saga that will echo down

through the generations. Richly told and profoundly moving, Pachinko is a story of love, sacrifice, ambition, and loyalty. From bustling street markets to the halls of Japan's finest universities to the pachinko parlors of the criminal underworld, Lee's complex and passionate characters--strong, stubborn women, devoted sisters and sons, fathers shaken by moral crisis--survive and thrive against the indifferent arc of history.

[The Paris Wife](#)

by Paula McLain

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

[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.

[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.

[Playground](#)

by Richard Powers

Playground is a story about a three-way friendship that explores the interplay between human life and technology, centering on the conflicts and connections between art, science, and the natural world.

[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.

[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.

[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.

[Red letter days](#)

by Sarah-Jane Stratford

When two brave women flee from the Communist Red Scare, they soon discover that no future is free from the past.

[Red Letter Days](#)

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When two brave women flee from the Communist Red Scare, they soon discover that no future is free from the past. Amid the glitz and glamour of 1950s New York, Phoebe Adler pursues her dream of screenwriting. A dream that turns into a living nightmare when she is blacklisted--caught in the Red Menace that is shattering the lives of suspected Communists. Desperate to work, she escapes to London, determined to keep her dream alive and clear her good name. There, Phoebe befriends fellow American exile Hannah Wolfson, who has defied the odds to build a career as a successful television producer in England. Hannah is a woman who has it all, and is now gambling everything in a very dangerous game--the game of hiring blacklisted writers. Neither woman suspects that danger still looms...and their fight is only just beginning.

[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.

[Remarkably bright creatures](#)

by Shelby Van Pelt

The novel explores themes of grief, connection, and the unexpected bonds that can form between humans and animals, told through the perspectives of a giant Pacific octopus names Marcellus, an elderly widow names Tova, and a young man named Cameron.

[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.

[Running from Grace](#)

by Dana Bagshaw

"Running from Grace is a cleverly fictionalized memoir of a tempestuous relationship between mother and son. The mother is depicted largely from the son's perspective and it is not long before the reader wills the son to break free of his tyrannical mother. But filial love is not easily broken and the author skillfully charts the path to the resolution. A well-written story that is all the more powerful and intriguing for being based on real lives."

[The Safekeep](#)

by Yael van der Wouden

The Safekeep explores the complicated relationship between two women, Eva and Isabelle, who share a house with a difficult past.

[The Secret Keeper](#)

by Kate Morton

Withdrawing from a family party, sixteen-year-old Laurel Nicolson witnesses a shocking murder that throughout a subsequent half century shapes her beliefs, her acting career, and the lives of three strangers from vastly different cultures.

[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.

[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.

[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.

[The signature of all things](#)

by Elizabeth Gilbert

A glorious, sweeping novel of desire, ambition, and the thirst for knowledge... In The Signature of All Things, Elizabeth Gilbert returns to fiction, inserting her inimitable voice into an enthralling story of love, adventure and discovery. Spanning much of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the novel follows the fortunes of the extraordinary Whittaker family as led by the enterprising Henry Whittaker--a poor-born Englishman who makes a great fortune in the South American quinine trade, eventually becoming the richest man in Philadelphia.

[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.

[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.

[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.

[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.

[The Storied Life of A.J. Fikry](#)

by Gabrielle Zevin

A. J. Fikry's life is not at all what he expected it to be. He lives alone, his bookstore is experiencing the worst sales in its history, and now his prized possession, a rare collection of Poe poems, has been stolen. But when a mysterious package appears at the bookstore, its unexpected arrival gives Fikry the chance to make his life over--and see everything anew.

[The tattooist of Auschwitz](#)

by Heather Morris

In April 1942, Lale Sokolov, a Slovakian Jew, is forcibly transported to the concentration camps at Auschwitz-Birkenau. When his captors discover that he speaks several languages, he is put to work as a Tätowierer (the German word for tattooist), tasked with permanently marking his fellow prisoners. Imprisoned for over two and a half years, Lale witnesses horrific atrocities and barbarism--but also incredible acts of bravery and compassion.

[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.

[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.

[There There](#)

by Tommy Orange

Tommy Orange's shattering novel follows twelve characters from Native communities: all traveling to the Big Oakland Powwow, all connected to each other in ways they may not yet realize. There is Jacquie Red Feather, newly sober and working to make it back to the family she left behind. Dene Oxendene, who is pulling his life back together after his uncle's death, has come to work at the powwow to honor his memory. Fourteen-year-old Orvil has come to perform traditional dance for the very first time. Together, this chorus of voices tells of the plight of the urban Native American--grappling with a complex and painful history, with an inheritance of beauty and spirituality, with communion and sacrifice and heroism. Hailed as an instant classic, *There There* is at once poignant and laugh-out-loud funny, utterly contemporary and always unforgettable.

[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.

[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.

[Tilt](#)

by Emma Pattee

The story is a profound exploration of motherhood, personal identity, and the impact of climate change. It follows Annie, a pregnant woman in her final weeks, as she navigates the aftermath of a massive earthquake in Portland, Oregon.

[Tom Lake](#)

by Ann Patchett

The novel is centered around Lara Nelson, who, during the Covid-19 pandemic, recounts her youthful romance with a famous actor to her daughters while sheltering at their Michigan cherry farm.

[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.

[TransAtlantic](#)

by Colum McCann

A tale spanning 150 years and two continents reimagines the peace efforts of democracy champion Frederick Douglass, Senator George Mitchell and World War I airmen John Alcock and Teddy Brown through the experiences of four generations of women from a matriarchal clan.

[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.

[Trust](#)

by Hernan Diaz

A metafictional novel that explores themes of wealth, power, and the nature of truth through multiple, conflicting narratives.

[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.

[Under the Wide and Starry Sky](#)

by Nancy Horan

Imagines the love affair of Robert Louis Stevenson and American divorcee Fanny Van de Grift Osbourne, who after meeting in rural France take refuge from their unhappy lives and embark on two shared decades of international turbulence.

[The Underground Railroad](#)

by Colson Whitehead

Cora is a slave on a cotton plantation in Georgia. When Caesar, a recent arrival from Virginia, tells her about the Underground Railroad, they decide to take a terrifying risk and escape. Though they manage to find a station and head north, they are being hunted. Their first stop is South Carolina, in a city that initially seems like a haven. But the city's placid surface masks an insidious scheme designed for its black denizens. And even worse: Ridgeway, the relentless slave catcher, is close on their heels.

[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.

[The vanishing half](#)

by Brit Bennett

It's the story of light-skinned Black identical twin sisters who grow up inseparable in a light-skinned Black community in Louisiana. At a young age, they witness their father's death and the hands of white men and, as teens, they run away from their home to New Orleans.

[Violeta](#)

by Isabel Allende

Violeta is a 2022 novel by Chilean-American author Isabel Allende. It is a fictional autobiographical account of the life of Violeta Del Valle and how she witnessed the various upheavals of the 20th century.

[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.

[Wandering Stars](#)

by Tommy Orange

This is a powerful novel that explores themes of intergenerational trauma, addiction, and the search for identity within a Native American family, spanning from the 1864 Sand Creek Massacre to the present day.

[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.

[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.

[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.

[The Wives of Los Alamos](#)

by Tarashea Nesbit

An emotionally charged tale told in the collective voices of the wives of the team who created the atom bomb traces their struggles to adapt and raise children in a rugged military town where everything their husbands are doing is an intense secret.

[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.

[The year of the flood](#)

by Margaret Atwood

Set in the visionary future of Atwood's acclaimed Oryx and Crake, The Year of the Flood is at once a moving tale of lasting friendship and a landmark work of speculative fiction. In this second book of the MaddAddam trilogy, the long-feared waterless flood has occurred, altering Earth as we know it and obliterating most human life. Among the survivors are Ren, a young trapeze dancer locked inside the high-end sex club Scales and Tails, and Toby, who is barricaded inside a luxurious spa. Amid shadowy, corrupt ruling powers and new, gene-spliced life forms, Ren and Toby will have to decide on their next move, but they can't stay locked away.

[Yellowface](#)

by R. F. Kuang

Yellowface is a novel that uses a contemporary publishing setting to satirize the industry while exploring themes of plagiarism, racial identity, jealousy, and cultural appropriation.

[Your House Will Pay](#)

by Steph Cha

A powerful novel about racial tensions in L.A., following two families--one Korean-American, one African-American--grappling with the effects of a decades-old crime.