# Book Discussion Kits (Historical Fiction)

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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.

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.

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.

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 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.

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.

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

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.

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.

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.

One thousand white women
by Jim Fergus
One Thousand White Women is a fictionalized account of a secret government program in the American West in 1875. The book explores cultural clashes, human resilience, and the treatment of Native Americans.

Lessons in chemistry
by Bonnie Garmus
The novel explores themes of gender inequality, feminism, and the power of education.

Isola
by Allegra Goodman
Isola by Allegra Goodman is a sweeping historical fiction novel that retells the true 16th-century survival story of French noblewoman Marguerite de la Rocque. Betrayed and marooned on a subarctic Canadian island by her abusive guardian Roberval, Marguerite undergoes a harrowing transformation, learning to survive the brutal wilderness, profound grief, and utter isolation.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

We do not part
by Han Kang
A haunting novel by Nobel Prize-winning South Korean author Han Kang. It explores the profound friendship between two women against the backdrop of the brutal and historically suppressed 1948 Jeju Island massacre. The narrative intimately examines generational trauma, the weight of history, and the unbreakable bonds of the human spirit.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

Hello beautiful
by Ann Napolitano
Hello Beautiful is a multigenerational novel that explores themes of family, loss, and identity. The book is told through multiple narrators, and the story follows the lives of the Padavano sisters and William, a young man from a neglectful family.

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 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.

Hamnet
by Maggie O'Farrell
A poignant, emotional reimagining of 16th-century playwright William Shakespeare's family life. The novel centers on his wife Agnes and their devastating grief when their 11-year-old son, Hamnet, unexpectedly contracts the plague and dies. Ultimately, the father channels his tragic grief into writing his famous masterpiece, Hamlet.

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 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.

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.

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.

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. 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.

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.

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 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 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.

This is happiness
by Niall Williams
A lyrical coming-of-age novel set in the rainy, fictional village of Faha in County Clare, Ireland, during the late 1950s.

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.