Book Discussion Kits (Historical 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.
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

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.
Approximate number of books in kit: 12

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.
Approximate number of books in kit: 13

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: 8

The Cartographer of No Man's Land
by P. S. Duffy
A Nova Scotian pacifist, assured a job as a cartographer in London, joins the war effort in 1916 in search of his beloved missing brother-in-law, leaving his son to fend for himself in their grieving fishing

village.
Approximate number of books in kit: 12

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.
Approximate number of books in kit: 12

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.
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

The Dovekeepers
by Alice Hoffman
Hoffman's novel is a spellbinding tale of four extraordinarily bold, resourceful, and sensuous women, each of whom has come to Masada by a different path.
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: 9

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.
Approximate number of books in kit: 12

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.
Approximate number of books in kit: 12

Garden of Stones
by Sophie Littlefield
After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Lucy Takeda and her mother, Miyako, are rounded up and taken to the Manzanar prison camp where they endure abuse and harsh living conditions until Miyako makes the ultimate sacrifice.
Approximate number of books in kit: 12

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.
Approximate number of books in kit: 12

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 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.

Approximate number of books in kit: 12

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.
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: 12

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

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.
Approximate number of books in kit: 12

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.
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

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: 11

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

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.
Approximate number of books in kit: 12

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.
Approximate number of books in kit: 12

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: 8

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.
Approximate number of books in kit: 12