

## Book Discussion Kits (Non-Fiction)

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### [And the band played on](#)

by Randy Shilts

An examination of the AIDS crisis critiques the federal government for its inaction, health authorities for their greed, and scientists for their desire for prestige in the face of the AIDS pandemic, in a twentieth anniversary edition of the acclaimed exposé.

### [The Art of Relevance](#)

by Nina Simon

What do the London Science Museum, California Shakespeare Theater, and ShaNaNa have in common? They are all fighting for relevance in an often indifferent world. The Art of Relevance is your guide to mattering more to more people. You'll find inspiring examples, rags-to-relevance case studies, research-based frameworks, and practical advice on how your work can be more vital to your community. Whether you work in museums or libraries, parks or theaters, churches or afterschool programs, relevance can work for you. Break through shallow connection. Unlock meaning for yourself and others. Find true relevance and shine.

### [The Bookseller of Kabul](#)

by Asne Seierstad

Capturing the harsh realities of life in modern-day Afghanistan and plight of Afghan women, the Norwegian journalist provides a portrait of a committed Muslim man, a bookseller, and his family living in post-Taliban Kabul, Afghanistan.

### [Botany of Desire](#)

by Michael Pollan

Focusing on the human relationship with plants, the author of *Second Nature* uses botany to explore four basic human desires--sweetness, beauty, intoxication, and control--through portraits of four plants that embody them: the apple, tulip, marijuana, and potato.

### [The Boys in the Boat](#)

by Daniel James Brown

Traces the story of an American rowing team from the University of Washington that defeated elite rivals at Hitler's 1936 Berlin Olympics, sharing the experiences of such contributors as their enigmatic coach, a visionary boat builder and a homeless teen rower.

### [The Crucible](#)

by Arthur Miller

A veiled reflection of the anticommunist witch-hunts of the 1950s, this play portrays seventeenth-century Salem, Massachusetts as a rigid theocracy eager to ferret out real or imagined deviations from the norm, and indicts everyone in Salem--and by extension American society--for the crimes of intolerance and blind hatred.

### [Dead Wake](#)

by Erik Larson

Gripping and important, *Dead Wake* captures the sheer drama and emotional power of a disaster

whose intimate details and true meaning have long been obscured by history.

### [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.

### [The Girls From Ames](#)

by Jeffrey Zaslow

The story of eleven girls from Ames, Iowa, the ten women they became, and the mysterious death of their eleventh member demonstrates how female friendships can shape every aspect of women's lives.

### [Killers of the Flower Moon: The Osage Murders and the Birth of the FBI](#)

by David Grann

In the 1920s, the richest people per capita in the world were members of the Osage Indian Nation in Oklahoma. After oil was discovered beneath their land, the Osage rode in chauffeured automobiles, built mansions, and sent their children to study in Europe. Then, one by one, they began to be killed off. One Osage woman, Mollie Burkhart, watched as her family was murdered. David Grann revisits a shocking series of crimes in which dozens of people were murdered in cold blood. The book is a masterpiece of narrative nonfiction, as each step in the investigation reveals a series of sinister secrets and reversals. But more than that, it is a searing indictment of the callousness and prejudice toward Native Americans that allowed the murderers to operate with impunity for so long.

### [Lab Girl](#)

by Hope Jahren

An illuminating debut memoir of a woman in science; a moving portrait of a longtime friendship; and a stunningly fresh look at plants that will forever change how you see the natural world

### [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.

### [Musicophilia](#)

by Oliver Sacks

In this book, Oliver Sacks explores the power music wields over us; a power that sometimes we control and at other times don't. He explores, in his inimitable fashion, how it can provide access to otherwise unreachable emotional states, how it can revivify neurological avenues that have been frozen, evoke memories of earlier, lost events or states or bring those with neurological disorders back to a time when the world was much richer.

### [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."

### [The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness](#)

by Michelle Alexander

Argues that the War on Drugs and policies that deny convicted felons equal access to employment, housing, education, and public benefits create a permanent under caste based largely on race.

### [The Odyssey](#)

by Homer/ translated by Robert Fagles

The award-winning translator of Iliad and Oresteia introduces a new translation of Homer's age-old tale of the wanderings of Odysseus during his ten-year voyage back home to Ithaca after the Trojan War as he overcomes both divine and natural forces.

### [Old age is another country: a traveler's guide](#)

by Page Smith

Smith tells us how to grow old with dignity, humor, and active participation in life during the sometimes puzzling retirement years.

### [The Orchid Thief](#)

by Susan Orlean

A staff writer for The New Yorker describes the life and times of John Laroche, a plant smuggler and orchid thief, and the eccentric world of Florida's obsessed collectors of rare plants.

### [The Rainbow Comes and Goes](#)

by Anderson Cooper

A poignant correspondence between the CNN journalist and his iconic designer mother, exchanged in the aftermath of the latter's brief illness, shares a rare window into their relationship and the life lessons imparted by an aging mother to her adult son.

### [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.

### [Refuge: an unnatural history of family and place](#)

by Terry Williams

The author of Leap describes her Mormon upbringing, juxtaposing these reminiscences with discussions of the flooding of a wildlife bird sanctuary and its effect on that ecosystem, and her family's legacy of cancer.

### [The River of Doubt : Theodore Roosevelt's Darkest Journey](#)

by Candice Millard

The true story of Theodore Roosevelt's harrowing 1914 exploration of one of the most dangerous rivers on earth, a black, uncharted tributary of the Amazon that snakes through one of the most treacherous jungles in the world. Indians armed with poison-tipped arrows haunt its shadows; piranhas glide through its waters; boulder-strewn rapids turn the river into a roiling cauldron. After his humiliating election defeat in 1912, Roosevelt set his sights on the most punishing physical challenge he could find, the first descent of an unmapped tributary of the Amazon. He and his men faced an unbelievable series of hardships, losing their canoes and supplies to punishing whitewater rapids, and enduring starvation, Indian attack, disease, drowning, and a murder within their own ranks. Three men died, and

Roosevelt was brought to the brink of suicide. Yet he accomplished a feat so great that many at the time refused to believe it.

### [The Sixth Extinction](#)

by Elizabeth Kolbert

Drawing on the work of geologists, botanists, marine biologists and other researchers, an award-winning writer for The New Yorker discusses the five devastating mass extinctions on earth and predicts the coming of a sixth.

### [The Spirit Catches You And You Fall Down](#)

by Anne Fadiman

A tragic tale of cultural differences chronicles the fight over the proper care of an epileptic Hmong child between a California medical center and her tradition-minded Laotian refugee family.

### [Thunderstruck](#)

by Erik Larson

A portrait of the Edwardian era recounts two parallel stories--the case of Dr. Hawley Crippen, who murdered his wife and fled to America, and Guglielmo Marconi, the inventor of wireless communication--as the new technology is used to capture a killer.

### [Unbroken](#)

by Laura Hillenbrand

Relates the story of a U.S. airman who survived when his bomber crashed into the sea during World War II, spent forty-seven days adrift in the ocean before being rescued by the Japanese Navy, and was held as a prisoner until the end of the war.

### [A Walk in the Woods](#)

by Bill Bryson

Bryson shares his breath-taking adventures and the fascinating history of the 2,100-mile Appalachian Trail, in this wry account of his arduous trek past the Trail's natural pleasures, human eccentrics, and offbeat comforts.

### [The Warmth of Other Suns](#)

by Isabel Wilkerson

In an epic history covering the period from the end of World War I through the 1970s, a Pulitzer Prize winner chronicles the decades-long migration of African Americans from the South to the North and West through the stories of three individuals and their families.

### [The Year of Magical Thinking](#)

by Joan Didion

An autobiographical portrait of marriage and motherhood by the acclaimed author details the critical illness of her daughter, Quintana Roo, followed by the fatal coronary of her husband, John Gregory Dunne, and her daughter's second bout with a life-threatening ailment, and her struggle to come to terms with life and death, illness, sanity, personal upheaval, and grief.