

Book Discussion Kit Titles

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Britt-Marie was Here by Fredrik Backman - NEW

Britt-Marie can't stand mess. A disorganized cutlery drawer ranks high on her list of unforgivable sins. She is not one to judge others—no matter how ill-mannered, unkempt, or morally suspect they might be. It's just that sometimes people interpret her helpful suggestions as criticisms, which is certainly not her intention.

But hidden inside the socially awkward, fussy busybody is a woman who has more imagination, bigger dreams, and a warmer heart that anyone around her realizes.

When Britt-Marie walks out on her cheating husband and has to fend for herself in the miserable backwater town of Borg—of which the kindest thing one can say is that it has a road going through it—she finds work as the caretaker of a soon-to-be demolished recreation center. The fastidious Britt-Marie soon finds herself being drawn into the daily doings of her fellow citizens, an odd assortment of miscreants, drunkards, layabouts. Most alarming of all, she's given the impossible task of leading the supremely untalented children's soccer team to victory. In this small town of misfits, can Britt-Marie find a place where she truly belongs?

Funny and moving, sweet and inspiring, Britt-Marie Was Here celebrates the importance of community and connection in a world that can feel isolating.

A Man Called Ove by Fredrik Backman

Meet Ove. He's a curmudgeon; the kind of man who points at people he dislikes as if they were burglars caught outside his bedroom window. He has staunch principles, strict routines, and a short fuse. People call him 'the bitter neighbour from hell'. But must Ove be bitter just because he doesn't walk around with a smile plastered to his face all the time? Behind the cranky exterior there is a story and a sadness. So when one November morning a chatty young couple with two chatty young daughters move in next door and accidentally flatten Ove's mailbox, it is the lead-in to a comical and heartwarming tale of unkempt cats, unexpected friendship, and the ancient art of backing up a U-Haul. All of which will change one cranky old man and a local residents' association to their very foundations.

All Things Cease to Appear by Elizabeth Brundage – NEW

Late one winter afternoon in the small town of Chosen, New York, professor George Clare knocks on his neighbor's door with terrible news: he returned from work to find his wife, Catherine, murdered in their bed. Someone took an ax to her head while their three-year-old daughter, Franny, played alone in her room across the hall.

Recent transplants to Chosen, the Clares have not received the warmest welcome; once a thriving dairy farm, their home is haunted by the tragedy that left the former owner's three sons orphaned and adrift. As one dark secret peels away to reveal others—and as the Clare marriage reveals itself to have a sinister darkness that rivals the farm's history—Elizabeth Brundage offers a rich and complex portrait of the scars that can haunt a community for generations and the dark longings inside each and every one of us that drive us to do inexplicable things.

Tell the Wolves I'm Home by Carol Rifka Brunt

In this striking literary debut, Carol Rifka Brunt unfolds a moving story of love, grief, and renewal as two lonely people become the unlikeliest of friends and find that sometimes you don't know you've lost someone until you've found them.

1987. There's only one person who has ever truly understood fourteen-year-old June Elbus, and that's her uncle, the renowned painter Finn Weiss. Shy at school and distant from her older sister, June can only be herself in Finn's company; he is her godfather, confidant, and best friend. So when he dies, far too young, of a mysterious illness her mother can barely speak about, June's world is turned upside down. But Finn's death brings a surprise acquaintance into June's life—someone who will help her to heal, and to question what she thinks she knows about Finn, her family, and even her own heart.

At Finn's funeral, June notices a strange man lingering just beyond the crowd. A few days later, she receives a package in the mail. Inside is a beautiful teapot she recognizes from Finn's apartment, and a note from Toby, the stranger, asking for an opportunity to meet. As the two begin to spend time together, June realizes she's not the only one who misses Finn, and if she can bring herself to trust this unexpected friend, he just might be the one she needs the most.

An emotionally charged coming-of-age novel, *Tell the Wolves I'm Home* is a tender story of love lost and found, an unforgettable portrait of the way compassion can make us whole again.

The Silent Sister by Diane Chamberlain

Riley MacPherson has spent her entire life believing that her older sister Lisa committed suicide as a teenager. It was a belief that helped shape her own childhood and that of her brother. It shaped her view of her family and their dynamics. It influenced her entire life. Now, more than twenty years later, her father has passed away and she's in New Bern, North Carolina, cleaning

out his house when she finds evidence that what she has always believed is not the truth. Lisa is alive. Alive and living under a new identity. But why, exactly, was she on the run all those years ago? What secrets are being kept now, and what will happen if those secrets are revealed? As Riley works to uncover the truth, her discoveries will put into question everything she thought she knew about her family. Riley must decide what the past means for her present, and what she will do with her newfound reality. Told with Diane Chamberlain's powerful prose and illumination into the human heart and soul, *The Silent Sister* is an evocative novel of love, loss, and the bonds among siblings.

The Girls by Emma Cline – NEW

Northern California, during the violent end of the 1960s. At the start of summer, a lonely and thoughtful teenager, Evie Boyd, sees a group of girls in the park, and is immediately caught by their freedom, their careless dress, their dangerous aura of abandon. Soon, Evie is in thrall to Suzanne, a mesmerizing older girl, and is drawn into the circle of a soon-to-be infamous cult and the man who is its charismatic leader. Hidden in the hills, their sprawling ranch is eerie and run down, but to Evie, it is exotic, thrilling, charged—a place where she feels desperate to be accepted. As she spends more time away from her mother and the rhythms of her daily life, and as her obsession with Suzanne intensifies, Evie does not realize she is coming closer and closer to unthinkable violence. Emma Cline's remarkable debut novel is gorgeously written and spellbinding, with razor-sharp precision and startling psychological insight. *The Girls* is a brilliant work of fiction.

Whistling Past the Graveyard by Susan Crandall – South Branch Kit

In the summer of 1963, nine-year-old spitfire Starla Claudelle runs away from her strict grandmother's home. Mamie is the nearest thing to family Starla has. After being put on restriction yet again for her sassy mouth, Starla is caught sneaking out. She fears Mamie will make good on her threat to send Starla to reform school, so Starla walks to the outskirts of town, and just keeps walking. Walking a lonely country road, Starla accepts a ride from Eula, a black woman traveling alone with a white baby. The trio embarks on a road trip that will change Starla's life forever. She sees for the first time life as it really is - as she reaches for a dream of how it could one day be.

The Boston Girl by Anita Diamant

An unforgettable novel about a young Jewish woman growing up in Boston in the early twentieth century, told “with humor and optimism...through the eyes of an irresistible heroine.”

Follows the life of one woman, Addie Baum, through a period of dramatic change. Addie is *The Boston Girl*, the spirited daughter of an immigrant Jewish family, born in 1900 to parents who were unprepared for America and its effect on their three daughters. Growing up in the North End of Boston, then a teeming multicultural neighborhood, Addie's intelligence and curiosity

take her to a world her parents can't imagine—a world of short skirts, movies, celebrity culture, and new opportunities for women. Addie wants to finish high school and dreams of going to college. She wants a career and to find true love. From the one-room tenement apartment she shared with her parents and two sisters, to the library group for girls she joins at a neighborhood settlement house, to her first, disastrous love affair, to finding the love of her life, eighty-five-year-old Addie recounts her adventures with humor and compassion for the naïve girl she once was.

Written with the same attention to historical detail and emotional resonance that made Diamant's previous novels bestsellers, *The Boston Girl* is a moving portrait of one woman's complicated life in twentieth century America, and a fascinating look at a generation of women finding their places in a changing world.

All the Light We Cannot See by Anthony Doerr

From the highly acclaimed, multiple award-winning Anthony Doerr, a stunningly ambitious and beautiful novel 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. Marie-Laure lives with her father in Paris near the Museum of Natural History, where he works as the master of its thousands of locks. When she is six, Marie-Laure goes blind and her father builds a perfect miniature of their neighborhood so she can memorize it by touch and navigate her way home.

When she is twelve, the Nazis occupy Paris and father and daughter flee to the walled citadel of Saint-Malo, where Marie-Laure's reclusive great-uncle lives in a tall house by the sea. With them they carry what might be the museum's most valuable and dangerous jewel.

In a mining town in Germany, the orphan Werner grows up with his younger sister, enchanted by a crude radio they find. Werner becomes an expert at building and fixing these crucial new instruments, a talent that wins him a place at a brutal academy for Hitler Youth, then a special assignment to track the resistance. More and more aware of the human cost of his intelligence, Werner travels through the heart of the war and, finally, into Saint-Malo, where his story and Marie-Laure's converge.

The Great Gatsby by F. Scott Fitzgerald – South Branch Kit

The exemplary novel of the Jazz Age, F. Scott Fitzgerald's third book, *The Great Gatsby* (1925), stands as the supreme achievement of his career. T. S. Eliot read it three times and saw it as the "first step" American fiction had taken since Henry James; H. L. Mencken praised "the charm and beauty of the writing," as well as Fitzgerald's sharp social sense; and Thomas Wolfe hailed it as Fitzgerald's "best work" thus far. The story of the fabulously wealthy Jay Gatsby and his love for the beautiful Daisy Buchanan, of lavish parties on Long Island at a time when, *The New York Times* remarked, "gin was the national drink and sex the national obsession," it is an exquisitely crafted tale of America in the 1920s that resonates with the power of myth. A novel

of lyrical beauty yet brutal realism, of magic, romance, and mysticism, *The Great Gatsby* is one of the great classics of twentieth-century literature.

We are All Completely Beside Ourselves by Karen Joy Fowler

Meet the Cooke family: Mother and Dad, brother Lowell, sister Fern, and Rosemary, who begins her story in the middle. She has her reasons. “I was raised with a chimpanzee,” she explains. “I tell you Fern was a chimp and already you aren’t thinking of her as my sister. But until Fern’s expulsion ... she was my twin, my funhouse mirror, my whirlwind other half and I loved her as a sister.” As a child, Rosemary never stopped talking. Then, something happened, and Rosemary wrapped herself in silence.

Karen Joy Fowler weaves her most accomplished work to date—a tale of loving but fallible people whose well-intentioned actions lead to heartbreaking consequences.

The Metropolis Case by Matthew Gallaway – South Branch Kit

From smoky music halls of 1860s Paris to the tumbling skyscrapers of twenty-first-century New York, a sweeping tale of passion, music, and the human heart’s yearning for connection. Martin is a forty-year-old lawyer who, despite his success, feels disoriented and disconnected from his life in post-9/11 Manhattan. But even as he comes to terms with the missteps of his past, he questions whether his life will feel more genuine going forward. Decades earlier, in the New York of the 1960s, Anna is destined to be a grande dame of the international stage. As she steps into the spotlight, however, she realizes that the harsh glare of fame may be more than she bargained for. Maria is a tall, awkward, ostracized teenager desperate to break free from the doldrums of 1970s Pittsburgh. When the operatic power of her extraordinary voice leads Maria to Juilliard, New York seems to hold possibilities that are both exhilarating and uncertain. Lucien is a young Parisian at the birth of the modern era, racing through the streets of Europe in an exuberant bid to become a singer for the ages. When tragedy leads him to a magical discovery, Lucien embarks on a journey that will help him – and Martin, Maria, and Anna – learn that it’s not how many breaths you take, it’s what you do with those you’re given. This unlikely quartet is bound together across centuries and continents by the strange and spectacular history of Richard Wagner’s masterpiece opera *Tristan and Isolde*. Grandly operatic in scale, their story is one of music and magic, love and death, betrayal and fate. Matthew Gallaway’s riveting debut will have readers spellbound from the opening page to its breathtaking conclusion.

Still Alice by Lisa Genova – South Branch Kit

In Lisa Genova’s extraordinary New York Times bestselling novel, an accomplished professor diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease learns that her worth is comprised of more than her ability to remember. Alice Howland is proud of the life she worked so hard to build. At fifty years old, she’s a cognitive psychology professor at Harvard and a world-renowned expert in linguistics with a successful husband and three grown children. When she becomes increasingly

disoriented and forgetful, a tragic diagnosis changes her life—and her relationship with her family and the world—forever. At once beautiful and terrifying, *Still Alice* is a moving and vivid depiction of life with early-onset Alzheimer's disease.

Little Mercies by Heather Gudenkauf

Veteran social worker Ellen Moore has seen the worst side of humanity—the vilest acts one person can commit against another. She is a fiercely dedicated children's advocate and a devoted mother and wife. But one blistering summer day, a simple moment of distraction will have repercussions that Ellen could never have imagined, threatening to shatter everything she holds dear, and trapping her between the gears of the system she works for. Meanwhile, ten-year-old Jenny Briard has been living with her well-meaning but irresponsible father since her mother left them, sleeping on friends' couches and moving in and out of cheap motels. When Jenny suddenly finds herself on her own, she is forced to survive with nothing but a few dollars and her street smarts. The last thing she wants is a social worker, but when Ellen's and Jenny's lives collide, little do they know just how much they can help one another. A powerful and emotionally charged tale about motherhood and justice, *Little Mercies* is a searing portrait of the tenuous grasp we have on the things we love the most, and of the ties that unexpectedly bring us together.

Nightingale by Kristin Hannah -NEW

In love we find out who we want to be.

In war we find out who we are.

FRANCE, 1939

In the quiet village of Carriveau, Vianne Mauriac says goodbye to her husband, Antoine, as he heads for the Front. She doesn't believe that the Nazis will invade France ... but invade they do, in droves of marching soldiers, in caravans of trucks and tanks, in planes that fill the skies and drop bombs upon the innocent. When a German captain requisitions Vianne's home, she and her daughter must live with the enemy or lose everything. Without food or money or hope, as danger escalates all around them, she is forced to make one impossible choice after another to keep her family alive.

Vianne's sister, Isabelle, is a rebellious eighteen-year-old girl, searching for purpose with all the reckless passion of youth. While thousands of Parisians march into the unknown terrors of war, she meets G aetan, a partisan who believes the French can fight the Nazis from within France, and she falls in love as only the young can ... completely. But when he betrays her, Isabelle joins the Resistance and never looks back, risking her life time and again to save others.

With courage, grace and powerful insight, bestselling author Kristin Hannah captures the epic panorama of WWII and illuminates an intimate part of history seldom seen: the women's war.

The Nightingale tells the stories of two sisters, separated by years and experience, by ideals, passion and circumstance, each embarking on her own dangerous path toward survival, love, and freedom in German-occupied, war-torn France—a heartbreakingly beautiful novel that celebrates the resilience of the human spirit and the durability of women. It is a novel for everyone, a novel for a lifetime.

Our Souls at Night by Kent Haruf

A spare yet eloquent, bittersweet yet inspiring story of a man and a woman who, in advanced age, come together to wrestle with the events of their lives and their hopes for the imminent future.

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 in Colorado Springs, her son even farther away in Grand Junction, and Addie and Louis have long been living alone in houses now empty of family, the nights so terribly lonely, especially with no one to talk with.

Their brave adventures—their pleasures and their difficulties—are hugely involving and truly resonant, making *Our Souls at Night* the perfect final installment to this beloved writer's enduring contribution to American literature.

The Girl on the Train by Paula Hawkins

Rachel takes the same commuter train every morning. Every day she rattles down the track, flashes past a stretch of cozy suburban homes, and stops at the signal that allows her to daily watch the same couple breakfasting on their deck. She's even started to feel like she knows them. Their life—as she sees it—is perfect. Not unlike the life she recently lost.

And then she sees something shocking. It's only a minute until the train moves on, but it's enough. Now everything's changed. Unable to keep it to herself, Rachel offers what she knows to the police, and becomes inextricably entwined in what happens next, as well as in the lives of everyone involved. Has she done more harm than good?

Compulsively readable, *The Girl on the Train* is an emotionally immersive, Hitchcockian thriller and an electrifying debut.

A Moveable Feast by Ernest Hemingway – South Branch Kit

Published posthumously in 1964, *A Moveable Feast* remains one of Ernest Hemingway's most beloved works. It is his classic memoir of Paris in the 1920s, filled with irreverent portraits of other expatriate luminaries such as F. Scott Fitzgerald and Gertrude Stein; tender memories of his first wife, Hadley; and insightful recollections of his own early experiments with his craft. It

is a literary feast, brilliantly evoking the exuberant mood of Paris after World War I and the youthful spirit, unbridled creativity, and unquenchable enthusiasm that Hemingway himself epitomized.

And the Mountains Echoed by Khaled Hosseini – South Branch Kit

Khaled Hosseini, the #1 New York Times–bestselling author of *The Kite Runner* and *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, has written a new novel about how we love, how we take care of one another, and how the choices we make resonate through generations. In this tale revolving around not just parents and children but brothers and sisters, cousins and caretakers, Hosseini explores the many ways in which families nurture, wound, betray, honor, and sacrifice for one another; and how often we are surprised by the actions of those closest to us, at the times that matter most. Following its characters and the ramifications of their lives and choices and loves around the globe—from Kabul to Paris to San Francisco to the Greek island of Tinos—the story expands gradually outward, becoming more emotionally complex and powerful with each turning page.

When Breath Becomes Air by Paul Kalanithi – NEW

At the age of thirty-six, on the verge of completing a decade's worth of training as a neurosurgeon, Paul Kalanithi was diagnosed with stage IV lung cancer. One day he was a doctor treating the dying, and the next he was a patient struggling to live. And just likethat, the future he and his wife had imagined evaporated. *When Breath Becomes Air* chronicles Kalanithi's transformation from a naïve medical student "possessed," as he wrote, "by the question of what, given that all organisms die, makes a virtuous and meaningful life" into a neurosurgeon at Stanford working in the brain, the most critical place for human identity, and finally into a patient and new father confronting his own mortality. What makes life worth living in the face of death? What do you do when the future, no longer a ladder toward your goals in life, flattens out into a perpetual present? What does it mean to have a child, to nurture a new life as another fades away? These are some of the questions Kalanithi wrestles with in this profoundly moving, exquisitely observed memoir. Paul Kalanithi died in March 2015, while working on this book, yet his words live on as a guide and a gift to us all. "I began to realize that coming face to face with my own mortality, in a sense, had changed nothing and everything," he wrote. "Seven words from Samuel Beckett began to repeat in my head: 'I can't go on. I'll go on.'" *When Breath Becomes Air* is an unforgettable, life-affirming reflection on the challenge of facing death and on the relationship between doctor and patient, from a brilliant writer who became both.

Fever by Mary Beth Keane

On the eve of the twentieth century, Mary Mallon emigrated from Ireland at age fifteen to make her way in New York City. Brave, headstrong, and dreaming of being a cook, she fought to climb up from the lowest rung of the domestic-service ladder. Canny and enterprising, she worked her way to the kitchen, and discovered in herself the true talent of a chef. Sought after

by New York aristocracy, and with an independence rare for a woman of the time, she seemed to have achieved the life she'd aimed for when she arrived in Castle Garden. Then one determined "medical engineer" noticed that she left a trail of disease wherever she cooked, and identified her as an "asymptomatic carrier" of Typhoid Fever. With this seemingly preposterous theory, he made Mallon a hunted woman.

The Invention of Wings by Sue Monk Kidd

Writing at the height of her narrative and imaginative gifts, Sue Monk Kidd presents a masterpiece of hope, daring, the quest for freedom, and the desire to have a voice in the world.

Hetty "Handful" Grimke, an urban slave in early nineteenth century Charleston, yearns for life beyond the suffocating walls that enclose her within the wealthy Grimke household. The Grimke's daughter, Sarah, has known from an early age she is meant to do something large in the world, but she is hemmed in by the limits imposed on women.

Kidd's sweeping novel is set in motion on Sarah's eleventh birthday, when she is given ownership of ten year old Handful, who is to be her handmaid. We follow their remarkable journeys over the next thirty five years, as both strive for a life of their own, dramatically shaping each other's destinies and forming a complex relationship marked by guilt, defiance, estrangement and the uneasy ways of love.

As the stories build to a riveting climax, Handful will endure loss and sorrow, finding courage and a sense of self in the process. Sarah will experience crushed hopes, betrayal, unrequited love, and ostracism before leaving Charleston to find her place alongside her fearless younger sister, Angelina, as one of the early pioneers in the abolition and women's rights movements. Inspired by the historical figure of Sarah Grimke, Kidd goes beyond the record to flesh out the rich interior lives of all of her characters, both real and invented, including Handful's cunning mother, Charlotte, who courts danger in her search for something better.

Orphan Train by Christina Baker Kline

Between 1854 and 1929, so-called orphan trains ran regularly from the cities of the East Coast to the farmlands of the Midwest, carrying thousands of abandoned children whose fates would be determined by luck or chance. Would they be adopted by a kind and loving family, or would they face a childhood and adolescence of hard labor and servitude? As a young Irish immigrant, Vivian Daly was one such child, sent by rail from New York City to an uncertain future a world away. Returning east later in life, Vivian leads a quiet, peaceful existence on the coast of Maine; the memories of her upbringing rendered a hazy blur. But in her attic, hidden in trunks, are vestiges of a turbulent past. Seventeen-year-old Molly Ayer knows that a community-service position helping an elderly widow clean out her attic is the only thing keeping her out of juvenile hall. But as Molly helps Vivian sort through her keepsakes and possessions, she discovers that she and Vivian aren't as different as they appear. A Penobscot Indian who has

spent her youth in and out of foster homes, Molly is also an outsider being raised by strangers, and she, too, has unanswered questions about the past. Moving between contemporary Maine and Depression-era Minnesota, *Orphan Train* is a powerful tale of upheaval and resilience, second chances, and unexpected friendship.

The Luckiest Girl Alive by Jessica Knoll

HER PERFECT LIFE IS A PERFECT LIE.

As a teenager at the prestigious Bradley School, Ani FaNelli endured a shocking, public humiliation that left her desperate to reinvent herself. Now, with a glamorous job, expensive wardrobe, and handsome blue blood fiancé, she's this close to living the perfect life she's worked so hard to achieve.

But Ani has a secret.

There's something else buried in her past that still haunts her, something private and painful that threatens to bubble to the surface and destroy everything.

With a singular voice and twists you won't see coming, *Luckiest Girl Alive* explores the unbearable pressure that so many women feel to "have it all" and introduces a heroine whose sharp edges and cutthroat ambition have been protecting a scandalous truth, and a heart that's bigger than it first appears.

The question remains: will breaking her silence destroy all that she has worked for—or, will it at long last, set Ani free?

The Dinner by Herman Koch - NEW

It's a summer's evening in Amsterdam, and two couples meet at a fashionable restaurant for dinner. Between mouthfuls of food and over the scrapings of cutlery, the conversation remains a gentle hum of polite discourse. But behind the empty words, terrible things need to be said, and with every forced smile and every new course, the knives are being sharpened.

Each couple has a fifteen-year-old son. The two boys are united by their accountability for a single horrific act; an act that has triggered a police investigation and shattered the comfortable, insulated worlds of their families. As the dinner reaches its culinary climax, the conversation finally touches on their children. As civility and friendship disintegrate, each couple show just how far they are prepared to go to protect those they love.

Skewering everything from parenting values to pretentious menus to political convictions, this novel reveals the dark side of genteel society and asks what each of us would do in the face of unimaginable tragedy.

Turn of Mind by Alice LaPlante

Is the perfect murder the one you can't forget or the one you can't remember? As the story opens, Dr. Jennifer White's life-long friend and neighbor, Amanda, has been killed, and four fingers surgically removed. Dr. White is the prime suspect in the murder and she doesn't know if she did it or not. Narrated in her voice, fractured and eloquent, a picture emerges of the surprisingly intimate, complex alliance between this pair, two proud, forceful women who were at times each other's most formidable adversaries.

Dead Wake: The Last Crossing of the Lusitania by Erik Larson – NEW

On May 1, 1915, with WWI entering its tenth month, a luxury ocean liner as richly appointed as an English country house sailed out of New York, bound for Liverpool, carrying a record number of children and infants. The passengers were surprisingly at ease, even though Germany had declared the seas around Britain to be a war zone. For months, German U-boats had brought terror to the North Atlantic. But the Lusitania was one of the era's great transatlantic "Greyhounds"—the fastest liner then in service—and her captain, William Thomas Turner, placed tremendous faith in the gentlemanly strictures of warfare that for a century had kept civilian ships safe from attack.

Germany, however, was determined to change the rules of the game, and Walther Schwieger, the captain of Unterseeboot-20, was happy to oblige. Meanwhile, an ultra-secret British intelligence unit tracked Schwieger's U-boat, but told no one. As U-20 and the Lusitania made their way toward Liverpool, an array of forces both grand and achingly small—hubris, a chance fog, a closely guarded secret, and more—all converged to produce one of the great disasters of history.

It is a story that many of us think we know but don't, and Erik Larson tells it thrillingly, switching between hunter and hunted while painting a larger portrait of America at the height of the Progressive Era. Full of glamour and suspense, *Dead Wake* brings to life a cast of evocative characters, from famed Boston bookseller Charles Lauriat to pioneering female architect Theodate Pope to President Woodrow Wilson, a man lost to grief, dreading the widening war but also captivated by the prospect of new love.

Annie's Ghosts by Steve Luxemburg – South Branch Kit

Annie's Ghosts is part memoir, part detective story, and part history. Employing his skills as a journalist while struggling to maintain his empathy as a son, author Steve Luxemburg pieces together the story of his mother's motivations, his aunt's unknown life, and the times in which they lived. His search takes him to imperial Russia and Depression-era Detroit, through the Holocaust in Ukraine and the Philippine war zone, and back to the hospitals where Annie and many others languished in anonymity. *Annie's Ghosts* is a story about family secrets, personal journeys, genealogy, mental disability and illness, poverty, and immigration. It is a story of reframing one's self-understanding once a family secret is revealed, providing insight into how

our identities are shaped by learning something shockingly new about our family history. Great Michigan Read 2013-14.

What She Knew by Gilly Macmillan – NEW

In a heartbeat, everything changes...

Rachel Jenner is walking in a Bristol park with her eight-year-old son, Ben, when he asks if he can run ahead. It's an ordinary request on an ordinary Sunday afternoon, and Rachel has no reason to worry—until Ben vanishes.

Police are called, search parties go out, and Rachel, already insecure after her recent divorce, feels herself coming undone. As hours and then days pass without a sign of Ben, everyone who knew him is called into question, from Rachel's newly married ex-husband to her mother-of-the-year sister. Inevitably, media attention focuses on Rachel too, and the public's attitude toward her begins to shift from sympathy to suspicion.

As she desperately pieces together the threadbare clues, Rachel realizes that nothing is quite as she imagined it to be, not even her own judgment. And the greatest dangers may lie not in the anonymous strangers of every parent's nightmares, but behind the familiar smiles of those she trusts the most.

Where is Ben? The clock is ticking...

Station Eleven by Emily St. John Mandel - Main Library and South Branch Kit

Kirsten Raymonde will never forget the night Arthur Leander, the famous Hollywood actor, had a heart attack on stage during a production of *King Lear*. That was the night when a devastating flu pandemic arrived in the city, and within weeks, civilization as we know it came to an end.

Twenty years later, Kirsten moves between the settlements of the altered world with a small troupe of actors and musicians. They call themselves The Traveling Symphony, and they have dedicated themselves to keeping the remnants of art and humanity alive. But when they arrive in St. Deborah by the Water, they encounter a violent prophet who will threaten the tiny band's existence. And as the story takes off, moving back and forth in time, and vividly depicting life before and after the pandemic, the strange twist of fate that connects them all will be revealed. Great Michigan Read 2015-16.

The Paris Wife by Paula McLain – South Branch Kit

A deeply evocative story of ambition and betrayal, *The Paris Wife* captures a remarkable period of time and a love affair between two unforgettable people: Ernest Hemingway and his wife Hadley.

Chicago, 1920: Hadley Richardson is a quiet 28-year-old who has all but given up on love and happiness – until she meets Ernest Hemingway and her life changes forever. Following a whirlwind courtship and wedding, the pair set sail for Paris, where they became the golden couple in a lively and volatile group – the fabled “Lost Generation” – that included Gertrude Stein, Ezra Pound, and F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald.

Though deeply in love, the Hemingways are ill prepared for the hard-drinking and fast-living life of Jazz Age Paris, which hardly values traditional notions of family and monogamy. Surrounded by beautiful women and competing egos, Ernest struggles to find the voice that will earn him a place in history, pouring all the richness and intensity of his life with Hadley and their circle of friends into the novel that will become *The Sun Also Rises*. Hadley, meanwhile, strives to hold on to her sense of self as the demands of life with Ernest grow costly and her roles as wife, friend, and muse become more challenging. Despite their extraordinary bond, they eventually find themselves facing the ultimate crisis of their marriage – a deception that will lead to the unraveling of everything they’ve fought so hard for.

The Husband’s Secret by Liane Moriarty – South Branch Kit

Imagine that your husband wrote you a letter, to be opened after his death. Imagine, too, that the letter contains his deepest, darkest secret - something with the potential to destroy not just the life you built together, but the lives of others as well. Imagine, then, that you stumble across that letter while your husband is still very much alive... Cecilia Fitzpatrick has achieved it all - she's an incredibly successful businesswoman, a pillar of her small community, and a devoted wife and mother. Her life is as orderly and spotless as her home. But that letter is about to change everything, and not just for her: Rachel and Tess barely know Cecilia - or each other - but they too are about to feel the earth-shattering repercussions of her husband's secret.

The Distant Hours by Kate Morton – South Branch Kit

A long lost letter arrives in the post and Edie Burchill finds herself on a journey to Milderhurst Castle, a great but moldering old house, where the Blythe spinsters live and where her mother was billeted 50 years before as a 13-year-old child during WWII. The elder Blythe sisters are twins and have spent most of their lives looking after the third and youngest sister, Juniper, who hasn’t been the same since her fiancé jilted her in 1941. Inside the decaying castle, Edie begins to unravel her mother’s past. But there are other secrets hidden in the stones of Milderhurst, and Edie is about to learn more than she expected. The truth of what happened in ‘the distant hours’ of the past has been waiting a long time for someone to find it. Morton once again enthralls readers with an atmospheric story featuring unforgettable characters beset by love and circumstance and haunted by memory that reminds us of the rich power of storytelling.

The Forgotten Garden by Kate Morton – South Branch Kit

From the internationally bestselling author of *The House at Riverton*, an unforgettable new novel that transports the reader from the impoverished back alleys of pre-World War I London to the shores of colonial Australia where so many made a fresh start, and back to the windswept coast of Cornwall, England, past and present. A tiny girl is abandoned on a ship headed for Australia in 1913. She arrives completely alone with nothing but a small suitcase containing a few clothes and a single book – a beautiful volume of fairy tales. She is taken in by the dock master and his wife and raised as their own. On her twenty-first birthday they tell her the truth. With her sense of self shattered and with very little to go on, “Nell” sets out on a journey to England in an effort to trace her story and find her real identity. Her quest leads her to Blackhurst Manor on the Cornish coast and the secrets of the doomed Mountrachet family. But it is not until her granddaughter, Cassandra, takes up the search after Nell’s death that all the pieces of the puzzle are assembled. At Cliff Cottage, on the grounds of Blackhurst Manor, Cassandra discovers the forgotten garden of the book’s title and is able to unlock the secrets of the beautiful book of fairy tales.

After You by Jojo Moyes – NEW

How do you move on after losing the person you loved? How do you build a life worth living? Louisa Clark is no longer just an ordinary girl living an ordinary life. After the transformative six months spent with Will Traynor, she is struggling without him. When an extraordinary accident forces Lou to return home to her family, she can't help but feel she's right back where she started. Her body heals, but Lou herself knows that she needs to be kick-started back to life.

Me Before You by JoJo Moyes

They had nothing in common until love gave them everything to lose.

Louisa Clark is an ordinary girl living an exceedingly ordinary life—steady boyfriend, close family—who has never been farther afield than their tiny village. She takes a badly needed job working for ex–Master of the Universe Will Traynor, who is wheelchair bound after an accident. Will has always lived a huge life—big deals, extreme sports, worldwide travel—and now he’s pretty sure he cannot live the way he is.

Will is acerbic, moody, bossy—but Lou refuses to treat him with kid gloves, and soon his happiness means more to her than she expected. When she learns that Will has shocking plans of his own, she sets out to show him that life is still worth living.

A Love Story for this generation, *Me Before You* brings to life two people who couldn’t have less in common—a heartbreakingly romantic novel that asks, What do you do when making the person you love happy also means breaking your own heart?

The Lady in Gold by Anne Marie O'Connor – South Branch Kit

The spellbinding story, part fairy tale, part suspense, of Gustav Klimt's Portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer, one of the most emblematic portraits of its time; of the beautiful, seductive Viennese Jewish salon hostess who sat for it; the notorious artist who painted it; the now vanished turn-of-the-century Vienna that shaped it; and the strange twisted fate that befell it.

Commonwealth by Ann Patchett – NEW

The acclaimed, bestselling author—winner of the PEN/Faulkner Award and the Orange Prize—tells the enthralling story of how an unexpected romantic encounter irrevocably changes two families' lives.

One Sunday afternoon in Southern California, Bert Cousins shows up at Franny Keating's christening party uninvited. Before evening falls, he has kissed Franny's mother, Beverly—thus setting in motion the dissolution of their marriages and the joining of two families.

Spanning five decades, *Commonwealth* explores how this chance encounter reverberates through the lives of the four parents and six children involved. Spending summers together in Virginia, the Keating and Cousins children forge a lasting bond that is based on a shared disillusionment with their parents and the strange and genuine affection that grows up between them.

When, in her twenties, Franny begins an affair with the legendary author Leon Posen and tells him about her family, the story of her siblings is no longer hers to control. Their childhood becomes the basis for his wildly successful book, ultimately forcing them to come to terms with their losses, their guilt, and the deeply loyal connection they feel for one another.

State of Wonder by Ann Patchett – South Branch Kit

Ann Patchett has dazzled readers with her award-winning books, including *The Magician's Assistant* and the New York Times bestselling *Bel Canto*. Now she raises the bar with *State of Wonder*, a provocative and ambitious novel set deep in the Amazon jungle. Dr. Marina Singh, a research scientist with a Minnesota pharmaceutical company, is sent to Brazil to track down her former mentor, Dr. Annick Swenson, who seems to have all but disappeared in the Amazon while working on what is destined to be an extremely valuable new drug, the development of which has already cost the company a fortune. Nothing about Marina's assignment is easy; not only does no one know where Dr. Swenson is, but the last person who was sent to find her, Marina's research partner Anders Eckman, died before he could complete his mission. Marina embarks on an odyssey into the insect-infested jungle in hopes of finding her former mentor as well as answers to several troubling questions about her friend's death, the state of her company's future, and her own past.

Once found, Dr. Swenson, now in her seventies, is as ruthless and uncompromising as she ever was back in the days of Grand Rounds at Johns Hopkins. With a combination of science and

subterfuge, she dominates her research team and the natives she is studying with the force of an imperial ruler. But while she is as threatening as anything the jungle has to offer, the greatest sacrifices to be made are the ones Dr. Swenson asks of herself, and will ultimately ask of Marina, who finds she may still be unable to live up to her teacher's expectations. In a narrative replete with poison arrows, devouring snakes, and a neighboring tribe of cannibals, *State of Wonder* is a world unto itself, where unlikely beauty stands beside unimaginable loss. It is a tale that leads the reader into the very heart of darkness, and then shows what lies on the other side.

The Wind is Not a River by Brian Payton – South Branch Kit

The Wind Is Not a River is Brian Payton's gripping tale of survival and an epic love story in which a husband and wife—separated by the only battle of World War II to take place on American soil—fight to reunite in Alaska's starkly beautiful Aleutian Islands.

Following the death of his younger brother in Europe, journalist John Easley is determined to find meaning in his loss. Leaving behind his beloved wife, Helen, he heads north to investigate the Japanese invasion of Alaska's Aleutian Islands, a story censored by the U.S. government.

While John is accompanying a crew on a bombing run, his plane is shot down over the island of Attu. He survives only to find himself exposed to a harsh and unforgiving wilderness, known as “the birthplace of winds.” There, John must battle the elements, starvation, and his own remorse while evading discovery by the Japanese.

Alone at home, Helen struggles with the burden of her husband's disappearance. Caught in extraordinary circumstances, in this new world of the missing, she is forced to reimagine who she is—and what she is capable of doing. Somehow, she must find John and bring him home, a quest that takes her into the farthest reaches of the war, beyond the safety of everything she knows.

I'm Thinking of Ending Things by Iain Reid – NEW

Jake and a woman known only as The Girlfriend are taking a long drive to meet his parents at their secluded farm. But when Jake takes a sudden detour, leaving The Girlfriend stranded at a deserted high school, the story transforms into a twisted combination of the darkest unease, psychological frailty, and a look into the limitations of solitude.

In this smart, suspenseful, and intense literary thriller, debut novelist Iain Reid explores the depths of the human psyche, questioning consciousness, free will, the value of relationships, fear, and the limitations of solitude. Reminiscent of Jose Saramago's early work, Michel Faber's cult classic *Under the Skin*, and Lionel Shriver's *We Need to Talk about Kevin*, *I'm Thinking of Ending Things* is an edgy, haunting debut. Tense, gripping, and atmospheric, this novel pulls you in from the very first page...and never lets you go.

When We Were Strangers by Pamela Schoenwaldt – South Branch Kit

“If you leave Opi, you’ll die with strangers,” Irma Vitale’s mother always warned. Even after her beloved mother’s passing, 20-year-old Irma longs to stay in her Abruzzo mountain village, plying her needle. But too poor and plain to marry, and subject to growing danger in her own home, she risks rough passage to America and workhouse servitude to achieve her dream of making dresses for gentlewomen.

In the raw immigrant quarters and with the help of an entrepreneurial Irish serving girl, ribbon-bedecked Polish ragman, and austere Alsatian dressmaker, Irma begins to stitch together a new life – until her peace and self are shattered in the charred remains of the Great Chicago Fire. Enduring a painful recovery, Irma reaches deep within to find that she has even more to offer the world than her remarkable ability with a needle and thread.

The Art of Hearing Heartbeats by Jan-Philipp Sendker – South Branch Kit

On the day after her graduation from law school, Julia Win’s father disappears without a trace, leaving her family unsettled and confused. It is not until a few years later that her mother finds a piece of the puzzle – an unmailed love letter to a Burmese woman named Mi Mi. Intent on solving the mystery and coming to terms with her father’s past, Julia puts her career and her life on hold to travel to the village where Mi Mi once lived. Her journey takes her to the small mountain village of Kalaw, where she is approached by a man who claims to know her father, and who seems to have an uncanny knowledge of Julia herself. Intrigued, she returns to meet him every afternoon and listen to his incredible tales of her father’s youth – of his childhood blindness, his education at a monastery, and, most of all, about his passionate relationship with a local girl. *The Art of Hearing Heartbeats* is a magical, uplifting tale of hardship and resilience, and the unyielding power of love to move mountains.

The Art Forger by B.A. Shapiro – South Branch Kit

Almost twenty-five years after the infamous art heist at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum—still the largest unsolved art theft in history—one of the stolen Degas paintings is delivered to the Boston studio of a young artist. Claire Roth has entered into a Faustian bargain with a powerful gallery owner by agreeing to forge the Degas in exchange for a one-woman show in his renowned gallery. But as she begins her work, she starts to suspect that this long-missing masterpiece—the very one that had been hanging at the Gardner for one hundred years—may itself be a forgery. *The Art Forger* is a thrilling novel about seeing—and not seeing—the secrets that lie beneath the canvas.

The Rosie Project by Graeme Simsion

Don Tillman, professor of genetics, has never been on a second date. He is a man who can count all his friends on the fingers of one hand, and whose lifelong difficulty with social rituals has convinced him that he is simply not wired for romance. So when an acquaintance informs

him that he would make a "wonderful" husband, his first reaction is shock. Yet he must concede to the statistical probability that there is someone for everyone, and he embarks upon The Wife Project. In the orderly, evidence-based manner with which he approaches all things, Don sets out to find the perfect partner. She will be punctual and logical – most definitely not a barmaid, a smoker, a drinker, or a late-arriver . . . yet Rosie is all these things. She is also beguiling, fiery, intelligent – and on a quest of her own. She is looking for her biological father, a search that a certain DNA expert might be able to help her with. Don's Wife Project takes a back burner to The Father Project and an unlikely relationship blooms, forcing the scientifically minded geneticist to confront the spontaneous whirlwind that is Rosie – and the realization that love is not always what looks good on paper.

The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks by Rebecca Skloot

From a single, abbreviated life grew a seemingly immortal line of cells that made some of the most crucial innovations in modern science possible. And from that same life, and those cells, Rebecca Skloot has fashioned in *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* a fascinating and moving story of medicine and family, of how life is sustained in laboratories and in memory. Henrietta Lacks was a mother of five in Baltimore, a poor African American migrant from the tobacco farms of Virginia, who died from a cruelly aggressive cancer at the age of 30 in 1951. A sample of her cancerous tissue, taken without her knowledge or consent, as was the custom then, turned out to provide one of the holy grails of mid-century biology: human cells that could survive--even thrive--in the lab. Known as HeLa cells, their stunning potency gave scientists a building block for countless breakthroughs, beginning with the cure for polio. Meanwhile, Henrietta's family continued to live in poverty and frequently poor health, and their discovery decades later of her unknowing contribution--and her cells' strange survival--left them full of pride, anger, and suspicion. For a decade, Skloot doggedly but compassionately gathered the threads of these stories, slowly gaining the trust of the family while helping them learn the truth about Henrietta, and with their aid she tells a rich and haunting story that asks the questions, Who owns our bodies? And who carries our memories?

The Light Between Oceans by M. L. Stedman – Main and South Branch Kit

After four harrowing years on the Western Front, Tom Sherbourne returns to Australia and takes a job as the lighthouse keeper on Janus Rock, nearly half a day's journey from the coast. To this isolated island, where the supply boat comes once a season and shore leaves are granted every other year at best, Tom brings a young, bold, and loving wife, Isabel. Years later, after two miscarriages and one stillbirth, the grieving Isabel hears a baby's cries on the wind. A boat has washed up onshore carrying a dead man and a living baby. Tom, whose records as a lighthouse keeper are meticulous and whose moral principles have withstood a horrific war, wants to report the man and infant immediately. But Isabel has taken the tiny baby to her heart. Against Tom's judgment, they claim her as their own and name her Lucy. When she is two, Tom and Isabel return to the mainland and are reminded that there are other people in

the world and that their choice has devastated one of them. M. L. Stedman's mesmerizing, beautifully written novel seduces us into accommodating Isabel's decision to keep this "gift from God." We are swept into a story about extraordinarily compelling characters seeking to find their North Star in a world where there is no right answer, where justice for one person is another's tragic loss.

The Kind Worth Killing by Peter Swanson – NEW

In a tantalizing set-up reminiscent of Patricia Highsmith's classic *Strangers on a Train*... On a night flight from London to Boston, Ted Severson meets the stunning and mysterious Lily Kintner. Sharing one too many martinis, the strangers begin to play a game of truth, revealing very intimate details about themselves. Ted talks about his marriage that's going stale and his wife Miranda, who he's sure is cheating on him. Ted and his wife were a mismatch from the start—he the rich businessman, she the artistic free spirit—a contrast that once inflamed their passion, but has now become a cliché.

But their game turns a little darker when Ted jokes that he could kill Miranda for what she's done. Lily, without missing a beat, says calmly, "I'd like to help." After all, some people are the kind worth killing, like a lying, stinking, cheating spouse...

Back in Boston, Ted and Lily's twisted bond grows stronger as they begin to plot Miranda's demise. But there are a few things about Lily's past that she hasn't shared with Ted, namely her experience in the art and craft of murder, a journey that began in her very precocious youth.

Suddenly these co-conspirators are embroiled in a chilling game of cat-and-mouse, one they both cannot survive . . . with a shrewd and very determined detective on their tail.

Clara and Mr. Tiffany by Susan Vreeland – South Branch Kit

Against the unforgettable backdrop of New York near the turn of the 20th century, from the Gilded Age world of formal balls and opera to the immigrant poverty of the Lower East Side, bestselling author Susan Vreeland breathes life into a work of art in this extraordinary novel. It's 1893, and at the Chicago World's Fair, Louis Comfort Tiffany makes his debut with a luminous exhibition of innovative stained-glass windows that he hopes will earn him a place on the international artistic stage. But behind the scenes in his New York studio is the freethinking Clara Driscoll, head of his women's division, who conceives of and designs nearly all of the iconic leaded-glass lamps for which Tiffany will long be remembered.

Never publicly acknowledged, Clara struggles with her desire for artistic recognition and the seemingly insurmountable challenges that she faces as a professional woman. She also yearns for love and companionship, and is devoted in different ways to five men, including Tiffany, who enforces a strict policy – he does not employ married women. Ultimately, Clara must decide what makes her happiest – the professional world of her hands or the personal world of her heart.

Beautiful Ruins by Jess Walter – South Branch Kit

The acclaimed, award-winning author of the national bestseller *The Financial Lives of the Poets* returns with his funniest, most romantic, and most purely enjoyable novel yet. Hailed by critics and loved by readers of literary and historical fiction, *Beautiful Ruins* is the story of an almost-love affair. From the moment it opens on a rocky patch of Italian coastline, circa 1962, when a daydreaming young innkeeper looks out over the water and spies a mysterious woman approaching him on a boat—*Beautiful Ruins* is a dazzling, yet deeply human, roller coaster of a novel. From the lavish set of Cleopatra to the shabby revelry of the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, to the back lots of contemporary Hollywood, *Beautiful Ruins* is gloriously inventive and constantly surprising—a story of flawed yet fascinating people navigating the rocky shores of their lives while clinging to their improbably dreams.