

## Book Discussion Kits – Classic Literature

[\*All the King's Men\*](#) by Robert Penn Warren - Winner of the Pulitzer Prize, this classic is generally regarded as the finest novel ever written on American politics. It is the story of Willie Stark, a back-country lawyer whose idealism is overcome by his lust for power.

[\*The Awakening\*](#) by Kate Chopin - The story of a woman, unhappy with her indifferent husband and family, who gives in to her adulterous desires regardless of Victorian religious and social pressures.

[\*The Beautiful and Damned\*](#) by F. Scott Fitzgerald - Set in the heady Jazz Age of New York, "The beautiful and damned" chronicles the relationship between Anthony Patch, a Harvard-educated aspiring aesthete, and his beautiful trophy wife, Gloria, as they wait to inherit his grandfather's fortune.

[\*Brave New World\*](#) by Aldous Huxley - In the year 632 A.F. (After Ford, the deity) dawns a world of tomorrow in which capitalist civilization has been reconstituted through scientific and psychological engineering, where the people are genetically designed to be passive, and useful to the ruling class.

[\*The Bridge of San Luis Rey\*](#) by Thornton Wilder - In this Pulitzer Prize winning classic, a bridge collapses in eighteenth-century Peru and five die. Who were they? And what cosmic ironies led them to their fate?

[\*Cakes and Ale\*](#) by W. Somerset Maugham - The bitter, witty novel about the business of writing and London literary society between the two World Wars focuses on the lives of a famous writer and his two very different wives.

[\*Cannery Row\*](#) by John Steinbeck - A timeless American classic. Cannery Row is only a few blocks long, but the story it harbors is suffused with warmth, understanding and a great fund of human values.

[\*Carol or The Price of Salt\*](#) by Patricia Highsmith - Trapped in a boring, dead-end day job in a department store, stage designer Therese Belivet finds her life forever changed when she encounters--and falls in love with Carol Aird, an alluring suburban housewife in the midst of a divorce.

[\*A Christmas Carol\*](#) by Charles Dickens - Miserly Ebenezer Scrooge is visited by the ghosts of past, present and future in the Victorian story of the meaning of redemption and benevolence.

[\*The Collected Writings of Zelda Fitzgerald\*](#) by Zelda Fitzgerald – Her only published novel, *Save Me the Waltz*, an autobiographical account of the Fitzgeralds' adventures in Paris and on the Riviera; eleven short stories; and the letters she wrote to her husband over the span of their courtship and marriage.

[\*Complete Stories\*](#) by Dorothy Parker -. Dorothy Parker's talents extended far beyond brash one-liners and clever rhymes. Her skilled social satire brings to life the urban milieu from the Jazz Age to the 1950s. This is the complete collection of stories including thirteen previously unpublished works.

[\*The Daughter of Time\*](#) by Josephine Tey - A 20th-century policeman sees a picture of Richard III and reinvestigates Richard's role in the murder of the princes in the Tower using all available information about Richard's time. Voted the number one mystery novel of all time by the Crime Writers Association.

[\*Dead Souls\*](#) by Nikolai Gogol – In 19th century Russia an opportunist takes advantage of political corruption to buy landowners' rights to dead but registered and counted peasants in order to raise money on the certificates.

[\*Delta Wedding\*](#) by Eudora Welty - Set in 1923 on a Mississippi delta plantation, this vivid and charming portrait of a large southern family is shown through the Fairchilds as they prepare for their daughter's wedding.

[\*The Dollmaker\*](#) by Harriette Arnow - A story of a strong Southern woman determined to hold onto her dreams of a rural family life while uprooted to Detroit during World War II.

[Elizabeth and her German Garden](#) by Elizabeth Von Arnim – Originally published in 1898, this is a year's diary of a noblewoman. It includes commentary on the beauty of nature and on society, but is primarily humorous due to Elizabeth's frequent mistakes and her idiosyncratic outlook on life.

[The Enduring Hills](#) by Janice Holt Giles - A story of a boy who yearns for wider horizons than his Eastern Kentucky home.

[Fahrenheit 451](#) by Ray Bradbury - Fireman Guy Montag loves to rush to a fire and watch books burn up. Then he meets a seventeen-year old girl who tells him of a past when people were not afraid, and a professor who tells him of a future where people could think.

[Far From the Madding Crowd](#) by Thomas Hardy - Although Gabriel Oak loves the proud Bathsheba Everdene, she willfully becomes involved with two other unsuitable men, with tragic consequences.

[Fathers and Sons](#) by Ivan Turgenev – In 19th century Russia, Evgeny Bazarov, a young student and nihilist, professes to believe in nothing but science and thus disappoints his adoring parents.

[The Fountainhead](#) by Ayn Rand - Rand's hero is Howard Roark, a brilliant young architect who is engaged in ideological warfare with a society that despises him, an architectural community that doesn't understand him, and a woman who loves him but wants to destroy him.

[Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus](#) by Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley - This 19th Century classic is a timeless terrifying tale of one man's obsession to create life – and the monster that became his legacy

[Gaudy Night](#) by Dorothy L. Sayres - This famous Harriet Vane mystery takes place at the all female Shrewsbury College at Oxford, where a powerful argument for women's status as men's intellectual equals is unfolding.

[Go Tell It on the Mountain](#) by James Baldwin – An autobiographical novel that tells the story of the deep spiritual struggle of a fourteen year old black boy growing up in a Harlem community in the 1930s and of his attempts to find his own identity as the son of a Pentecostal minister.

[The Good Earth](#) by Pearl S. Buck - This great modern classic depicts life in China through one Chinese peasant and his family at a time before the vast political and social upheavals transformed an essentially agrarian country into a world power.

[A Good Man is Hard to Find, and Other Stories](#) by Flannery O'Connor - O'Connor keenly uses irony and dialogue to focus on the dark side of life in the rural south in this collection of short stories.

[The Grapes of Wrath](#) by John Steinbeck - A Pulitzer Prize-winning novel spotlighting the struggle of a dust bowl family who migrate to California to become migrant workers.

[The Great Gatsby](#) by F. Scott Fitzgerald - The story of the fabulously wealthy Jay Gatsby and his love for the beautiful Daisy Buchanan has been acclaimed by generations of readers.

[The Haunting of Hill House](#) by Shirley Jackson - A tale of subtle, psychological terror has earned its place as one of the significant haunted house stories of the ages.

[The Heart is a Lonely Hunter](#) by Carson McCullers - The story of the passions of an adolescent girl and her friendships with social outcasts of her small southern town.

[Herland](#) by Charlotte Perkins Gilman - Utopian novel about a fictitious society of women who reproduce by asexual means resulting in an ideal society that is free of conflict and war.

[Howards End](#) by E. M. Forster - A story of class conflict within British society as a wealthy family, two independent but cultured sisters, and a young man living on the edge of poverty struggle with their destinies and desires.

[\*I Heard the Owl Call My Name\*](#) by Margaret Craven - A young vicar is sent to a village in the Pacific Northwest, learning tolerance and love as he faces his own poignant destiny.

[\*The Innocents Abroad\*](#) by Mark Twain - This book offers a glimpse of a major writer when he was and just beginning to flex his muscles, and also serves as an enduring no-nonsense guide for the first-time traveler of Europe and the Holy Land.

[\*Jane Eyre\*](#) by Charlotte Bronte - The romantic classic set in Victorian England of an orphaned young woman who accepts employment as a governess with the mysterious Mr. Rochester.

[\*Jude the Obscure\*](#) by Thomas Hardy - The story of the tragic relationship between Jude Fawley, a village stonemason who is thwarted in his aspirations to the ministry, and Sue Bridehead, a free-thinking cousin who is shunned by society for her social and sexual rebellion.

[\*Light in August\*](#) by William Faulkner - Joe Christmas does not know whether he is black or white and can fit in neither world. Faulkner makes of Joe's tragedy a powerful indictment of racism.

[\*Little Women\*](#) by Louisa May Alcott - Set against the backdrop of the American Civil War, four sisters (Meg, Jo, Beth, and Amy March) evolve and mature from children into adulthood.

[\*Lolita\*](#) by Vladimir Nabokov - When it was published in 1955, *Lolita* immediately became a cause célèbre because of the freedom and sophistication with which it handled the unusual erotic predilections of its protagonist

[\*The Maltese Falcon\*](#) by Dashiell Hammett - Considered the author's finest work, this mystery novel introduces Sam Spade, the prototype of the hard-boiled detective.

[\*Mrs. Dalloway\*](#) by Virginia Woolf - Direct and vivid in her account of the details of Clarissa Dalloway's preparations for a party she is to give that evening, Woolf ultimately manages to reveal much more.

[\*My Antonia\*](#) by Willa Cather - Despite betrayal and crushing opposition, Antonia steadfastly pursues her quest for happiness—a moving struggle that mirrors the quiet drama of the American landscape. Considered by many to be Cather's greatest novel.

[\*Native Son\*](#) by Richard Wright - In 1930s Chicago Bigger Thomas, a young, poor black man, is caught in a downward spiral after he kills a young white woman in a brief moment of panic.

[\*O Pioneers!\*](#) by Willa Cather - The story of a 19th century Nebraska family coming to grips with farm life and personal relationships.

[\*One Hundred Years of Solitude\*](#) by Gabriel Garcia-Marquez - A weaving of spiritual, personal and political worlds into a history of the mysterious and magical Buendia family.

[\*One of Ours\*](#) by Willa Cather - The Pulitzer Prize-winning narrative of the making of a young American soldier in World War I.

[\*Peyton Place\*](#) by Grace Metalious – This 1950s cultural icon topped the bestseller lists for more than a year, unbuttoned the straitlaced New England of the popular imagination, transformed the publishing industry, and made its young author one of the most talked-about people in America.

[\*The Picture of Dorian Gray\*](#) by Oscar Wilde - A classic tale of a well-to-do Englishman who buys his youth from the Devil, remaining young and handsome as his portrait reflects the evil that consumes his life.

[\*The Portrait of a Lady\*](#) by Henry James - When Isabel Archer, a beautiful, spirited American, is brought to Europe by her wealthy aunt, she is resolved to determine her own fate, But then she finds herself irresistibly drawn to Gilbert Osmond, who, beneath his veneer of charm and cultivation, is cruelty itself.

[\*Pride and Prejudice\*](#) by Jane Austen - An 18th century comedy of manners about a family's attempts to marry off five daughters.

[\*The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie\*](#) by Muriel Spark - Miss Jean Brodie teaches school and influences the lives of young girls in Edinburgh during the 1930s, until one of them betrays her.

[\*The Razor's Edge\*](#) by W. Somerset Maugham – In 1918, leaving wealth and loved ones behind, Larry Darrell journeys to the mountains of India in search of spiritual wisdom. But Larry learns that the path to enlightenment is as painful and narrow as treading the sharp edge of a razor.

[\*Rebecca\*](#) by Daphne Du Maurier - A young bride arriving at Manderley, is drawn into the life of the first Mrs. De Winter, the beautiful Rebecca, dead, but not forgotten.

[\*The Red Pony\*](#) by John Steinbeck - The classic story of a boy's journey to manhood under the joys and hardships of ranch life, focused around the life and death of his red pony..

[\*River of Earth\*](#) by James Still - A vivid account of difficult Appalachian life, told with humor and love through the eyes of a boy.

[\*The Screwtape letters; with Screwtape Proposes a Toast\*](#) by C. S. Lewis - In this humorous and perceptive exchange between two devils, C. S. Lewis delves into moral questions about good vs. evil, temptation, repentance, and grace. Through this wonderful tale, the reader emerges with a better understanding of what it means to live a faithful life.

[\*Slaughterhouse-Five\*](#) by Kurt Vonnegut - A fictional account of Vonnegut's experience as a prisoner of war during World War II and, in his words, —is about the inhumanity of many of man's inventions to man.

[\*So Big\*](#) by Edna Ferber – The unforgettable story of Selina Peake DeJong, a gambler's daughter, and her struggles to stay afloat and maintain her dignity and her sanity in the face of marriage, widowhood, and single parenthood.

[\*The Sorrows of Young Werther\*](#) by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe - Chronicles a young man's unrequited love and fatal passion for a married woman.

[\*The Stranger\*](#) by Albert Camus - Through the story of an ordinary man unwittingly drawn into a senseless murder on an Algerian beach, Camus explores what he termed "the nakedness of man faced with the absurd."

[\*Summer\*](#) by Edith Wharton - A New Englander of humble origins, Charity Royall is swept into a torrid love affair with an artistically inclined young man, but her dreams of a future with him are thwarted. Summer was an immediate sensation when first published in 1917 and still stands as one of Wharton's greatest achievements.

[\*The Sun Also Rises\*](#) by Ernest Hemingway - This classic captures life among the expatriates on Paris's Left Bank during the 1920s, the brutality of bullfighting in Spain, and the moral and spiritual dissolution of a generation.

[\*Their Eyes Were Watching God\*](#) by Zora Neale Hurston - The story of tragedy and triumph of an early 20th century African-American woman.

[\*Things Fall Apart\*](#) by Chinua Achebe - A novel warning of the problems of colonialism in Africa and its impact on national culture.

[\*To the Lighthouse\*](#) by Virginia Woolf - At their holiday home in Cornwall, a distant lighthouse holds a haunting attraction for the members of an Edwardian family as disillusionment, turmoil, and a world on the brink of war plague the family's relationships.

[\*Tortilla Flat\*](#) by John Steinbeck - Danny is a paisano descended from the original Spanish settlers of Monterey, California. He and his cohorts value friendship above money and possessions. Their love of freedom and scorn for material things draw them into daring and often hilarious adventures.

[\*A Tree Grows in Brooklyn\*](#) by Betty Smith - This American classic about a young girl's coming-of-age at the turn of the century captures a unique time and place. The story of young, sensitive, and idealistic Francie Nolan and her bittersweet formative years.

[\*The Trial\*](#) by Franz Kafka - The terrifying tale of Josef K., a respectable bank officer who is suddenly and inexplicably arrested and must defend himself against a charge about which he can get no information.

[\*Vile Bodies\*](#) by Evelyn Waugh - This darkly comic novel does a scathing take on the 1920s London's culture of hedonistic living and the hectic partying of the 'Bright, Young People', mostly men and women from the aristocracy and the upper classes as well as artists and bohemians.

[\*The Wedding\*](#) by Dorothy West - A family saga of race and class focusing on the relationship of an African American woman and her white jazz musician husband.

[\*Wellspring\*](#) by Janice Holt Giles - The last book Giles published before her death in 1979, *Wellspring* brings together Giles's fiction, nonfiction, autobiography, and fictionalized autobiography to reveal a behind-the-scenes look at her life, her family, and her love for her adopted state of Kentucky

[\*Winesburg, Ohio\*](#) by Sherwood Anderson - A timeless book of connected short stories about the brave, cowardly, and altogether realistic inhabitants of an imaginary American town.

[\*Wise Blood\*](#) by Flannery O'Connor - The story of Hazel Motes, a twenty-two-year-old caught in an unending struggle against his innate, desperate fate, this tale of redemption, retribution, and false prophets gives us one of the most riveting characters in twentieth-century American fiction.