

## Book Discussion Kits – Kentucky Focus

[\*Abundance: a novel of Marie Antoinette\*](#) by Sena Jeter Naslund - Marie Antoinette lived a brief--but astounding--life. She rebelled against the formality and rigid protocol of the court; an outsider who became the target of a revolution that ultimately decided her fate.

[\*Ahab's Wife, or the Star-Gazer\*](#) by Sena Jeter Naslund - Inspired by a brief passage in Melville's *Moby-Dick*, this tale of 19th century America explores the strong-willed woman who loved Captain Ahab.

[\*Aindreas the Messenger: Louisville, Ky, 1855\*](#) by Gerald McDaniel - Aindreas is a young Irish-Catholic boy living in gaudy, grubby Louisville in 1855, a city where being Irish, Catholic, German or black usually means trouble.

[\*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.

[\*All the Living\*](#) by C. E. Morgan - Moving to a remote tobacco farm that her lover inherited when the rest of his family was killed in a terrible accident, a young woman in 1984 Kentucky struggles with their isolated life, her lover's grief, and a budding friendship with a dynamic young preacher.

[\*Animal Dreams\*](#) by Barbara Kingsolver - A vivid tale of a young woman rediscovering that which makes her life whole when she returns home to take care of her aging father.

[\*Atlas of Unknowns\*](#) by Tania James - Winning a scholarship to a prestigious school in New York, Anju leaves her sister behind in Kerala, India, and enters the elite world of her Hindu American host family.

[\*The Bean Trees\*](#) by Barbara Kingsolver - Taylor Greer leaves poor rural Kentucky in a '55 Volkswagen and ends up in Tucson Arizona, —inheriting a 3-year-old American Indian girl along the way.

[\*Clay's Quilt\*](#) by Silas House - Orphaned at age four, Clay Sizemore is taken in by the residents of a small Appalachian mining town. As he grows, his substitute family helps him find his true family roots.

[\*Cloud Chamber\*](#) by Michael Dorris - The saga of an American immigrant family from their roots in 19th century Ireland to life in present-day Montana.

[\*The Coal Tattoo\*](#) by Silas House - (Large Print) When a miner survives the collapse of a mine, he'll often surface with a permanent mark stamped onto his skin-- a coal tattoo. Everyone who is raised in Black Banks is indelibly marked by and forever connected to the place.

[\*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.

[\*Dr. King's Last Day\*](#) by Georgia Davis Powers – The author, the first person of color and the first woman elected to the Kentucky State Senate, gives an eyewitness account of the hours leading up to Dr. King's 1968 death and the lives of the five friends who spent those last hours with him.

[\*Drinking Coffee Elsewhere\*](#) by Z.Z. Packer - This debut collection of short stories dealing with black men and women, mostly young and urban. treats listeners to the richness of highly developed characters and leads them to some intriguing scenarios.

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

[\*Flight Behavior\*](#) by Barbara Kingsolver - Dellarobia Turnbow is a discontent farmwife when she discovers an unusual group of butterflies in a forested valley behind her house. This curiosity causes a stir in the scientific and local communities, garnering a great deal of media attention and leads to Dellarobia confronting and questioning everything she thought she believed in..

[\*The Fountain of St. James Court\*](#) by Sena Jeter Naslund (Large Print) - Kathryn Callaghan has just finished her novel about renowned painter Élisabeth Vigée-Le Brun, a survivor of the French Revolution who was hated for her sympathetic portraits of Marie Antoinette. Although the manuscript is complete, its author remains haunted by Élisabeth's experiences,

[\*The German Woman\*](#) by Paul Griner - Years after being mistaken for a spy and forced to flee a World War I field hospital, Kate, the English widow of a German surgeon, attracts the attention of Claus, a propaganda filmmaker and World War II British spy. New book by Kentucky author.

[\*Ghosting\*](#) by Kirby Gann - In Eastern Kentucky a young man has disappeared, along with his drug dealer's reefer harvest. Deciding that the best way to discover what happened to his older brother is to take his place as a drug runner, James Cole plunges into a dark underworld of drugs, violence, and long hidden family secrets.

[\*The Girl in the Blue Beret\*](#) by Bobbie Ann Mason - When an American World War II pilot shot down in Occupied Europe returns to his crash site decades later, he finds himself drawn back in time to the brave people who helped him escape from the Nazis.

[\*Hannah Coulter\*](#) by Wendell Berry - Now, in her late seventies, twice-widowed and alone, Hannah sorts through her memories: of her childhood, of young love and loss, of raising children and the changing seasons. An installment in Wendell Berry's story of the citizens of Port William, Kentucky.

[\*Hell's Angels: A Strange and Terrible Saga\*](#) by Hunter S. Thompson - In the mid-1960s, Thompson spent almost two years living with the controversial Angels. His book successfully captures a singular moment in American history, when such countercultural movements were electrifying and horrifying America.

[\*Icy Sparks\*](#) by Gwyn Hyman Rubio - A coming-of-age story set in 1950s rural Kentucky, featuring a poor, orphaned child prone to "fits".

[\*In Country\*](#) by Bobbie Ann Mason - Sam resents the effects of the Vietnam War, especially the death of her father and her uncle's suffering from Agent Orange ingestion. An American classic by a Kentucky author.

[\*Italian Love Stories: A Kentuckian's Journal of Tuscany\*](#) by Donna Valtri Crane - Crane, a second generation Italian-American and first generation Kentuckian, gives a witty and observant account of life in the tiny Tuscan hill town of Volterra.

[\*Jayber Crow\*](#) by Wendell Berry - Set in the fictional small town of Port William, this is the story of a young man who abandons his plan to become a minister to instead become the town barber.

[\*Kentucky Straight\*](#) by Chris Offutt - Stories, sometimes poignant, about life in Kentucky Appalachia, told with no patina of nostalgia, but with a strong sense of place.

[\*Kentucky Women: Their Lives and Times\*](#) by Melissa McEuen – Collection of essays from 17 scholars profiling twenty-three notable women from three centuries across the state —from the story of Shawnee chief Nonhelema Hokolesqua to the lasting impact of former Gov. Martha Layne Collins.

[\*The Lacuna\*](#) by Barbara Kingsolver - The story of Harrison William Shepherd, a man caught between two worlds -- Mexico and the United States in the 1930s, '40s, and '50s -- and whose search for identity takes readers to the heart of the twentieth century's most tumultuous events.

[\*Lost Mountain: a Year in the Vanishing Wilderness: Radical Strip Mining, and the Devastation of Appalachia\*](#) by Erik Reece - A groundbreaking work that exposes how radical strip mining is destroying one of America's most precious natural resources and the communities that depend on it.

[\*The Memory Keeper's Daughter\*](#) by Kim Edwards - A doctor is forced by a blizzard to deliver his own twins. When his daughter is born, he sees immediately that she has Down's syndrome. Rationalizing it as a need to protect Norah, his wife, he makes a split second decision that will alter all of their lives forever.

[\*The Memory of Old Jack\*](#) by Wendell Berry - Kentucky author Wendell Berry proves his mastery as a storyteller by sharing the life story of a 92-year-old small town Kentucky farmer, "Old Jack" Beechum.

[\*Mending: New and Selected Stories\*](#) by Sallie Bingham - Spanning 50 years, this omnibus of Bingham's tight, sparkling short fiction includes stories from her earliest collections to her latest.

[\*Obedience\*](#) by Will Lavender - The students of Winchester University's class on Logic and Reasoning are given a strange assignment by the creepy Professor Williams, to follow a series of clues to find a missing girl who will be murdered if she has not been found by the end of the term.

[\*A Parchment of Leaves\*](#) by Silas House - In 1917, a Cherokee woman who leaves her community to marry a white man finds herself isolated and discriminated against as she tries to settle into her new life.

[\*A Pearl in the Storm\*](#) by Tori Murden McClure – Kentuckian Tori McClure rowed across the Atlantic Ocean solo in a twenty-three-foot plywood boat with no motor or sail. A true story of high adventure -- and of her personal quest to discover that embracing her own humanity was more important than superhuman feats.

[\*The Poisonwood Bible\*](#) by Barbara Kingsolver - A story of a fierce, evangelical Baptist who takes his family on a mission to the Belgian Congo in 1959. A suspenseful epic of one family's tragic undoing and remarkable reconstruction.

[\*Prodigal Summer\*](#) by Barbara Kingsolver - Kentucky born author weaves together three stories of human love within a larger tapestry of lives in southern Appalachia.

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

[\*Saint Monkey\*](#) by Jacinda Townsend - Two friends from a 1950s small Black community in hardscrabble eastern Kentucky try to retain their friendship when one of them is invited to New York to play the Apollo Theater with a jazz group while the other sinks lower into the poverty and care of a scraping-by rural life.

[\*The Secret Wisdom of the Earth\*](#) by Christopher Scotton - Witnessing his younger brother's accidental death, teenaged Kevin spends the summer traumatized in his grandfather's Appalachia coal-mining community, which is fighting plans for a massive mountaintop-removal operation.

[\*The Seven Storey Mountain\*](#) by Thomas Merton - In 1941, a young man decided to give up a promising literary career to enter a monastery in Kentucky, from where he proceeded to become one of the most influential writers of the 20th century.

[\*Slow Dancing on Dinosaur Bones\*](#) by Lana Witt - When a Californian rolls his broken-down car into a remote Kentucky town, he finds friends, enemies and lovers who are playing out tales as old as the prehistoric soil beneath their feet.

[\*Subversive Southerner: Anne Braden and the Struggle for Racial Justice in the Cold War South\*](#) by Catherine Fosl - One of the few white people--particularly from the South--to join the southern black freedom movement in its nascent years in the 1950s, Braden became a role model and inspiration for the thousands of young white people that joined the mass movement a decade later.

[\*Sweeping Up Glass\*](#) by Carolyn D. Wall - Living behind her store with her son in 1938 Kentucky, Olivia is stunned when members of the exclusive Hunt Club suddenly turn their sights on the two of them, a dangerous situation complicated by the exposure of the community's horrifying secrets.

[\*The Wall Between\*](#) by Anne Braden - In 1954, Anne and Carl Braden bought a house in an all-white neighborhood in Louisville, Kentucky, on behalf of a black couple, Andrew and Charlotte Wade. The result was mob violence against the Wades, the bombing of the house, and imprisonment for Carl on charges of sedition.

[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

[You Have Given Me a Country](#) by Neela Vaswani - Combining memoir, history, and fiction, the book follows the paths of the author's Irish-Catholic mother and Sindhi-Indian father on their journey toward each other and the biracial child they create.