

## Book Discussion Kits added to the collection in the past year – September 2016

[\*American Creation: Triumphs and Tragedies at the Founding of the Republic\*](#) by Joseph J. Ellis - An account of the early years of the Republic, the most politically creative era in American history, when a dedicated group of men undertook a bold experiment in political ideals.

[\*Bettyville\*](#) by George Hodgeman – A laugh-out-loud memoir of a cultured gay man who leaves New York City to care for his aging, irascible mother in Paris, Missouri; examining the warm yet fraught relationship between mother and son, as well as growing up gay and small-town life in America.

[\*Between the World and Me\*](#) by Ta-nehisi Coates - In a letter to his adolescent son. Coates shares with his son—and readers—the story of his awakening to the truth about his place in the world through a series of revelatory experiences, asking the question of what is it like to inhabit a black body and find a way to live within it? And how can we all honestly reckon with this fraught history and free ourselves from its burden?

[\*The Birth of the Pill: How Four Crusaders Reinvented Sex and Launched a Revolution\*](#) by Jonathan Eig - The fascinating story of one of the most important scientific discoveries of the 20<sup>th</sup> century made possible by the unlikely bonds between a millionaire activist, a free-loving crusader, a Roman Catholic gynecologist, and a maverick scientist.

[\*The Boys in the Boat: Nine Americans and Their Epic Quest for Gold at the 1936 Berlin Olympics\*](#) by Daniel James Brown - The improbable, intimate account of how nine working-class boys from the American West showed the world at the 1936 Olympics in Berlin what true grit really meant.

[\*Brooklyn\*](#) by Colm Toibin - Leaving her home in post-World War II Ireland to work as a bookkeeper in Brooklyn, Ellis Lacey discovers a new romance in America with a charming blond Italian man before devastating news from home threatens her happiness.

[\*Call the Midwife: A Memoir of Birth, Joy, and Hard Times\*](#) by Jennifer Worth - Worth was just twenty-two when she volunteered for midwifery training in London's East End in the 1950s. Coming from a sheltered background, she found that conditions for many women giving birth just half a century ago were horrifying.

[\*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.

[\*The Children's Crusade\*](#) by Ann Packer - When their younger sibling returns, the three oldest Blair children find their lives disrupted in ways they could have never imagined as they each tell their story that is interwoven with portraits of their family at crucial points in their history.

[\*Circling the Sun\*](#) by Paula McLain - A fictionalized biography of the adventures and romances of beautiful, high-flying aviator and author Beryl Markham in British Kenya in the early 20th century. Her 1936 solo flight across the Atlantic in a two-seater prop plane transfixed the world.

[\*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.

[\*Daisy Turner's Kin\*](#) by Jane C. Beck - A daughter of freed African American slaves, Daisy Turner became a living repository of history. The family narrative entrusted to her began among the Yoruba in West Africa and continued with her own century and more of life.

[\*Dispatches from Pluto: Lost and Found in the Mississippi Delta\*](#) by Richard Grant – Adventure writer Grant takes on “the most American place on Earth”—the enigmatic, beautiful, often derided Mississippi Delta where he and his girlfriend decide on a whim to buy an old plantation house in Pluto, Miss and get to know all their neighbors - black, white, rich and poor.

[\*The Dream Lover\*](#) by Elizabeth Berg – In 1831 Aurore Dupin, a free-spirited young woman, leaves her loveless marriage in the French countryside for a creative, bohemian life in Paris, a life that will lead her to become literary icon George Sand whose cross-dressing persona and many love affairs scandalized society.

[\*Fifth Born\*](#) by Zelda Lockhart - Triggered by an accidental meeting with a relative she had not seen in a long time, long-buried memories resurface to reveal a shocking truth to Odessa about the sexual abuse that marked her early family life.

[\*Go Set a Watchman\*](#) by Harper Lee - Twenty years after the trial of Tom Robinson, Scout returns home to Maycomb to visit her father and struggles with personal and political issues as her small Alabama town adjusts to the turbulent events beginning to transform the United States in the mid-1950s.

[\*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.

[\*God Help the Child\*](#) by Toni Morrison – The story of a woman who calls herself Bride, whose stunning blue-black skin is only one element of her beauty, her boldness and confidence, her success in life; but which caused her light-skinned mother to deny her even the simplest forms of love.

[\*The Great Santini\*](#) by Pat Conroy - Stern and unyielding Marine pilot Bull Meecham rules his family like his squadron, with an iron fist, challenging his southern-bred gentle wife and his top athlete son to stand up and fight back for the independence to make their own decisions.

[\*H is for Hawk\*](#) by Helen Macdonald - When naturalist Helen Macdonald's beloved father died suddenly, she was devastated. An experienced falconer, she resolved to purchase and raise one of the most vicious predators, the goshawk, as a means to cope with her loss. Thus Mabel came into her life.

[\*Housekeeping\*](#) by Marilynne Robinson - After a series of family tragedies Ruth and her younger sister Lucille grow up haphazardly first under the care of their competent grandmother, then of two comically bumbling great-aunts, and finally of Sylvie, their eccentric and remote aunt.

[\*I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings\*](#) by Maya Angelou – In this first of five volumes of autobiography, poet Maya Angelou recounts a youth filled with disappointment, frustration, tragedy, and finally hard-won independence.

[\*Irrepressible: the Jazz Age Life of Henrietta Bingham\*](#) by Emily Bingham – Raised like a princess in one of the most powerful families in the American South, Henrietta Bingham ripped through the Jazz Age like an F. Scott Fitzgerald character: intoxicating and intoxicated, selfish and often terribly troubled.

[\*The Japanese Lover\*](#) by Isabel Allende – In pre-war San Francisco a young Jewish refugee and the son of the Japanese gardener of her wealthy relations form a loving attachment that spans decades despite misfortunes, cultural differences and the realities of ageing.

[\*A Judgement in Stone\*](#) by Ruth Rendell – When a housekeeper carries out a modern "Valentine's Day Massacre" on the family that employs her, the investigation uncovers evidence of a personal tragedy that precipitated the crime. Often deemed the greatest work of one of the world's great crime novelists.

[\*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.

[\*Kingdom of Shadows\*](#) by Alan Furst - In 1938 Paris, Nicholas Morath, a Hungarian aristocrat and former cavalry officer, is recruited by his uncle, Count Janos Polanyi, to try to bring down the Hungarian fascists, as Europe moves ever closer to all-out war.

[Leaving Before the Rains Come](#) by Alexandra Fuller - A child of the Rhodesian wars and of two deeply complicated parents, noted memoirist Alexandra Fuller turns to her African past for clues to rebuild her life after a painful divorce.

[Love and Treasure](#) by Ayelet Waldman - A tale inspired by the World War II Hungarian Gold Train follows the 1945 American capture of a locomotive filled with riches and the efforts of a Jewish-American lieutenant's granddaughter to track down a mysterious woman 70 years later.

[The Lover](#) by Marguerite Duras - An adolescent French girl living with her family in pre-World War II Indochina in the waning days of France's colonial empire has a scandalous and tumultuous affair with the son of a wealthy Chinese businessman.

[Maisie Dobbs](#) by Jacqueline Winspear - Maisie Dobbs entered domestic service in 1910 at thirteen. When her remarkable intelligence is discovered by her employer, Maisie is educated and in 1929 she hangs out her shingle: M. Dobbs, Trade and Personal Investigations.

[A Man Called Ove](#) by Fredrik Backman - A curmudgeon hides a terrible personal loss beneath a cranky and short-tempered exterior while clashing with his new neighbors, a boisterous family whose chattiness and habits lead to unexpected friendship.

[The Master](#) by Colm Toibin - Nineteenth-century writer Henry James is heartbroken when his first play performs poorly in contrast to Oscar Wilde's "The Importance of Being Earnest" and struggles with subsequent doubts about his sexual identity.

[The Meursault Investigation](#) by Kamel Daoud - This work revisits Albert Camus's *The Stranger* from the Arab perspective. The narrator, Harun, recalls the murder of his older brother, Musa, who is all but anonymous in Camus's work, and the heavy consequences of this act.

[The Monsters of Templeton](#) by Lauren Groff - Returning in disgrace to her mother's home after an affair with her professor, temperamental Willie arrives at the same time the remains of a prehistoric creature are discovered in the town's lake, a finding that leads to painful revelations about Willie's family.

[Mrs. Poe](#) by Lynn Cullen - Struggling to support her family in mid-19th-century New York, writer Frances Osgood makes an unexpected connection with literary master Edgar Allan Poe and finds her survival complicated by her intense attraction to the writer and the scheming manipulations of his wife.

[My Brilliant Friend](#) by Elena Ferrante - The world of Elena and Lila, Neapolitan girls growing up after the Second World War, is small, casually violent, and confined to their poor neighborhood. Lila: smarter and bolder than the others, does what she wants, drawing shyer Elena, who narrates the story, in her wake.

[Naked](#) by David Sedaris - Whether he's taking to the road with a thieving quadriplegic, sorting out the fancy from the extra-fancy in a bleak fruit-packing factory, or celebrating Christmas in the company of a recently paroled prostitute, this collection of memoirs creates a wickedly incisive portrait of his world.

[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.

[Ordinary Grace](#) by William Kent Kruger - Looking back at a tragic event that occurred during his thirteenth year, Frank Drum explores how a complicated web of secrets, adultery, and betrayal shattered his Methodist family and their small 1961 Minnesota community.

[Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis](#) by Robert Putnam - The author examines the family, the community, the school and the support networks in key communities across America, presenting proof that in every case the upper classes are moving forward with ease, while the lower classes and the poor are trapped in a world of violence, debt, and lack of resources.

[Our Souls at Night](#) by Kent Haruf - In Holt, Colorado, widower Louis Waters is initially thrown when the widowed Addie Moore suggests that they spend time together, in bed, to stave off loneliness, but soon they are exchanging the confidences and memories.

[Out of Africa](#) by Isak Dinesen – With classic simplicity and a painter's feeling for atmosphere and detail, Isak Dinesen tells of the years she spent from 1914 to 1931 managing a coffee plantation in Kenya

[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 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.

[Room](#) by Emma Donoghue - A five-year-old narrates a story about his life growing up in a single room where his mother aims to protect him from the man who kidnapped her when she was a teenager and has held her prisoner for seven years.

[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.

[Shakespeare: The World as Stage](#) by Bill Bryson – Shakespeare's biographical information has long been a thicket of wild supposition arranged around scant facts. With a steady hand and his trademark wit, Bill Bryson sorts through this colorful muddle to reveal the man himself rather than the myths.

[Some Luck](#) by Jane Smiley – A love song to American farms and the people who keep them, Some Luck spans thirty years in the lives of a Iowa farm family, telling a parallel story of the changes taking place in America from 1920 through 1950.

[Spinster: Making a Life of One's Own](#) by Kate Bolick - Journalist and cultural critic Bolick uses her own life experiences as well as those of five pioneering women from the last century in a revelatory look at the pleasures and possibilities of remaining single.

[A Spool of Blue Thread](#) by Anne Tyler - Three generations of Whitshanks have lived in the family home in Baltimore since the 1920s, in which they have loved, squabbled and protected secrets. Now there are mounting tensions among the grown Whitshank siblings as their aging parents need looking after.

[The Sympathizer](#) by Viet Thanh Nguyen - A communist double agent, a half-French, half-Vietnamese army captain, comes to America after the Fall of Saigon, and while building a new life with other Vietnamese refugees in Los Angeles is secretly reporting back to his communist superiors in Vietnam.

[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.

[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 Weight of Water](#) by Anita Shreve - A photographer who has come to a small island off the coast of New Hampshire to shoot a photo-essay about a double murder that took place there over a century ago, notices parallels between her own life and the lives of the murder victims.

[West with the Night](#) by Beryl Markham - Beryl Markham, the first person to fly solo across the Atlantic from east to west, describes her childhood on a farm in Kenya, her apprenticeship as a horse trainer, and her later career as a pioneer aviator in the remote corners of Africa.

[\*When Books Went to War\*](#) by Molly Guptill Manning (Large Print) – While the Nazis were burning hundreds of millions of books across Europe, America printed and shipped 140 million books to its troops. The uplifting story of the Armed Forces Editions, small, lightweight paperbacks carried by American GIs in every theater of war.

[\*White Like Me: Reflections on Race From a Privileged Son\*](#) by Tim J. Wise – Wise examines white privilege as a social institution in America and how that it can ultimately harm its recipients in the long run and make progressive social change less likely.