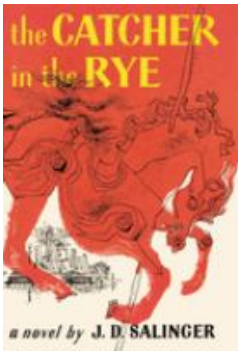
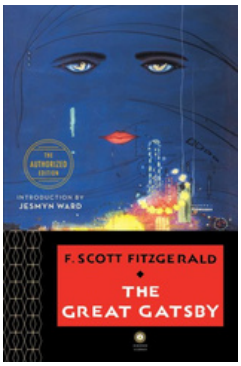
Possible Titles 2025-2026 Book Discussion

Classics



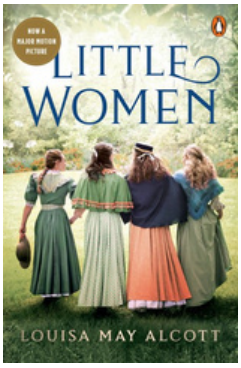
The Catcher in the Rye (277 pages)
by J.D. Salinger

The Catcher in the Rye is the only novel by American author J. D. Salinger. It was partially published in serial form in 1945–46 before being novelized in 1951. Originally intended for adults, it is often read by adolescents for its themes of angst and alienation, and as a critique of superficiality in society. The novel also deals with themes of innocence, identity, belonging, loss, connection, sex, and depression. The main character, Holden Caulfield, has become an icon for teenage rebellion.



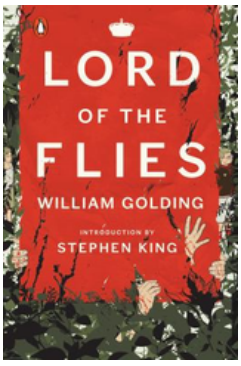
The Great Gatsby (180 pages)
by F. Scott Fitzgerald

Jay Gatsby is the man who has everything. But one thing will always be out of his reach. Everybody who is anybody is seen at his glittering parties. Day and night his Long Island mansion buzzes with bright young things drinking, dancing, and debating his mysterious character. For Gatsby---young, handsome, and fabulously rich---always seems alone in the crowd, watching and waiting, though no one knows what for. Beneath the shimmering surface of his life he is hiding a secret: a silent longing that can never be fulfilled. And soon this destructive obsession will force his world to unravel.



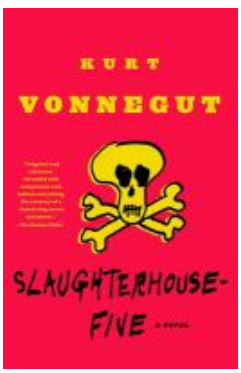
Little Women (464 pages)
by Louisa May Alcott

Little Women is a coming-of-age novel by Louisa May Alcott that follows the lives of the four March sisters—Meg, Jo, Beth, and Amy—as they navigate their transition from childhood to adulthood during the American Civil War. The story explores themes of domesticity, work, and love, highlighting the sisters' personal growth and their relationships with each other and their community.



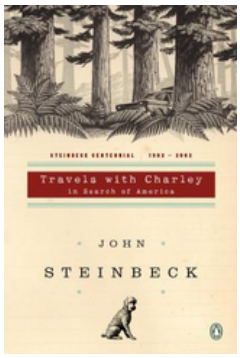
Lord of the Flies (285 pages)
by William Golding

Lord of the Flies is the 1954 debut novel of British author William Golding. The plot concerns a group of prepubescent British boys who are stranded on an uninhabited island and their disastrous attempts to govern themselves that led to a descent into savagery. The novel's themes include morality, leadership, and the tension between civility and chaos.



Slaughterhouse-Five (275 pages)
by Kurt Vonnegut

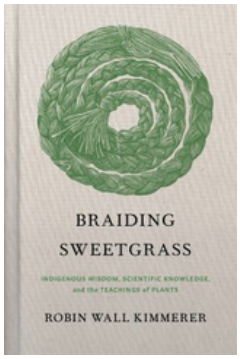
A fourth-generation German-American now living in easy circumstances on Cape Cod (and smoking too much), who, as an American infantry scout hors de combat, as a prisoner of war, witnessed the fire-bombing of Dresden, Germany, "the Florence of the Elbe," a long time ago, and survived to tell the tale. This is a novel somewhat in the telegraphic schizophrenic manner of tales of the planet Tralfamadore, where the flying saucers come from peace.



Travels with Charley: In Search of America (214 pages)
by John Steinbeck

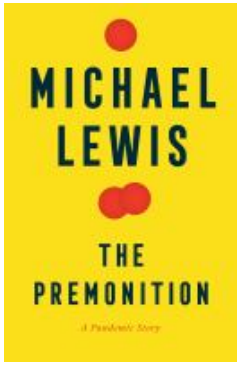
Travels with Charley: In Search of America is a travelogue by John Steinbeck, published in 1962, detailing his 1960 road trip across the United States with his poodle, Charley. The journey, which covered nearly 10,000 miles, was motivated by Steinbeck's desire to reconnect with America and its people, exploring themes of culture, politics, and the changing landscape of the country during that time.

Nonfiction



Braiding Sweetgrass (382pages)
by Robin Wall Kimmerer

As a botanist, Robin Wall Kimmerer has been trained to ask questions of nature with the tools of science. As a member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation, she embraces the notion that plants and animals are our oldest teachers. In Braiding Sweetgrass, Kimmerer brings these two lenses of knowledge together to take us on "a journey that is every bit as mythic as it is scientific, as sacred as it is historical, as clever as it is wise.

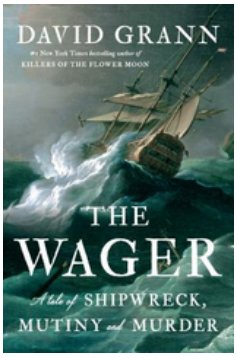


The Premonition (304 pages)
by Michael Lewis

The Premonition by Michael Lewis is a non-fiction book that explores the experiences of a group of medical professionals and scientists who foresaw the COVID-19 pandemic and attempted to prepare the U.S. government for its impact. The narrative highlights their struggles against bureaucratic obstacles and the failures of public health institutions, particularly the CDC, in responding effectively to the crisis.

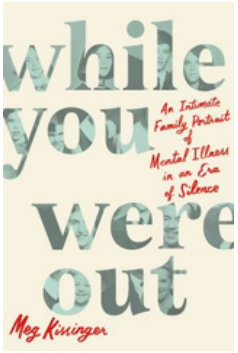
The Splendid and the Vile (329 pages)
by Erik Larson

The Splendid and the Vile by Erik Larson chronicles Winston Churchill's first year as Prime Minister during World War II, focusing on his leadership and the resilience of the British people during the Blitz. The book combines historical events with personal stories, illustrating how Churchill inspired courage and unity in a time of crisis.



The Wager: A Tale of Shipwreck, Mutiny, and Murder (585 pages)
by David Grann

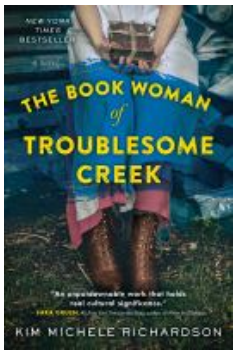
The Wager: A Tale of Shipwreck, Mutiny, and Murder by David Grann recounts the true story of the HMS Wager, a British warship that wrecked off the coast of Patagonia in 1741 during a secret mission against Spain. The narrative explores the harrowing experiences of the survivors, their struggle for survival, and the ensuing mutiny, ultimately leading to a dramatic court martial that reveals conflicting accounts of heroism and betrayal.



While You Were Out (303 pages)
by Meg Kissinger

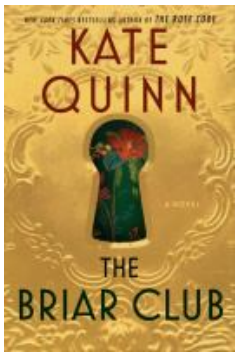
While You Were Out begins as the personal story of one family's struggles then opens outward, as local author Meg Kissinger details how childhood tragedy catalyzed a journalism career focused on exposing our country's flawed mental health care. Combining the intimacy of memoir with the rigor of investigative reporting, the book explores the consequences of shame, the havoc of botched public policy, and the hope offered by new treatment strategies. Powerful, candid and filled with surprising humor, this is the story of one family's love and resilience in face of great loss.

Fiction



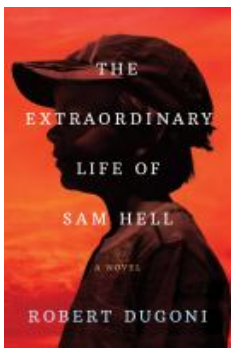
The Book Woman of Troublesome Creek (308 pages)
by Kim Michele Richardson

Cussy Mary Carter is the last of her kind, her skin the color of a blue damselfly in these dusty hills. But that doesn't mean she's got nothing to offer. As a member of the Pack Horse Library Project, Cussy delivers books to the hill folk of Troublesome, hoping to spread learning in these desperate times. But not everyone is so keen on Cussy's family or the Library Project, and the hardscrabble Kentuckians are quick to blame a Blue for any trouble in their small town. The Book Woman of Troublesome Creek is a story of raw courage, fierce strength, and one woman's determination to bring a little bit of hope to the darkly hollers



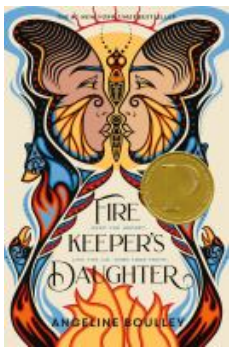
The Briar Club (423 pages)
by Kate Quinn

The Briar Club is a historical fiction novel set in 1950s Washington, D.C., focusing on a group of women living in a boarding house called Briarwood House. The story begins with a murder on Thanksgiving Day, leading to a complex narrative that explores the characters' interconnected lives, secrets, and the themes of friendship and resilience against the backdrop of societal issues like McCarthyism.



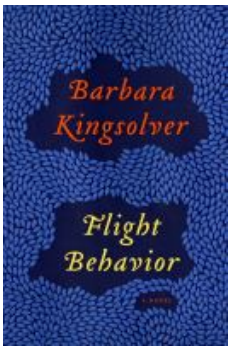
The Extraordinary Life of Sam Hell (428 pages)
by Robert Dugoni

The Extraordinary Life of Sam Hell is a coming-of-age novel chronicling the life of protagonist Sam Hill, who is born with a genetic condition causing his irises to appear red. From his early years, Sam faces ostracization and bullying, but his deeply Catholic mother insists the condition is God's will. As Sam makes the hard journey towards self-acceptance, he wrestles with questions of fate and faith. The novel was named book of the year in 2018 by Suspense Magazine.



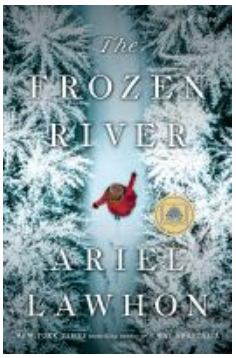
Firekeeper's Daughter (494 pages)
by Angeline Boulley

Firekeeper's Daughter by Angeline Boulley follows 18-year-old Daunis Fontaine, who navigates her mixed heritage as she becomes embroiled in an FBI investigation after witnessing a murder in her community. The novel explores themes of identity, family, and the impact of grief while highlighting Daunis's journey to uncover the truth about her friend's death and the secrets within her Ojibwe tribe.



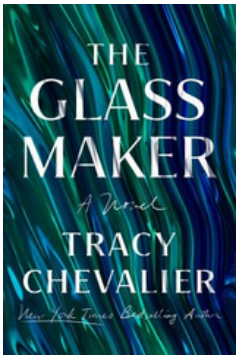
Flight Behavior (436 pages)
by Barbara Kingsolver

Flight Behavior is a novel by Barbara Kingsolver that follows Dellarobia Turnbow, a discontented housewife in rural Appalachia, who discovers millions of displaced monarch butterflies in her valley. This unexpected phenomenon brings attention to climate change and disrupts her community, prompting Dellarobia to confront her life and the broader environmental issues at play.



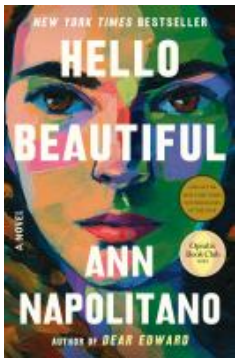
The Frozen River (432 pages)
by Ariel Lawhon

The Frozen River is a historical fiction novel set in 1789 Maine, following Martha Ballard, an 18th-century midwife who investigates the murder of a man found frozen in the Kennebec River. The story intertwines themes of women's rights and societal challenges, as Martha navigates her role in a male-dominated world while uncovering dark secrets in her community.



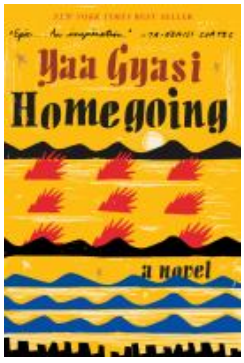
The Glassmaker (402 pages)
by Tracy Chevalier

The Glassmaker by Tracy Chevalier follows the story of Orsola Rosso, a young girl from a family of glassmakers on the island of Murano, starting in 1486. The novel spans several centuries, depicting Orsola's struggles and triumphs as she defies societal norms to pursue her passion for glassmaking, while the characters age at a slower rate than the world around them, allowing readers to explore the history of Venice and its glassmaking tradition through the same family.



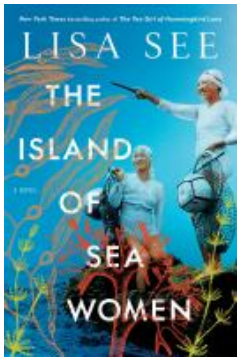
Hello Beautiful (387 pages)
by Ann Napolitano

Hello Beautiful is a 2023 historical fiction novel by Ann Napolitano that follows the lives of four sisters, Julia, Sylvie, Emeline, and Cecelia Padavano, in an Italian Catholic family in Chicago. The story explores themes of love, loss, and family loyalty, particularly focusing on the impact of a man named William Waters who marries into the family, leading to a significant rift that affects their lives for generations.



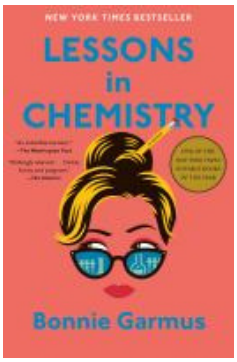
Homegoing (305 pages)
by Yaa Gyasi

Homegoing by Yaa Gyasi is a historical fiction novel that follows the lives of two half-sisters, Effia and Esi, born in 18th-century Ghana. Their divergent paths—one marrying a British governor and the other being sold into slavery—set the stage for a multi-generational saga that explores the impact of slavery and colonialism on their descendants across continents and centuries.



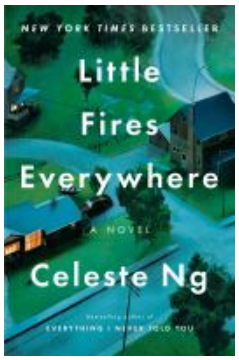
The Island of Sea Women (374 pages)
by Lisa See

The Island of Sea Women is a historical novel by Lisa See that follows the friendship between two women, Mi-ja and Young-sook, on the Korean island of Jeju from the 1930s to 2008. Their bond is tested by their differing backgrounds, the impact of Japanese colonialism, and the challenges of life as haenyeo, female divers who provide for their families, amidst the backdrop of significant historical events.



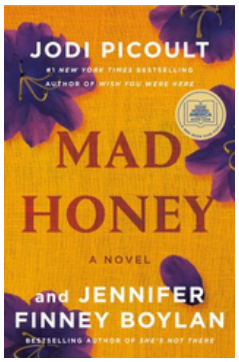
Lessons in Chemistry (390 pages)
by Bonnie Garmus

Lessons in Chemistry is a novel by Bonnie Garmus that follows Elizabeth Zott, a chemist in the 1960s who faces sexism in her career and personal life. After being fired from her job, she becomes a cooking show host, using her platform to empower women and challenge societal norms while navigating her role as a single mother.



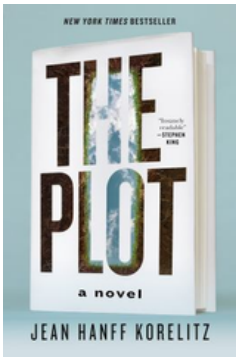
Little Fires Everywhere (338 pages)
by Celeste Ng

In Shaker Heights, a placid, progressive suburb of Cleveland, everything is planned--from the layout of the winding roads, to the colors of the houses, to the successful lives its residents will go on to lead. And no one embodies this spirit more than Elena Richardson, whose guiding principle is playing by the rules. Enter Mia Warren--an enigmatic artist and single mother--who arrives in this idyllic bubble with her teenage daughter, Pearl, and a disregard for the status quo that threatens to upend this carefully ordered community. Suspicious of Mia and her motives, Elena is determined to uncover the secrets in Mia's past. But her obsession will come at unexpected and devastating costs.



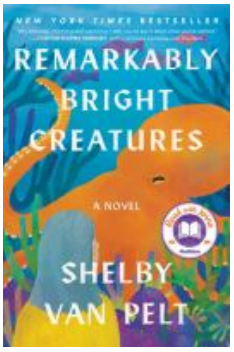
Mad Honey (452 pages)
by Jodi Picoult and Jennifer Finney Boylan

Mad Honey by Jodi Picoult and Jennifer Finney Boylan is a compelling story that explores themes of gender identity, friendship, and the complexities of love. It follows Olivia, a single mother and beekeeper, as she navigates the challenges of her son Asher's relationship with Lily, a new girl at school, amidst a backdrop of personal and societal struggles.



The Plot (322 pages)
by Jean Korelitz

The Plot by Jean Hanff Korelitz follows Jake Bonner, a struggling writer who steals the plot of a novel from a deceased student, Evan Parker. After achieving success with his book, Jake faces threats revealing his plagiarism, leading him to uncover dark truths about Evan's family and the consequences of his actions.



Remarkably Bright Creatures (360 pages)
by Shelby Van Pelt

Remarkably Bright Creatures by Shelby Van Pelt follows Tova Sullivan, a widow who works the night shift at an aquarium, where she forms an unlikely friendship with Marcellus, a giant Pacific octopus. The story explores themes of grief, healing, and the emotional connections between humans and animals as Tova seeks answers about her missing son while navigating her own loneliness.

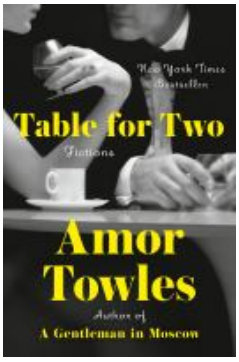
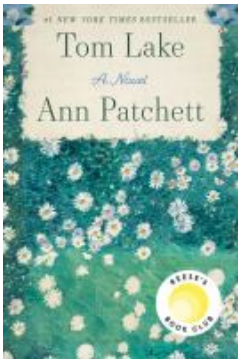


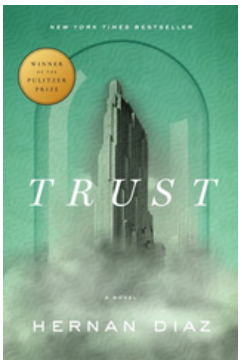
Table for Two (451 pages)
by Amor Towles

Table for Two is a collection of six short stories and a novella by Amor Towles, author of *A Gentleman in Moscow* and *The Lincoln Highway*. The stories are primarily set in New York City and explore significant moments between characters, often involving deep conversations at a table, while the novella follows a character from Towles's previous work, *Rules of Civility*, as she navigates life in Hollywood.



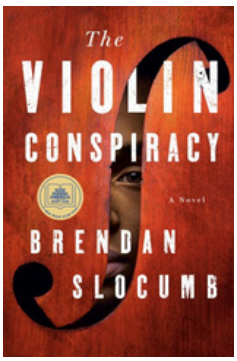
Tom Lake (309 pages)
by Ann Patchett

Tom Lake is a novel by Ann Patchett that tells the story of Lara, a former actress, who recounts her youthful romance with a famous actor to her three daughters while they all work together on their family's cherry farm in Michigan during the COVID-19 pandemic. The narrative explores themes of family, love, and the passage of time as the daughters learn about their mother's past and reflect on their own lives.



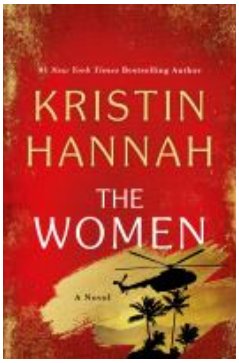
Trust (402 pages)
by Hernan Diaz

Trust by Hernan Diaz, the 2023 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction winner, is a novel that explores themes of wealth, power, and perception through the story of Andrew Bevel, a wealthy financier, and his wife, Mildred. The narrative is presented through four different documents, including a biographical novel and a memoir, each revealing different perspectives on their lives and the complexities of their relationship amidst the backdrop of the financial world.



The Violin Conspiracy (342 pages)
by Brendan Slocumb

Ray McMillian loves playing the violin more than anything, and nothing will stop him from pursuing his dream of becoming a professional musician. Not his mother, who thinks he should get a real job, not the fact that he can't afford a high-caliber violin, not the racism inherent in the classical music world. And when he makes the startling discovery that his great-grandfather's fiddle is actually a priceless Stradivarius, his star begins to rise. Then , his prized family heirloom is stolen. Ray is determined to get it back. But now his family and the descendants of the man who once enslaved Ray's great-grandfather are each claiming that the violin belongs to them.



The Women (471 pages)
by Kristin Hannah

When twenty-year-old nursing student Frances "Frankie" McGrath hears these unexpected words, it is a revelation. Raised on idyllic Coronado Island and sheltered by her conservative parents, she has always prided herself on doing the right thing, being a good girl. But in 1965 the world is changing, and she suddenly imagines a different choice for her life. When her brother ships out to serve in Vietnam, she impulsively joins the Army Nurse Corps and follows his path. As green and inexperienced as the men sent to Vietnam to fight, Frankie is overwhelmed by the chaos and destruction of war, as well as the unexpected trauma of coming home to a changed and politically divided America.