

Instant Book Club—Just Add Readers An Annotated List

***About Schmidt* by Louis Begley**

Albert Schmidt is a buttoned-down lawyer of the old school. But now his life is slowly unraveling—his beloved wife has recently died; he stumbles into early retirement; and his daughter is planning to marry a man Schmidt cannot approve of. As Schmidt gropes for resolutions, he finds unexpected hope in an intense and unexpected passion.

The Adventures of Tom Sawyer

The 1876 novel about a boy's adventures along the Mississippi River.
Statewide read 2010 title.

***The Age of Innocence* by Edith Wharton**

This 1921 Pulitzer Prize-winning novel chronicles Newland Archer's confused emotions as he prepares to marry docile May Welland, while harboring a secret passion for the mysterious Countess Ellen Olenska.

***Alas, Babylon* by Pat Frank**

The survivors of a nuclear holocaust are forced to rely on their own resources as they join together in the struggle for survival amidst the ruins of Fort Repose, a small town in Florida.

***The Alchemist* by Paul Coelho**

Follow Santiago, a Spanish shepherd boy who leaves home in search of treasure, and who finds rewards more fulfilling than any object ever dreamed of.

***The All-True Travels and Adventures of Lidie Newton* by Jane Smiley**

The pre-Civil War memoirs of an abolitionist who in 1855 enters the fray between Kansas free-staters and slave-holding Missourians.

***American Pastoral* by Philip Roth**

Seymour (Swede) Levov, finds his golden youth no protection against suffering when, during the height of the Vietnam War, his beloved daughter Merry detonates a bomb in a suburban post office.

***Atonement* by Ian McEwan**

In a number of stories within a story, the repercussions of a crime in the summer of 1935 are followed through the turn of the 21st century.

***Balzac and the Little Chinese Seamstress* by Dai Sijie**

During the Chinese Cultural Revolution, two boys are sent to the country for reeducation, where their lives take an unexpected turn. While they are there, they meet the beautiful daughter of a local tailor and stumble upon a forbidden stash of Western literature.

***The Bean Trees* by Barbara Kingsolver**

Taylor Greer hits the road wanting only to get as far away from Kentucky as possible, ending up in Arizona with a 3-year-old Cherokee girl she has inherited from a woman in a bar.

***The Beans of Egypt, Maine* by Carolyn Chute**

The Bean family in Egypt, Maine struggles for survival in the face of grinding poverty.

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***Bee Season* by Myla Goldberg**

Nine-year-old Eliza Naumann, a mediocre student, wins a statewide spelling bee which results in dramatic repercussions for the Naumanns. An exploration of a child's need for acceptance and the meaning of family.

***The Beekeeper's Apprentice* by Laurie R. King**

Long since retired, Sherlock Holmes is engaged in a reclusive study of honeybee behavior on the Sussex Downs. Under the master detective's instruction, 15-year-old Miss Mary Russell hones her talent for deduction, disguises, and danger in the chilling case of a landowner's mysterious fever, and in the kidnapping of an American senator's daughter in the wilds of Wales. But her ultimate challenge is yet to come.

***Bel Canto* by Ann Patchett**

When terrorists seize hostages at an embassy party, an unlikely assortment of people is thrown together, including American opera star Roxane Coss, and Mr. Hosokawa, a Japanese CEO and her biggest fan.

***Big Stone Gap* by Adriana Trigiani**

Ave Maria Mulligan, a spinster at thirty-five, lives in the Blue Ridge Mountains, enjoying small-town life. She discovers that she's not who she always thought she was, and starts coping with marriage proposals, greedy family members, and the trip of a lifetime in this heart warming and humorous tale.

***The Blind Assassin* by Margaret Atwood**

A multi-layered story of the death of a woman's sister and husband in the 1940s, with a novel-within-a novel as a background.

***The Camel Bookmobile* by Masha Hamilton**

Fiona Sweeney helps to start a traveling library in the arid bush of northeastern Kenya.

***Chang and Eng* by Darin Strauss**

Born attached at the chest, Chang and Eng Bunker were the Siamese twins for whom the term was coined. Narrated by Eng, the novel follows the twins from poverty to wealth, from solitude to boundless love, from the court of the King of Siam to the crowded bedroom of their North Carolina home.

***Chocolat* by Joanne Harris**

Newly arrived in a small French town, Vianne Rocher opens a confectionary serving up a sympathetic ear and, always, the perfect piece of *chocolat*.

***City of Light* by Lauren Belfer**

Louisa Barrett, the headmistress of the Macaulay School for Girls, is treated as an equal by the men who control Buffalo, New York in 1901. Louisa is secure in her position, until a mysterious death at a nearby power plant triggers a sequence of events that forces her to return to a past she has struggled to conceal.

***Clay's Quilt* by Silas House**

On a bone-chilling New Year's Day, when all the mountain roads are slick with ice, three-year-old Clay's mother, Anneth, insists on leaving her husband—a journey that ends in the death of

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Clay's mother. This is the story of how Clay Sizemore, a coal miner in love with his town but unsure of his place within it, finds a family to call his own.

***Corelli's Mandolin* by Louis De Bernieres**

Widowed Dr. Iannis and his daughter Pelagia suffer during the Italian and German occupation of the Greek island of Cephallonia, but find their faith and love restored by a charming Army officer, Captain Antonio Corelli.

***The Corrections* by Jonathan Franzen**

Enid Lambert, the matriarch of a spectacularly dysfunctional family, wants her three children to come home to the Midwest for one last Christmas, even as her husband of 50 years is falling victim to Parkinson's-induced dementia.

***A Cup of Tea* by Amy Ephron**

Rosemary Fell has wealth, well-connected friends, and a handsome fiancé. In a moment of kindness, Rosemary invites Eleanor Smith, a penniless young woman she sees under a streetlamp in the rain, into her home for a cup of tea. While Rosemary eventually sends Eleanor on her way she cannot undo this chance encounter and its consequences.

***The Dante Club* by Matthew Pearl**

In 1865, the preparations of the Dante Club--led by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and Oliver Wendell Holmes--to release the first translation of Dante's "The Divine Comedy" are threatened by a series of murders that re-create episodes from "Inferno."

***The Dive from Clausen's Pier* by Ann Packer**

On the verge of breaking her engagement to her high school sweetheart, Carrie Bell is forced to reconsider her decision following her fiancé's ill-thought-out dive from Clausen's Pier.

***Empire Falls* by Richard Russo**

Enter into small town, blue collar America, where big-hearted Miles Roby has given up a college education and worked at the Empire Grill for 20 years.

***Felicia's Journey* by William Trevor**

Young and pregnant, Felicia leaves her Irish hometown to search for her boyfriend in the English Midlands, only to fall in with the obese fiftyish Mr. Hilditch.

***The Final Solution* by Michael Chabon**

In retirement in the English countryside, an eighty-nine-year-old man, vaguely recollected by locals as a once-famous detective, is more concerned with his beekeeping than with his fellow man. Into his life wanders Linus Steinman, nine years old and mute, who has escaped from Nazi Germany with an African gray parrot.

***A Fine Balance* by Rohinton Mistry**

In 1975 in an unnamed Indian city, Mrs. Dina Dalal, a Parsi widow, takes in a boarder and two Hindu tailors. Despite differences in caste, class, and religion, the four form an unlikely, fragile alliance.

The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* by Stieg Larsson **NEW*

Mikael Blomkvist, a once-respected financial journalist, watches his professional life rapidly crumble around him. Prospects appear bleak until an old-school titan of Swedish industry

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makes an unexpected offer. The catch is that Blomkvist must first spend a year researching a mysterious disappearance that has remained unsolved for nearly four decades. With few other options, he accepts and enlists the help of investigator Lisbeth Salander, a misunderstood genius with a cache of authority issues.

***The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society* by Mary Ann Shaffer**

January 1946: London is emerging from the shadow of the Second World War, and writer Juliet Ashton is looking for her next book subject. Who could imagine that she would find it in a letter from a man she had never met, a native of Guernsey, the British island once occupied by the Nazis.

The Help* by Kathryn Stockett **NEW*

Three women are about to take one extraordinary step. In 1962 Mississippi, Skeeter has just returned after graduating from Ole Miss. She may have a degree but her mother will not be happy until she is married. Aibileen is a black maid raising her 17th white child. Minny, Aibileen's best friend, is the sassiest woman in Mississippi. She can cook like nobody's business, but she can't mind her tongue, so she's lost yet another job. As different from one another as can be, these women will come together for a secret project that will put them all at risk.

***The History of Love* by Nicola Krauss**

Set in contemporary New York City, old and young, past and present, loss and survival merge in this story of the connection between the elderly Polish retired locksmith Leo Gursky and the 14-year old half-orphan Alma Singer.

***The Hours* by Michael Cunningham**

This Pulitzer Prize-winning novel intertwines the story of author Virginia Woolf with the lives of two contemporary women. Each woman is linked by the events of the novel, as they explore love, death, and the beauty of ordinary life.

***Housekeeping* by Marilynne Robinson**

After their mother's suicide, sisters Ruth and Lucille go to live with an eccentric aunt in eastern Washington.

***I Capture the Castle* by Dodie Smith**

In the cold and crumbling castle which is their home, Cassandra Mortmain records in her journal the extraordinary account of life with her extraordinary family with characteristic honesty, as she tries to come to terms with her own feelings.

***I Don't Know How She Does It* by Allison Pearson**

Hedge-fund manager, wife, and mother of two, Kate Reddy manages to juggle nine currencies in five time zones and keep in step with the Teletubbies. But when she finds herself awake at 1:37 a.m. in a panic over the need to produce a homemade pie for her daughter's school, she has to admit her life has become unrecognizable.

***In the Time of the Butterflies* by Julia Alvarez**

A novel based on the true story of the Mirabel sisters, who along with their husbands, worked to form an underground resistance movement against the dictatorship of Rafael Leonidas Trujillo.

***An Instance of the Fingerpost* by Iain Pears**

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An intellectual thriller set in the Oxford of the 1660s, a time of great ferment - intellectual, religious and political. The action takes place around the suspicious death of Robert Grove, a Fellow of New College.

***The Intelligencer* by Leslie Silbert**

Novice private investigator Kate Morgan teams up with a European financier who is investigating a centuries-old manuscript that documents the final days of an Elizabethan-era murder victim.

***Kaaterskill Falls* by Allegra Goodman**

A small Orthodox Jewish sect has traditionally spent summers in the Dutch community around Kaaterskill Falls, but in 1976 tensions arise both with the townspeople and some of the group's women who resent its many restrictions.

***The Kitchen Boy* by Robert Alexander**

Drawing from decades of work, travel, and research in Russia, Robert Alexander re-creates the tragic, perennially fascinating story of the final days of Nicholas and Alexandra as seen through the eyes of the Romanovs' young kitchen boy, Leonka.

***The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini**

Two motherless boys, Amir and Hassan, grow up together in Kabul, Afghanistan. A crime of violence changes their friendship. Later, as an adult, the cowardly Amir tries to learn the fate of Hassan's son.

***The Known World* by Edward P. Jones**

Henry Townsend, black farmer and former slave, is taught by William Robbins, the most powerful man in Manchester County, Virginia. When Robbins dies unexpectedly, his widow must rely on Townsend in this unflinching look at slavery.

The Last Kingdom* by Bernard Cornwell **NEW*

In A.D. 866, Uhtred, a boy of ten and the son of a nobleman, is captured in the same battle that kills his father. His captor is the Earl Ragnar, a Danish chieftain, who raises the boy as his own, teaching him the Viking ways of war. As a young man he grapples with divided loyalties -- between Ragnar, the warrior he loves like a father, and King Alfred, whose piety and introspection leave him cold.

***Life of Pi* by Yann Martel**

Martel won the Man Booker Prize for this story of sixteen-year-old Pi Patel and a Bengal tiger named Richard Parker, as they survive for seven months on a lifeboat following a shipwreck.

***Losing the Moon* by Patti Callahan Henry**

In this powerful debut novel, a wife and mother discovers that although life has led her in a joyous direction, she still cherishes memories of her first love...the college boyfriend who captivated her heart and then, without a word of warning, disappeared.

***Loving Frank* by Nancy Horan**

In 1903, an attraction developed between Mamah Borthwick Cheney and the renowned architect Frank Lloyd Wright. In time the clandestine lovers, each married with children, embarked on a course that would shock Chicago society and forever change their lives.

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***Luncheon of the Boating Party* by Susan Vreeland**

It is Paris, 1880, and Emile Zola has penned a scathing indictment of the Impressionist painters, saying they are inferior, and that a man of genius has not yet risen from among them. Pierre-Auguste Renoir decides to challenge this assertion by creating a painting that even Zola cannot deny is genius.

Major Pettigrew's Last Stand* by Helen Simonson **NEW*

The Major leads a quiet life valuing the things that Englishmen have lived by for generations: honor, duty, decorum, and a properly brewed cup of tea. But his brother's death sparks a friendship with Mrs. Jasmina Ali, the Pakistani shopkeeper from the village. Drawn together by their shared love of literature and the loss of their spouses, the Major and Mrs. Ali soon find their friendship blossoms. But the village insists on embracing him as the quintessential local and her as the permanent foreigner. Can their relationship survive the risks of pursuing happiness in the face of culture and tradition?

***The Memory Keeper's Daughter* by Kim Edwards**

In this tale spanning twenty-five years, a doctor delivers his newborn twins during a snowstorm and, rashly deciding to protect his wife from their baby daughter's affliction with Down Syndrome, turns her over to a nurse, who secretly raises the child.

***The Moonstone* by Wilkie Collins**

In the first modern English detective story, several narrators recount the theft of an enormous diamond originally stolen from an Indian shrine.

***My Last Days as Roy Rogers* by Pat Cunningham Devoto**

In an Alabama town in the early 1950s, ten-year-old tomboy, Tabitha Rutland seeks adventure with her best friend Maudie May.

***The No. 1 Ladies Detective Agency* by Alexander McCall Smith**

Precious Ramotswe establishes herself as Botswana's first female detective. In this detective-as-folk-hero tale, Precious solves many difficult matters with her innate common sense and her understanding of human nature.

Olive Kitteridge* by Elizabeth Strout **NEW*

Olive Kitteridge, a retired schoolteacher, deplors the changes in her little town of Crosby, Maine, and in the world at large, but she doesn't always recognize the changes in those around her. As the townspeople grapple with their problems, mild and dire, Olive is brought to a deeper understanding of herself and her life – sometimes painfully, but always with ruthless honesty.

***Out Stealing Horses* by Per Petterson**

Solitary Norwegian Trond Sander, a widower turning 70, reflects on his past and in particular, a transformative summer day in his youth where adventure and cruelty merged. Winner of the 2007 International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award.

***The Painted Veil* by W. Somerset Maugham**

When Kitty Fane's husband discovers her adulterous affair he forces her to accompany him to the heart of a cholera epidemic, where she is compelled by her awakening conscience to reassess her life and to learn how to love.

***The Piano Tuner* by Daniel Mason**

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A shy, middle-aged piano tuner travels to Burma to repair the rare piano of an eccentric army surgeon.

***Plainsong* by Kent Haruf**

An extended family is formed when a high school teacher helps a pregnant student make a home with two elderly bachelor ranchers.

***Pompeii* by Robert Harris**

Engineer Marcus Attilius Primus has taken charge of the Aqua Augusta, the aqueduct which brings water to a quarter of a million people. His predecessor has disappeared. When a crisis strikes the Augusta's main line, Attilius discovers that there are forces which even the Roman Empire can't control.

***Pope Joan* by Donna Woolfolk Cross**

For a thousand years men have denied her existence--Pope Joan, the woman who disguised herself as a man and rose to rule Christianity for two years. This novel animates the legend with a portrait of an unforgettable woman who struggles against restrictions her soul cannot accept.

The Postmistress* by Sarah Blake **NEW*

On the eve of the US entrance into WWII in 1940, Iris James, the postmistress of Franklin, a small Cape Cod town, doesn't deliver a letter. In London, American radio gal Frankie Bard reports on the Blitz. One night in a bomb shelter, she meets a doctor from Cape Cod with a letter in his pocket that Frankie vows to deliver when she returns from Germany and France, where she will record the stories of war refugees trying to escape. The residents of Franklin think the war can't touch them but when Frankie arrives on their doorstep, the two stories collide in a way no one could have foreseen.

***Ragtime* by E. L. Doctorow**

This novel tells the story of the interrelated early twentieth-century lives of the families of a New Rochelle manufacturer, an immigrant socialist, and a Harlem musician and their involvement with Evelyn Nesbit, Henry Ford, Houdini, Morgan, Freud, Zapata, and other period notables.

***The Red Tent* by Anita Diamant**

The Red Tent tells the little-known Biblical story of Dinah, daughter of Jacob and his wife, Leah. In Chapter 34 of the Book of Genesis, Dinah's tale is a short, horrific detour in the familiar narrative of Jacob and Joseph. Anita Diamant imaginatively tells the story from the perspective of its women. In the Biblical tale Dinah is given no voice; she is the narrator of *The Red Tent*, which reveals the life of ancient womanhood.

A Reliable Wife* by Robert Goolrick **NEW*

In the bitter cold, Ralph Truitt, a successful businessman, stands alone on a train platform waiting for the woman who answered his newspaper advertisement for "a reliable wife." But when Catherine Land steps off the train from Chicago, she's not the "simple, honest woman" that Ralph is expecting. She is complex and devious and her plan is simple: she will win this man's devotion, and then, ever so slowly, she will poison him and leave Wisconsin a wealthy widow. What she has not counted on is that Truitt has plans of his own for his new wife.

***The Sea* by Jon Banville**

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Max Morden has reached a crossroads in his life, and is trying hard to deal with several disturbing things. He decides that he will return to a town on the coast where he spent a memorable holiday as a boy. His memory of that time revolves around the charismatic Grace family. In a very short time, Max found himself drawn into a strange relationship with them, and pursuant events left their mark on him for the rest of his life.

***A Secret History* by Donna Tartt**

The narrator of this story is a boy who leaves California to attend a college in New England. He falls in with a group of students of Ancient Greek. Four of their number work themselves into a trance-like condition one night, and murder a local farmer. Bunny then tries to blackmail the others.

***The Secret Scripture* by Sebastian Barry**

Roseanne McNulty was one of the most beautiful girls in County Sligo, Ireland. Now as a patient at Roscommon Regional Mental Hospital she decides to record her life story. Because the hospital will close in a few months and Dr. Grene is to evaluate the patients and decide if they can return to society. As Dr. Grene researches her case he discovers a document written by a local priest that tells a very different story of Roseanne's life than what she recalls.

***The Shadow of the Wind* by Carlos Ruiz Zafon**

Just after the Spanish Civil War in 1945 Barcelona, Daniel's father takes him to the secret Cemetery of Forgotten Books, a huge library of old, forgotten titles lovingly preserved by a few initiates. Each initiate takes one book and protects it for life. Daniel selects *The Shadow of the Wind* by unknown author, Julian Carax. Daniel discovers that someone has been systematically destroying every book Carax has written and before Daniel knows it his innocent quest has opened a door into one of Barcelona's darkest secrets.

***The Shipping News* by Annie Proulx**

When Quoye's two-timing wife meets her just deserts, he retreats with his two daughters to his ancestral home on the starkly beautiful Newfoundland coast, where a rich cast of local characters and family members all play a part in Quoye's struggle to reclaim his life.

A Soft Place to Land* by Susan Rebecca White **NEW*

For more than ten years, Naomi and Phil Harrison enjoyed a marriage of heady romance, tempered only by the needs of their children. But on a vacation alone, the couple perishes in a flight over the Grand Canyon. After the funeral, their daughters, Ruthie and Julia, are shocked by the provisions in their will. As they heal from loss, search for love, and begin careers, their sisterhood becomes complicated by resentment, anger, and jealousy. It seems as though the echoes of their parents' deaths will never stop reverberating—until another shocking accident changes everything once again.

***Still Alice* by Lisa Genova**

Alice Howland, happily married with three grown children, is a celebrated Harvard professor at the height of her career when she notices a forgetfulness creeping into her life. She receives a devastating diagnosis: early onset Alzheimer's disease. Fiercely independent, Alice struggles to maintain her lifestyle and live in the moment, even as her sense of self is being stripped away.

***The Story of Edgar Sawtelle* by David Wroblewski**

A modern take on *Hamlet* set in rural Wisconsin in which the young hero, born mute,

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communicates with people, dogs, and the occasional ghost through his own mix of sign and body language.

***Suite Francaise* by Irene Nemirovsky**

Composed in 1941-42, this novel about the German occupation of France is embedded in a real story as gripping and complex as the invented one. This, her last work, was written under the tremendous pressure of a constant danger that was to catch up with her and kill her before she had finished.

***Swan* by Frances Mayes**

A bizarre crime in the small Georgian town of Swan pulls Ginger Mason home from her life in Italy: the body of her mother, Catherine, a suicide 19 years before, has been mysteriously exhumed. As the Mason children grapple with their pasts, the startling truth about Catherine's death emerges.

***Tall Pine Polka* by Lorna Landvik**

When a Hollywood movie crew shows up in Tall Pine, Minnesota, two friends find their relationship tested as one of them lands a major part in the film and both fall for the same man.

***The Three Junes* by Julia Glass**

Set in Greece, Scotland, and New York, a novel about family relationships, love and loss.

The Time Traveler's Wife* by Audrey Niffenegger **NEW*

This is the story of Clare, an art student, and Henry, a librarian, who have known each other since Clare was 6 and Henry was 36, and were married when Clare was 23 and Henry 31. Impossible but true, because Henry has been diagnosed with Chrono-Displacement Disorder: periodically his genetic clock resets and he finds himself misplaced in time. The novel depicts the effects of time travel on Henry and Clare's marriage and their passionate love for each other as the story unfolds from both points of view.

***The Three Miss Margarets* by Louise Shaffer**

Miss Peggy, Dr. Maggie, and Miss Li'l Bit, friends and confidantes for nearly a lifetime, have become icons in Charles Valley, Georgia. But thirty-odd years ago the three Miss Margarets did something extraordinary, clandestine, and very illegal. When a stranger's arrival in town and a tragic death open the floodgate of memory, their loyalty, friendship, and honor are tested in ways they could never have imagined.

To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee **NEW*

This novel is a story about innocence, knowledge, prejudice and courage. Lee tells two deftly paired stories set in a small Southern town: one focused on lawyer Atticus Finch's defense of an unjustly accused man, the other on his bright, bratty daughter's gradual discovery of her own goodness. For many young people this novel becomes their first big read, the grown-up story that all later books will be measured against.

***When Crickets Cry* by Charles Martin**

Set in a sleepy Southern town, this is the story of a spirited seven-year-old girl with a heart condition and the stranger who understands more about her condition than he wants to admit.

The White Tiger* by Aravind Adiga **NEW*

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Balam Halwai is a complicated man. Servant. Philosopher. Entrepreneur. Murderer. Over the course of seven nights, by the scattered light of a preposterous chandelier, Balam tells us the terrible and transfixing story of how he came to be a success in life -- having nothing but his own wits to help him along.

***Wise Blood* by Flannery O'Connor**

Hazel Motes, recently discharged from the Army, becomes entranced by the power of street preaching and creates his own church, "The Church Without Christ," upsetting the other itinerant preachers.

***Year of Wonders* by Geraldine Brooks**

In 1666, the bubonic plague appeared in a small lead-mining town in England; in a novel and courageous effort to contain the disease, the local minister and his congregation take an oath to quarantine themselves until the sickness is over.