

# Supplementary Book Club in a Bag Titles

## Albom, Mitch. *For One More Day*.



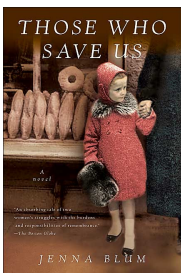
*For One More Day* explores the question: What would you do if you could spend one more day with a lost loved one? As a child, Charley "Chick" Benetto was told by his father, "You can be a mama's boy or a daddy's boy, but you can't be both." So he chooses his father, only to see the man disappear when Charley is on the verge of adolescence. Decades later, Charley's life has been crumbled by alcohol and regret. He loses his job. He leaves his family. After his only daughter has shut him out of her wedding, he decides to take his own life. He makes a midnight ride to his small hometown and staggers back to his old house, only to make an astonishing discovery. His mother—who died eight years earlier—is still living there, and welcomes him home as if nothing ever happened.

## Aleichem, Sholem. *Tevye the Dairyman*.



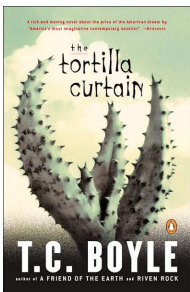
Of all the characters in modern Jewish fiction, the most beloved is Tevye, the compassionate, irrepressible, Bible-quoting dairyman from Anatevka, who has been immortalized in the writings of Sholem Aleichem and in acclaimed and award-winning theatrical and film adaptations.

## Blum, Jenna. *Those Who Save Us*.



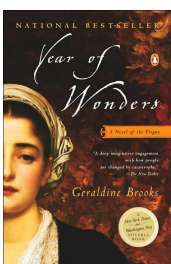
For fifty years, Anna Schlemmer has refused to talk about her life in Germany during World War II. Her daughter, Trudy, was only three when she and her mother were liberated by an American soldier and went to live with him in Minnesota. Trudy's sole evidence of the past is an old photograph: a family portrait showing Anna, Trudy, and a Nazi officer, the Obersturmführer of Buchenwald. Driven by the guilt of her heritage, Trudy, now a professor of German history, begins investigating the past and finally unearths the heartbreaking truth of her mother's life

## Boyle, T. C. *The Tortilla Curtain*



Topanga Canyon is home to two couples on a collision course. Los Angeles liberals Delaney and Kyra Mossbacher lead an ordered sushi-and-recycling existence in a newly gated hilltop community, while Mexican illegals Candido and America Rincon are desperately cling to their vision of the American Dream as they fight off starvation in a makeshift camp deep in the ravine. When a freak accident brings the Candidos and Delaneys into intimate contact, these four and their opposing worlds gradually intersect in what becomes a tragic comedy of errors and misunderstandings.

## Brooks, Geraldine. *Year of Wonders*.



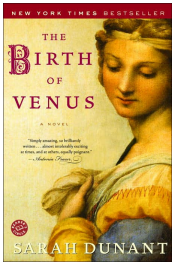
This gripping historical novel is based on the true story of Eyam, the "Plague Village," in the rugged mountain spine of England. In 1666, a tainted bolt of cloth from London carries bubonic infection to this isolated settlement of shepherds and lead miners. A visionary young preacher convinces the villagers to seal themselves off in a deadly quarantine to prevent the spread of disease. The story is told through the eyes of eighteen-year-old Anna Frith, the vicar's maid, as she confronts the loss of her family, the disintegration of her community, and the lure of a dangerous and illicit love. As the death toll rises and people turn from prayers and herbal cures to sorcery and murderous witch-hunting, Anna emerges as an unlikely and courageous heroine in the village's desperate fight to save itself.

### **Cunningham, Laura Shaine. *Sleeping Arrangements.***



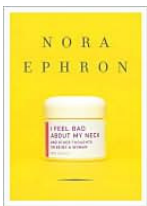
Adopted by her two eccentric bachelor uncles after her mother's death, the author describes growing up in an unorthodox but happy Bronx household during the 1950s. Here is Lily Moore at 10, as judged by her fifth grade teacher: 'Unsatisfactory...Hair matted, uncombed, disheveled appearance. Soil under nails.' She has in addition been AWOL from school for 37 full and 38 half days...She lives in a bizarre apartment whose living room furnishings consist of a gold lame castro convertible and two pink bath mats--her choice. She shares the habitation with a senile old woman and two bachelors, one of whom habitually cooks popcorn for breakfast wearing a pith helmet...All indications to the contrary notwithstanding. Lily is living a blessed life, as depicted in this enchanting memoir

### **Dunant, Sarah. *The Birth of Venus.***



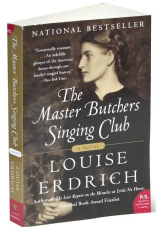
Alessandra Cecchi is not quite fifteen when her father, a prosperous cloth merchant, brings home a young painter to decorate the chapel walls in the family's Florentine palazzo. A child with a precocious mind and a talent for drawing, Alessandra is intoxicated by the painter's abilities. Their burgeoning relationship is interrupted when Alessandra's parents arrange her marriage to a wealthy, much older man. Meanwhile, Florence is changing, increasingly subject to the suppression imposed by the fundamentalist monk Savonarola. Alessandra and her native city are caught between the Medici state, with its love of luxury, learning, and art, and the hellfire preaching and increasing violence of Savonarola's followers. Played out against this turbulent backdrop, Alessandra's married life is a misery, except it allows her to pursue her powerful attraction to the young painter and his art.

### **Ephron, Nora. *I Feel Bad About My Neck.***



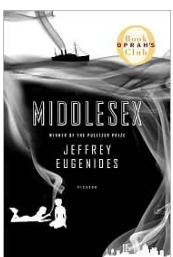
With her disarming, intimate, completely accessible voice, and dry sense of humor, Nora Ephron shares with us her ups and downs in *I Feel Bad About My Neck*, a candid, hilarious look at women who are getting older and dealing with the tribulations of maintenance, menopause, empty nests, and life itself.

### **Erdrich, Louise. *The Master Butchers Singing Club.***



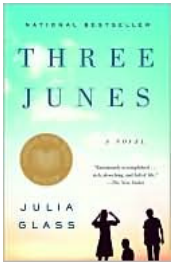
Having survived World War I, Fidelis Waldvogel returns to his quiet German village and marries the pregnant widow of his best friend, killed in action. With a suitcase full of sausages and a master butcher's precious knife set, Fidelis sets out for America. In Argus, North Dakota, he builds a business, a home for his family-which includes Eva and four sons-and a singing club consisting of the best voices in town. When the Old World meets the New- in the person of Delphine Watzka-the great adventure of Fidelis's life begins. Delphine meets Eva and is enchanted. She meets Fidelis, and the ground trembles. These momentous encounters will determine the course of Delphine's life, and the trajectory of this brilliant novel.

### **Eugenides, Jeffrey. *Middlesex.***



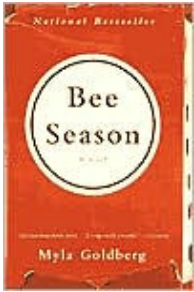
"I was born twice: first, as a baby girl, on a remarkably smogless Detroit day in January of 1960; and then again, as a teenage boy, in an emergency room near Petoskey, Michigan, in August of 1974." And so begins *Middlesex*, the mesmerizing saga of a near-mythic Greek American family and the "roller-coaster ride of a single gene through time." The odd but utterly believable story of Cal Stephanides, and how this 41-year-old hermaphrodite was raised as Calliope, is at the tender heart of this long-awaited second novel from Jeffrey Eugenides, whose elegant and haunting 1993 debut, [The Virgin Suicides](#), remains one of the finest first novels of recent memory.

### **Glass, Julia. *Three Junes*.**



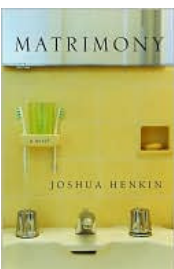
This novel draws the reader deeply into the lives of several central characters during three separate Junes spanning ten years. At the story's onset, Scotsman Paul McLeod, the father of three grown sons, is newly widowed and on a group tour of the Greek islands as he reminisces about how he met and married his deceased wife and created their family. Next, we see the world through the eyes of Paul's eldest son, Fenno, a gay man transplanted to New York City who learns lessons about love and loss that allow him to grow in unexpected ways. And finally there is Fern, an artist and book designer whom Paul met on his trip to Greece several years earlier. She is now a young widow, pregnant and also living in New York City, who must make sense of her own past and present to be able to move forward in her life.

### **Goldberg, Myla *Bee Season***



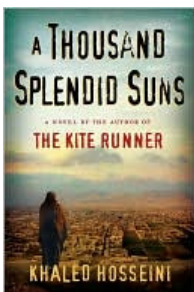
Eliza Naumann, a seemingly unremarkable nine-year-old, expects never to fit into her gifted family: her autodidact father, Saul, absorbed in his study of Jewish mysticism; her brother, Aaron, the vessel of his father's spiritual ambitions; and her brilliant but distant lawyer-mom, Miriam. Then, she surprises herself and the rest of the Naumanns when she discovers a rare aptitude for spelling, winning her school and district bees with a surreal surge of mystical insight, in which letters seem to take on a life of their own.

### **Henkin, Joshua *Matrimony***



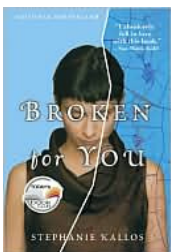
From the moment he was born, Julian Wainwright has lived a life of privilege. To get out from under his parents' influence, he goes off to a bohemian, Massachusetts college, where he hopes to become a writer. There Julian becomes friends with Carter, a scholarship student from California and he also meets Mia, whom he falls in love with and marries. After graduation, the couple move from one college town to another coping with family dramas and failed literary projects. Then Carter reappears and he throws everyone's life into turmoil.

### **Hosseini, Khaled *A Thousand Splendid Suns***



An in-depth exploration of Afghan society in the three decades of anti-Soviet jihad, civil war and Taliban cruelty. The story follows the heroic plight of two women of different generations married to the same savagely abusive male. Born out of wedlock, Mariam was forced to marry 40-year-old Rasheed when she was only 15. Then, 18 years later, her still childless husband angrily takes an even younger wife, Laila, who is mourning the loss of her childhood sweetheart and parents. The wives, after initial conflict, form a bond that sustains them through the violence and tragedy they face.

### **Kallos, Stephanie. *Broken for You*.**



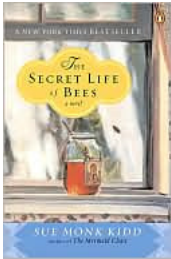
Septuagenarian Margaret Hughes lives alone in her mansion in Seattle with only a massive collection of valuable antiques for company. When young Wanda Schultz appears on Margaret's doorstep as a boarder, she arrives with only her broken heart and a plan to find her wayward boyfriend. Both women have spent years in self-imposed exile, but as their friendship develops, their armor falls away and Margaret and Wanda find the hidden strength behind things that only seem fragile. Funny, heartbreaking, and alive with a potpourri of eccentric and irresistible characters, *Broken for You* is a testament to the saving graces of surrogate families and shows how far the tiniest repair jobs can go in righting the world's wrongs.

## Kaplan, Johanna. *O My America.*



This is the story of Ezra Slavin, a crusty, unremitting social critic who dies at an anti-war rally in 1972. As an obituary puts it: From very early in his career, Mr. Slavin was harshly critical of the anomic trends of urban, mechanized American life, yet his vision of the city as a place of "limitless, tumultuous possibility" was a lyrical, even celebratory one. "I have had a lifelong affair with the idea of America," Mr. Slavin once said. "And when people find that difficult to believe, I remind them of that flintier vision which is bound to result when love is unrequited." That, one might say, is the "official," the pundit's, version of Ezra Slavin and what he stood for. *O My America!*, on the other hand, is that life told in flashback by his daughter Merry, one of his six children and part of what can only be called a complicated, free-form and exasperatingly extended "family."

## Kidd, Sue Monk. *The Secret Life of Bees.*



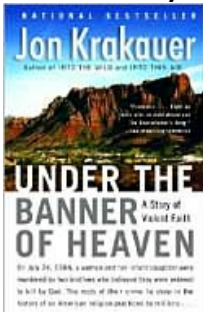
Lily Owens, 14, is an emotionally abused white girl living with her cold, uncaring father on a peach farm in rural South Carolina. The memory of her mother, who was accidentally killed in Lily's presence when she was four, haunts her constantly. She has one of her mother's few possessions, a picture of a black Madonna with the words, Tiburon, South Carolina, written on the back. Lily's companion during her sad childhood has been Rosaleen, the black woman hired to care for her. Rosaleen, in a euphoric mood after the passing of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, goes to town to register to vote and insults one of the town's most racist residents. After she is beaten up and hospitalized, Lily decides to rescue her and they go to Tiburon to search for memories of her mother. There they are taken in by three black sisters who are beekeepers producing a line of honey with the Black Madonna label. While racial tensions simmer around them, the women help Lily accept her loss and learn the power of forgiveness.

## King, Dave. *The Ha-Ha.*



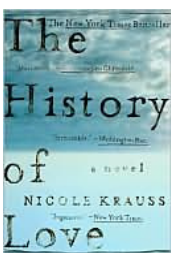
A shrewd, engrossing, and deeply genuine first novel told from the perspective of Howard Kapostash, a wounded Vietnam veteran whose injury has left him unable to read, write or speak. Now middle-age, Howard lives a lackluster existence in the house where he grew up. Everything changes when Sylvia, the former girlfriend he's loved since high school, heads to drug rehab, saddling Howard with Ryan, her taciturn nine-year-old son. Caring for Ryan has opened him up again to joy and sorrow, frustration and small accomplishments. King writes convincingly from inside Howard, offering entertaining descriptions of the small triumphs and sometimes humorous, sometimes tragic mistakes of a man reaching out to the world from deep inside himself.

## Krakauer, Jon *Under the Banner of Heaven*



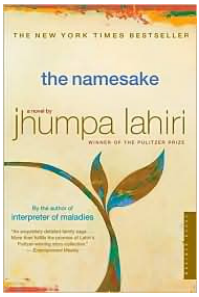
The chilling story of Mormon fundamentalist brothers Dan and Ron Lafferty, who in 1984 brutally butchered their sister-in-law and 15-month-old niece, claiming to have killed at the direct command of God. The bizarre details of this brutal crime play out against the history of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) and its subsequent splintering into fundamentalist sects. Krakauer explores the nature of these sects, taking readers inside isolated American communities where some 40,000 Mormon Fundamentalists still practice polygamy.

## Krauss, Nicole. *The History of Love.*



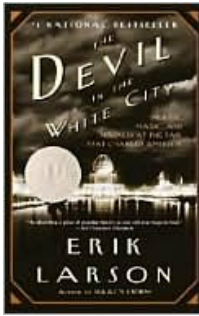
With consummate, spellbinding skill, Nicole Krauss gradually draws together the stories of Leo Gursky and 14 year old Alma. This extraordinary book was inspired by the author's four grandparents and by a pantheon of authors whose work is haunted by loss—Bruno Schulz, Franz Kafka, Isaac Babel, and more. It is truly a history of love: a tale brimming with laughter, irony, passion, and soaring imaginative power.

## Lahiri, Jhumpa *The Namesake*



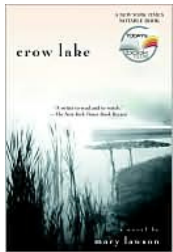
An Indian-American saga, following the immigrant Ganguli family across three decades. Newlyweds Ashoke and Ashima leave India for the Boston area shortly after their traditional arranged marriage. The young husband is ready to be part of U.S. culture, but Ashima, disoriented and homesick, is less taken with late-Sixties America. When their baby arrives, he is named Gogol, after the Russian writer. As Gogol matures, his unusual name proves to be a burden, though no more than the tensions and confusions of growing up as a first-generation American.

## Larson, Erik *The Devil in the White City*



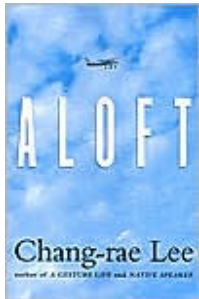
Before the turn of the 20th century, a city emerged seemingly out of the ash of then dangerous Chicago, designed by Daniel Burnham, this White City of the 1892 World's Fair became the antithesis of its parent city. While this great city of the future was being built, Henry H. Holmes, a young doctor and serial killer, built his "World's Fair Hotel" just west of the fairgrounds—a torture palace complete with dissection table, gas chamber, and 3,000-degree crematorium. A gripping true tale about two men -- one a creative genius, the other a mass murderer -- who turned the 1893 Chicago World's Fair into their playground.

## Lawson, Mary. *Crow Lake*.



Canadian writer Mary Lawson's debut novel is a beautifully crafted and shimmering tale of love, death, and redemption. The story, narrated by 26-year-old Kate Morrison, is set in the eponymous Crow Lake, an isolated rural community where time has stood still. The reader dives in and out of a year's worth of Kate's childhood memories--when she was 7 and her parents were killed in an automobile accident that left Kate, her younger sister Bo, and two older brothers, Matt and Luke, orphaned. When Kate, the successful zoologist and professor who is accustomed to dissecting everything through a microscope, receives an invitation to Matt's son's 18th birthday party, she must suddenly analyze her own relationship and come to terms with her past before she forsakes a future with the man she loves. Kate is still in turmoil over the events of that fateful summer and winter 20 years ago when the tragedy of another local family, the Pyes, spilled over into their lives with earth-shattering consequences. But does the tragedy really lie in the past or the present?

## Lee, Chang-rae *Aloft*



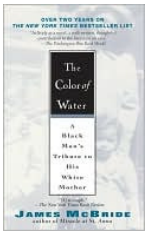
Jerry Battle is a suburban middle-aged man who has lived his entire life on Long Island, New York. His favorite diversion is to fly his small plane solo; slipping away for quick flights over the island or to the coastal towns of New England. Then a family crisis occurs, and Jerry finds he must face his disengagement in his relationships: with his deceased wife, the circumstances of whose death he has never fully accepted; with his former girlfriend, whom he still longs for; with his daughter, who refuses to address the disease that threatens her life; with his son, who is in danger of losing the family business; and with his father, who has been placed in a nursing home.

## Maugham, W. Somerset. *The Painted Veil*.



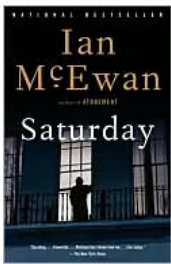
Set in England and Hong Kong in the 1920's *The Painted Veil* is the story of the beautiful but love-starved Kitie Fane. When her husband discovers her adulterous affair, he forces her to accompany him to the heart of a cholera epidemic. Stripped of the British society of her youth and the small but effective society she fought so hard to attain in Hong Kong, she is compelled by her awakening conscience to reassess her life and learn how to love.

### **McBride, James. *The Color of Water.***



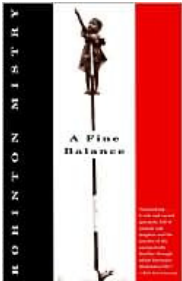
Around the narrative of Ruth McBride Jordan, a.k.a. Rachel Deborah Shilsky, the daughter of an angry, failed Orthodox Jewish rabbi in the South, her son James writes of the inner confusions he felt as a black child of a white mother and of the love and faith with which his mother surrounded their large family. The result is a powerful portrait of growing up, meditation on race and identity, and a poignant, beautifully crafted hymn from a son to his mother.

### **McEwan, Ian. *Saturday.***



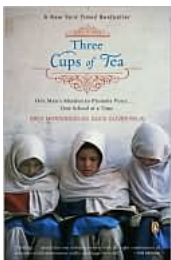
*Saturday* is a masterful novel set within a single day in February 2003. Henry Perowne is a contented man — a successful neurosurgeon, happily married to a newspaper lawyer, and enjoying good relations with his children. Outside the hospital, the world is not so easy or predictable. There is an impending war against Iraq, and a general darkening and gathering pessimism since the New York and Washington attacks two years before. On this particular Saturday morning, Perowne's day moves through the ordinary to the extraordinary. As he makes his way to his regular squash game, trying to avoid the hundreds of thousands of war protesters filling the streets of London, he has a minor car accident. This brings him into a confrontation with a small-time thug, who believes the surgeon has humiliated him and Henry Perowne must deploy all his skills to keep his family alive.

### **Mistry, Rohinton. *A Fine Balance.***



With a compassionate realism and narrative sweep that recall the work of Charles Dickens, this magnificent novel captures all the cruelty and corruption, dignity and heroism, of India. The time is 1975. The place is an unnamed city by the sea. The government has just declared a State of Emergency, in whose upheavals four strangers--a spirited widow, a young student uprooted from his idyllic hill station, and two tailors who have fled the caste violence of their native village--will be thrust together, forced to share one cramped apartment and an uncertain future. As the characters move from distrust to friendship and from friendship to love, *A Fine Balance* creates an enduring panorama of the human spirit in an inhuman state.

### **Mortenson, Greg and Relin, David Oliver *Three Cups of Tea***



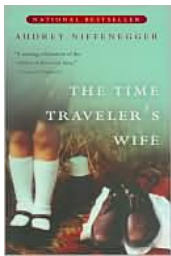
Some failures lead to phenomenal successes, and this American nurse's unsuccessful attempt to climb K2, the world's second tallest mountain, is one of them. Dangerously ill when he finished his climb in 1993, Mortenson was sheltered for seven weeks by the small Pakistani village of Korphe; in return, he promised to build the impoverished town's first school, a project that grew into the Central Asia Institute, which has since constructed more than 50 schools across rural Pakistan and Afghanistan.

### **Munro, Alice. *Away from Her.***



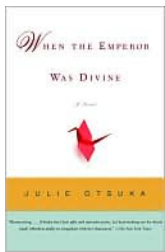
Follows Grant, a retired professor whose wife, Fiona, begins gradually to lose her memory and drift away from him. Readers slowly see how a lifetime of intimate details can create a marriage, and how mysterious the bonds of love really are.

### **Niffenegger, Audrey. *The Time Traveler's Wife*.**



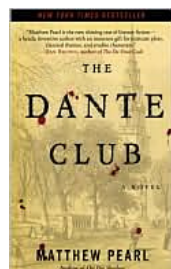
A dazzling novel in the most untraditional fashion, this is the remarkable story of Henry DeTamble, a dashing, adventuresome librarian who travels involuntarily through time, and Clare Abshire, an artist whose life takes a natural sequential course. Henry and Clare's passionate love affair endures across a sea of time and captures the two lovers in an impossibly romantic trap, and it is Audrey Niffenegger's cinematic storytelling that makes the novel's unconventional chronology so vibrantly triumphant. An enchanting debut and a spellbinding tale of fate and belief in the bonds of love, *The Time Traveler's Wife* is destined to captivate readers for years to come. -Book Jacket

### **Otsuka, Julie. *When the Emperor Was Divine***



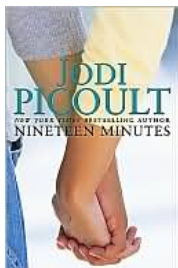
On a sunny day in Berkeley, California, in 1942, a woman sees a sign in a post office window, returns to her house, and matter-of-factly begins to pack her family's possessions. Like thousands of other Japanese Americans they have been reclassified, virtually overnight, as enemy aliens and are about to be uprooted from their home and sent to a dusty internment camp in the Utah desert. Julie Otsuka tells their story from five flawlessly realized points of view and conveys the exact emotional texture of their experience: the thin-walled barracks and barbed-wire fences, the omnipresent fear and loneliness, the unheralded feats of heroism, *When the Emperor was Divine* is a work of enormous power that makes a shameful episode of our history as immediate as today's headlines.

### **Pearl, Matthew *The Dante Club***



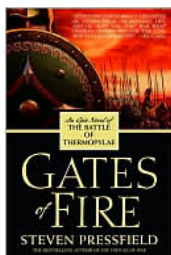
A serial killer is loose in this historical novel set in 1865 Boston. Strangely, the murderer kills his victims using the tortures described in Dante's *Inferno*. The Dante Club, whose members include Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Oliver Wendell Holmes, and James Russell Lowell, meet weekly to edit the first English translation of Dante's poem, in spite of the powerful Boston Brahmins who are fighting to keep Dante in obscurity. These literary men soon realize that the murderer is using their translation as a model for his crimes and decide to search for the killer.

### **Picoult, Jodi. *Nineteen Minutes*.**



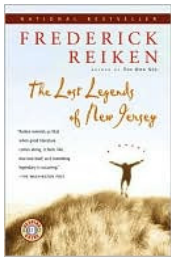
"In nineteen minutes, you can mow the front lawn, color your hair, watch a third of a hockey game. In nineteen minutes, you can bake scones or get a tooth filled by a dentist; you can fold laundry for a family of five....In nineteen minutes, you can stop the world, or you can just jump off it. In nineteen minutes, you can get revenge". Sterling is a small, ordinary New Hampshire town where nothing ever happens — until the day its complacency is shattered by a shocking act of violence. In the aftermath, the town's residents must not only seek justice in order to begin healing but also come to terms with the role they played in the tragedy.

### **Pressfield, Steven. *Gates of fire*.**



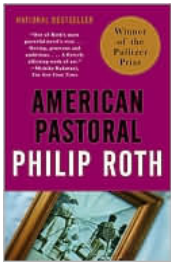
Ten years after his father Darius the Great was defeated at Marathon, Xerxes returned to conquer and punish Greece with a huge and terrible army. Between them and the Greek mainland lay the narrow pass of Thermopylae, defended by a small contingent of citizen-soldiers, and ultimately held by a picked force of just three hundred Spartan warriors. This is the moving story of those heroic brothers-in-arms who bought precious time for Western Civilization with their lives; a stirring tale of guts and glory, blood, brawn, and bone-jarring combat as wave after wave of Persian attackers crash on the mighty shore of Spartan shields.

## Reiken, Frederick. *The Lost Legends of New Jersey.*



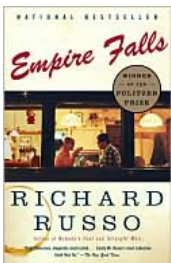
Romeo and Juliet in northern New Jersey? Yiddish constellations in Asbury Park? A garbage dump in the Meadowlands that's filled with old musical instruments from a high school marching band? Love and sex, hockey and snorkeling, a family that is falling apart despite the best intentions—this is what Frederick Reiken has delivered in his brilliant second novel.

## Roth, Philip *American Pastoral*



Swede Levov, a legendary athlete at his Newark high school, who grows up in the booming postwar years to marry a former Miss New Jersey, inherit his father's glove factory, and move into a stone house in the idyllic hamlet of Old Rimrock. And then one day in 1968, Swede's beautiful American luck deserts him. For Swede's adored daughter, Merry, has grown from a loving, quick-witted girl into a sullen, fanatical teenager—a teenager capable of an outlandishly savage act of political terrorism.

## Russo, Richard *Empire Falls*



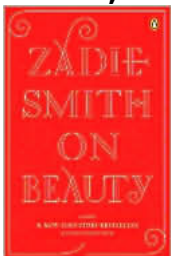
Empire Falls, Maine, has seen the inexorable failure of its logging and textile industries, the once mighty holdings of the Whiting clan, presided over by the last scion's widow, now mostly amount to decrepit real estate. Miles Roby gazes over this ruined kingdom from the Empire Grill, an opportunity that has become the albatross of his ambitions. Brought home from college by family obligations-- his mother ailing, his father it loose cannon -- Miles himself now has a divorce to contend with, but also a beloved daughter to guide gently through adolescence.

## Seierstad, Asne *Bookseller of Kabul*



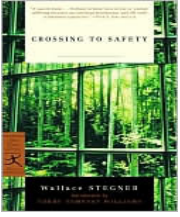
Journalist Asne Seierstad has given readers a first-hand look at Afghani life as few outsiders have seen it. Invited to live with Sultan Khan, a bookseller in Kabul who has defied the authorities—whether Communist or Taliban—to supply books to the people of Kabul, and his family for months, this account of her experience allows the Khans to speak for themselves, giving us a genuinely gripping and moving portrait of a family, and of a country of great cultural riches and extreme contradictions.

## Smith, Zadie. *On Beauty.*



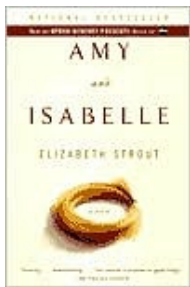
Just outside of Boston, in the small college town of Wellington, lives a family that is anything but typical. Liberated by education, complicated by race, and hobbled by self-delusion, they are about to stray onto the battleground that divides personal belief from political conviction. *On Beauty* is Zadie Smith's brilliant, hilarious send-up of the culture wars that define our age.

## **Stegner, Wallace *Crossing to Safety***



Two young couples, Sid and Charity and Larry and Sally, from different backgrounds--East and West, rich and poor--befriend each other in 1937 Madison, Wisconsin. Crossing to Safety is a novel about gifts: the gifts of our talents; the gifts of our shortcomings, which allow us to grow; the gifts of a marriage; the gifts of our friendships; the gifts of what endures and what falls away; the gift of a good life and the gift of a good death.

## **Strout, Elizabeth. *Amy and Isabelle.***



Isabelle Goodrow thought her move to the small mill town of Shirley Falls would be temporary--just until she decided in which direction she wanted her life to head. Now her daughter, Amy, has fallen in love with her high school math teacher, and he takes advantage of the teen's infatuation. When the relationship is discovered, Isabelle is furious with her daughter but also a little jealous that Amy has found sexual fulfillment while she has not. As mother and daughter try to rebuild the trust and closeness they once shared, the private secrets of many citizens of Shirley Falls are revealed.

## **Wolitzer, Meg *The Wife***



The moment Joan Castleman decides to leave her husband, they are thirty-five thousand feet above the ocean on a flight to Helsinki. Joan's husband, Joseph, is one of America's preeminent novelists, about to receive a prestigious international award, and Joan, who has spent forty years subjugating her own literary talents to fan the flames of his career, has finally decided to stop. From this gripping opening, Meg Wolitzer flashes back to 1950s Smith College and Greenwich Village and follows the course of the marriage that has brought the couple to this breaking point -- one that results in a shocking revelation.