

Accessible Book Club Kit sets

Each set has: 10 regular print, 3 Large Print, 2 AudioCD

In envelope: criticism and question sheets, sign-up sheet

Note: ONE person in each book club will check out and be responsible for the entire kit.

Sets are **returned by Saturday noon (Downtown)** for the next group to borrow.

There is a **6 week loan period – from Saturday** at noon (pick-ups later in the week back date to previous Saturday). **No renewals** are allowed.

At present *the public cannot book more than one loan period in advance*.

Please check there is an envelope in your kit before you leave.

Fiction

Alchemist by Paulo Coelho

Santiago is a young Andalusian shepherd who wants to travel and become rich. Along the way he meets a wide variety of people who either help or hinder him. He learns to listen to his heart, follow his dreams, and find happiness where he is. A delightful allegory with a surprising ending; this is probably Coelho's most well-known novel.

Cat's Table by Michael Ondaatje

Michael, an 11-year-old boy, is travelling on the ship Oronsay from Ceylon to London to meet his mother in the 1950s. On ship he meets two other children, Cassius and Ramadhin. They have many adventures and interact with an eccentric set of believable passengers.

Cutting for Stone by Abraham Verghese

Twin brothers are born to a surgeon and his nurse (a nun) in 1950s Ethiopia. The mother dies giving birth and the father flees, leaving the boys to be raised by a doctor couple. Both boys, Marion and Shiva, become surgeons. The author combines their story with that of modern Ethiopia. Marion flees to New York in the last part of the novel like many real-life refugees.

Daring Ladies of Lowell by Kate Alcott

This book explores the industrial revolution, and includes the case of an actual murder of an American mill girl in 1833. Farm girl, Alice, starts work in a Massachusetts cloth factory and her friend Lovey Cornell is murdered. The reactions of workers and the mill owner family as the case goes to trial are nicely showcased. The mill owner thinks of profit, but the eldest son is sympathetic to the poor conditions of workers.

Flight of Dreams by Ariel Lawhon

Set in 1937, this is a fictional account of the disastrous 3 day voyage of the *Hindenberg*. It is told from the perspective of 5 people who were actually on the flight: a navigator, the stewardess, a cabin boy, a journalist, and an American. The author states the

people who died in the explosion also died in the novel. While it reads like a thriller, the novel makes you aware of tensions between passengers, and in Europe at the time.

Half Blood Blues by Esi Edugyan

Partly set in the Paris jazz scene in 1940, this story is about a group of musicians two of whom go for a fateful walk. Hiero (an Afro-German) and Sid set out to get some milk, but Hiero is apprehended by the Nazis and vanishes. In 1992, Sid and another of the group head back to Paris and reflect on what happened.

House I Loved by Tatiana de Rosnay

Set in 1860s Paris, elderly Rose Bazelet, is upset her home is to be destroyed as part of the urban renewal plan of Baron Haussman. Rose writes letters to her beloved dead husband describing her struggles to try and save their home. The novel explores three major times and the memories which will be lost when the neighbourhood goes. By the author of Sarah's Key.

Invention of Wings by Sue Monk Kidd

Based on the life of abolitionist and suffragette Sarah Grimke, the novel focusses on Sarah and Hetty, the 10 year old slave Sarah was given on her 11th birthday. The interaction and friendship between these girls over the next 30 years shows how each struggled for a life of her own trying to overcome the limits imposed by their society.

Language of Flowers by Vanessa Diffenbaugh.

Victoria has grown up in the foster care system. She learned to mistrust most people and only likes flowers. A fire separated her from the only foster mother who liked her. At 18 she leaves the system and through an unusual local florist learns she actually has a talent for working with flowers. Victoria must decide whether it is worthwhile to struggle through trust issues and take a chance at being a 'normal member' of society.

Magic Strings of Frankie Pesto by Mitch Albom

Frankie, a Spanish civil war orphan, is tutored by a blind music teacher. The narrator, the voice of Music, tells how talented Frankie goes to America with his guitar and six magical strings. His music repertoire covers classical to jazz to rock and roll; he influences many musicians. If Frankie saves or alters a person's life, a string will turn blue. Then something happens to him and even though he is now famous, he vanishes for many years. This title makes you reflect on how you affect other people.

Orphan Train by Christina Baker Kline

Molly a native orphan about to age out of the foster care system is assigned community service. She has to help elderly Vivian clean out her home. To Molly's surprise she makes friends with Vivian who was sent out on the Orphan Train to the mid-Western USA many years ago. This novel brings to light a little-known part of history, is well-researched, and shows how two brave women of different eras are able to find common ground and help each other move forward.

Prodigal Summer by Barbara Kingsolver

Through one summer we follow three parallel stories set in Appalachia. Each set of people faces different challenges with the common theme being nature. Deanna is a wildlife biologist defending coyotes; Lusa an entomologist interested in moths; while Nannie is a certified organic farmer. Each has a foil with some love interest, but Kingsolver expects us to be more concerned with the overall picture than the people.

Sweetness at the bottom of the pie by Alan Bradley

Saskatchewan writer Bradley won the Debut Dagger Award with this novel set in 1950 at Buckshaw, a decaying English mansion. Flavia de Luce, an 11 year old chemist in the making, finds a dead bird on their doorstep with a postage stamp on its beak. Then she discovers a dead man in the vegetable garden. This young sleuth, who worries her stamp-collecting father will be blamed, tries to help the police find the real killer.

Room by Emma Donoghue

Shortlisted for the Man Booker prize, 'Room' is loosely based on Elisabeth Fritzl, a 42-year-old Austrian woman, imprisoned by her father for 24 years. Told through the eyes of 5 year old Jack it is the story of him and his mother, abducted 7 years earlier as a 19 year old college student, and their life in an 11 foot square sound-proofed shed. Part way through the novel Jack and his mother escape and the child must adjust to the real world.

Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry by Rachel Joyce

Recently retired Harold Fry and his wife, Maureen, seem distant from each other. Then a letter arrives from Queenie, with whom he worked twenty years ago. She is writing goodbye from a hospice. After responding with a short letter, Harold decides to walk 600 miles to say goodbye in person, as a thank-you for past kindnesses. Many people, including Harold and his wife, are positively changed by his decision.

Winter Palace by Eva Stachniak

The novel covers the early life of Catherine the Great of Russia, formerly Sophie, daughter of a German prince. We see a court of intrigue through her eyes and through the eyes of orphaned Varvara, a Polish servant. Varvara, trained as a spy by Count Bestuzhev, becomes friendly with Catherine against all odds as they grow up.

Wolves of Andover by Kathleen Kent.

In Massachusetts in the 1600s Martha Allen, an independent young woman, is sent to assist her pregnant cousin. One of the servants is Thomas Carrier who saves her life during a wolf attack. As their friendship grows, Martha realizes Thomas is in danger due to his service during the English Civil war. Assassins from London are now after him. There is lots of historical detail, and a fast-paced twisting plot.

Behind the Beautiful Forevers: life, death and hope in a Mumbai Undercity by

Katherine Boo

New York Times reporter, Boo, shows what the modern world is like in the Annawadi slum in India which houses 3000 residents. She details both the shocking stories and moments of triumph in the lives of several of the residents. Boo has also used information gleaned from criminal investigations and official documents in this area to show how the poor are considered as less than human.

End of your Life Book club by Will Schwalbe

Surprisingly uplifting book on how a mother and son deal with her pancreatic cancer. Will and his Mom get serious about their two person book club, and have great discussions about the books they choose over a two year period while awaiting treatment in the cancer center. Will notes, "reading isn't the opposite of doing; it's the opposite of dying". A must read for all book club lovers.

Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks by Rebecca Skloot

Black American Henrietta Lacks, was diagnosed with a fatal form of cervical cancer. Doctors in 1951 harvested cells from her cervix without permission and distributed them to labs. Known as HeLa cells, they became a source for medical research: gene mapping, in vitro fertilization, polio vaccine. Yet Lacks's children couldn't afford visits to doctors and spent decades not knowing about their mother's contribution.

In the Garden of Beasts: Love, Terror and an American Family in Hitler's Berlin by

Erik Larson

In the early 1930s William Dodd, a middle class southern historian becomes the US ambassador to Germany. At first he, and his wife, son, and wild daughter Martha were dazzled by the Nazis. Dodd was unprepared for the brutality of the rising regime. The author uses Martha's diaries plus other sources to vividly recreate the time and events as seen through the eyes of an 'average' family.

Updated: October 2017