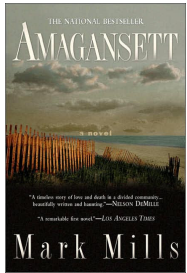




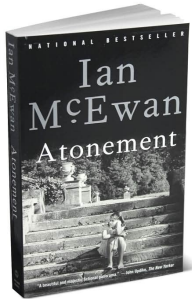
Book Club in a Bag: Annotated Bibliography

Amagansett by Mark Mills



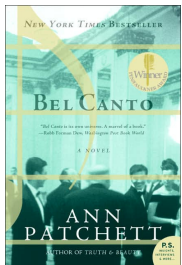
By 1947, Amagansett, like much of this part of Long island, is undergoing a radical change as Manhattan's rich and famous invade the small fishing villages and farmlands that have made up this area. Fishermen like immigrant Basque Conrad Labarde and his helper Rollo cast nets almost daily to earn a living and catch the body of a young woman. Deputy Chief of Police Tom Hollis investigates the death to ascertain whether a murder has occurred. Though on the surface *Amagansett* is a historical village police procedural, the story line is actually more of a character study at a time when great upheaval impacts this part of Long Island as centuries old lifestyle is changing.

Atonement by Ian McEwan



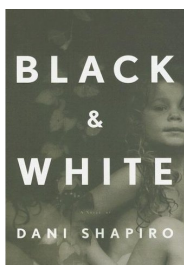
Using a love story, a family saga, and historical events, this book takes the reader through the events of three intertwined lives from childhood in 1935 England, through the WWII years and finally into the final stages of their lives. Foreboding from the start, the reader knows that something bad is going to happen. And it does about halfway through. The remainder of the book is spent learning about the consequences and the deep psychological makeup of these main characters.

Bel Canto by Ann Patchett.



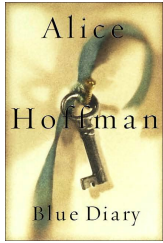
At a lavish, multi-national birthday party in a fictional South American country, terrorists invade. They are planning to kidnap the President who is not there and a siege ensues that lasts for several months. The reader watches as many alliances are slowly formed, stereotypes begin to disappear, and opera becomes the universal language. The tone of this book is almost diametrically opposed to the premise. It is a story of love, friendship, and compassion set in the midst of a terrorist act.

Black & White by Dani Shapiro



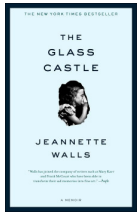
A novel about art, fame, ambition, and family that explores a provocative question: Is it possible for a mother to be true to herself and true to her children at the same time? Clara Brodeur has spent her entire adult life pulling herself away from her famous mother, the renowned and controversial photographer Ruth Dunne, whose towering reputation rests on the unsettling nude portraits she took of her young daughter from the ages of three to fourteen. Now, Ruth Dunne is dying, and Clara is summoned to her bedside. Despite her anguish and ambivalence, Clara returns and confronts the past she has ignored for so long.

Blue Diary by Alice Hoffman



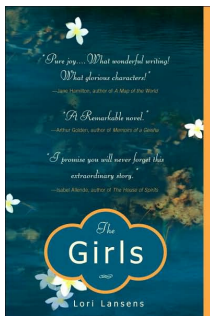
Secrets are the real key to *Blue Diary*, Hoffman's plunge into the darker mysteries of seemingly blissful love in a small New England town. Ethan Ford's secret, which is the thing that splits the novel apart, is that he has reinvented himself, from a crime-doer to a good-doer, and yet that means nothing in the wake of the crime he committed when he was "someone else. Jorie, his previously envied wife becomes the subject of derision and a personal breakdown that forever changes her life and that of her melancholy young son. It is a cautionary fable, a fairy tale with a true-life Grimm ending, although it has shoots of possible redemption at the end.

The Glass Castle: A Memoir by Jeannette Walls



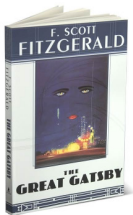
The author recalls her life growing up in a dysfunctional family with an alcoholic father and distant mother and describes how she and her siblings had to fend for themselves until they finally found the resources and will to leave home.

The Girls by Lori Lansens



Since their birth, Rose and Ruby Darlen have been known simply as "the girls." They make friends, fall in love, have jobs, love their parents, and follow their dreams. But the Darlens are special. Now nearing their 30th birthday, they are history's oldest craniopagus twins - joined at the head by a spot the size of a bread plate. When Rose, the bookish sister, sets out to write her autobiography, it inevitably becomes the story of her short but extraordinary life with Ruby, the beautiful one. From their awkward first steps--Ruby's arm curled around Rose's neck, her foreshortened legs wrapped around Rose's hips-- to the friendships they gradually build for themselves in the small town of Leaford, this is the profoundly affecting chronicle of an incomparable life journey.

The Great Gatsby by F. Scott Fitzgerald



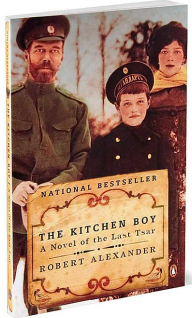
The Great Gatsby, which is generally considered to be Fitzgerald's greatest completed work, is set among the gaudy, excessive mansions of Long Island and depicts the hope and disillusionment inspired by the dream of becoming wealthy. It is a portrait of the spiritlessness of the Jazz Age and the cruelty of immense wealth.

House of Sand and Fog by Andre Dubus III



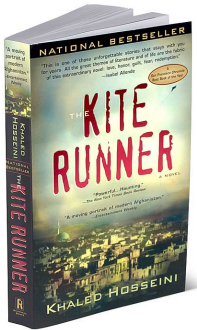
When the reader first meets Behrani, he has exhausted himself and almost all of his savings in a relentless job search, but has been unable to find a suitable job. Behrani, a former member of the Iranian Air Force under the Shah, is reduced to a job on a road crew picking up trash and yearns to restore his family's dignity. When an attractive bungalow turns up for auction, he buys it, hoping to resell it at a profit. But the house's troubled owner, Kathy Nicolo, aided by her lover, the local sheriff, is determined to get the house back. Both Behrani and Kathy are driven by the same need, as the house represents much more than just a place to live for both of them

The Kitchen Boy by Robert Alexander



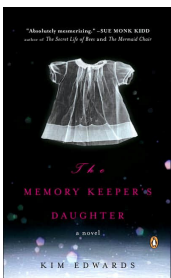
The Kitchen Boy is a brilliant mixture of historical information and skillful storytelling. Robert Alexander takes the bare bones of the Romanov tragedy and fleshes them out into a poignant, seemingly accurate tale. The descriptions of each member of the Tsar's family and how each behaved in captivity are based on testimony from those who saw them and are only slightly embellished. The diaries of the Tsar and Tsaritsa are also utilized to full extent to illustrate the misconceptions about her and the fact that he, while well-intentioned, was at best ineffectual as a leader. The imagery and descriptions are so vivid that the reader can almost picture the Tsar pacing up and down and the family rushing to be near the finally opened window for a breath of fresh air.

The Kite Runner by Khaled Hosseini



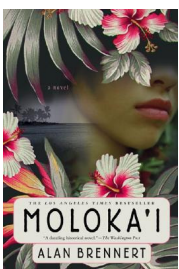
Taking us from Afghanistan in the final days of the monarchy to the present, *The Kite Runner* is the unforgettable, beautifully told story of the friendship between two boys growing up in Kabul. Raised in the same household and sharing the same wet nurse, Amir and Hassan nonetheless grow up in different worlds: Amir is the son of a prominent and wealthy man, while Hassan, the son of Amir's father's servant, is a Hazara, member of a shunned ethnic minority. Their intertwined lives, and their fates, reflect the eventual tragedy of the world around them. When the Soviets invade and Amir and his father flee the country for a new life in California, Amir thinks that he has escaped his past. And yet he cannot leave the memory of Hassan behind him. *The Kite Runner* is a novel about friendship, betrayal, and the price of loyalty.

The Memory Keeper's Daughter by Kim Edwards



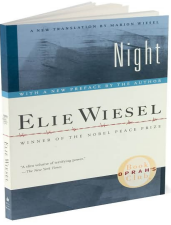
In a tale spanning twenty-five years, a doctor delivers his newborn twin daughter during a snowstorm and, rashly deciding to protect his wife from the baby's affliction with Down Syndrome, turns her over to a nurse, who secretly raises the child. This is an epic story of a doctor who, in an emotional moment makes a decision that affects him and everyone around him forever. Author Kim Edwards traces the story of this particular family over 25 years as a long kept secret is revealed.

Moloka'i by Alan Brennert



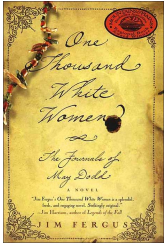
This richly imagined novel, set in Hawai'i more than a century ago, is an extraordinary epic of a little-known time and place---and a deeply moving testament to the resiliency of the human spirit. Rachel Kalama, a spirited seven-year-old Hawaiian girl, dreams of visiting far-off lands like her father, a merchant seaman. Then one day a rose-colored mark appears on her skin, and those dreams are stolen from her. Taken from her home and family, Rachel is sent to Kalaupapa, the quarantined leprosy settlement on the island of Moloka'i. Here her life is supposed to end---but instead she discovers it is only just beginning.

Night by Elie Wiesel



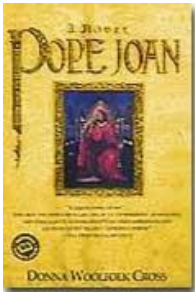
Wiesel is one of the most eloquent writers of the Holocaust, and this book is his best known work. This compelling narrative describes his own experience in Auschwitz. His account of his entrance into Auschwitz and his first night in the camp is extraordinary. This narrative is often considered required reading for students of the Holocaust.

One Thousand White Women by Jim Fergus



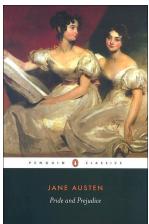
The story begins with May Dodd's journey west into the unknown. A government program, in which women are brought west as brides for the Cheyenne, is her vehicle. What follows is the story of May's adventures: her marriage to Little Wolf, chief of the Cheyenne nation, and her conflict of being caught between two worlds, loving two men, living two lives.

Pope Joan by Donna Woolfolk Cross



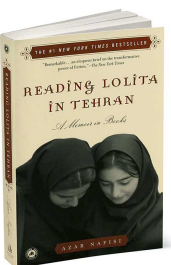
Brilliant and talented, young Joan rebels against the medieval social strictures forbidding women to learn to read and write. When her older brother is killed during a Viking attack, Joan takes up his cloak and identity, goes to the monastery of Fulda, and is initiated into the brotherhood in his place. As Brother John Anglicus, Joan distinguishes herself as a great Christian scholar. Eventually she is drawn to Rome, where she becomes enmeshed in a dangerous web of love, passion, and politics. Triumphant over appalling odds, she finally attains the highest throne in Christendom. Pope Joan is a sweeping historical drama set against the turbulent events of the ninth century.

Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen



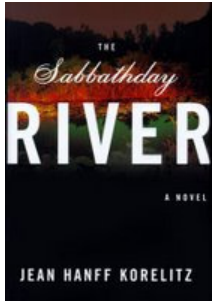
Pride and Prejudice is a perceptive examination of the relationship between the classes in Britain with middle class, upwardly mobile aspirations to progress rubbing against upper class efforts to keep them "in their place." Austen's adroit depiction of the plight of women in pre-Victorian Europe shows her superlative insight into her own world and this insight is skillfully mirrored through one of the most intriguing and admired heroines of English novels Elizabeth Bennet.

Reading Lolita in Tehran by Azar Nafisi



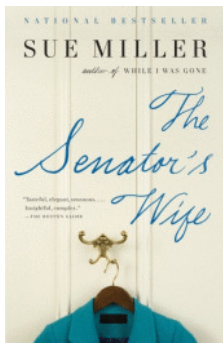
Azar Nafisi's luminous tale offers a fascinating portrait of the Iran-Iraq war viewed from Tehran and gives us a rare glimpse, from the inside, of women's lives in revolutionary Iran. Anyone who has ever belonged to a book group must read this book. Nafisi takes us into the vivid lives of eight women who must meet in secret to explore the forbidden fiction of the West. It is at once a celebration of the power of the novel and a cry of outrage at the reality in which these women are trapped.

Sabbathday River by Jean Hanff Korelitz



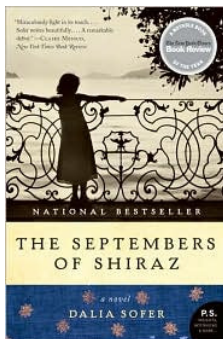
Jogging outside the town of Goddard, New Hampshire, Naomi Roth finds the body of a newborn baby girl floating facedown in the Sabbathday River. News of the dead child spreads quickly through Goddard, and Naomi - an aging idealist, a former VISTA volunteer, and the founder of a women's quilting cooperative - is shocked when the community swiftly, implausibly fingers Heather Pratt, a young single mother notorious for her affair with a married man, as the prime suspect. It comes as an even greater shock when, after a long interrogation behind closed doors, Heather confesses to the crime. Moved and angered by Heather's plight - and increasingly isolated in conservative Goddard - Naomi engages the help of Judith Friedman, a lawyer and fellow "flatlander," to defend the young woman. But when the truth at the heart of this astonishing case - and the body of a second baby - comes to light, it is Naomi who must confront how little she has understood her town, her friend, and herself.

The Senator's Wife by Sue Miller

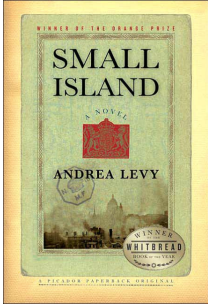


Meri is newly married, pregnant, and standing on the cusp of her life as a wife and mother, recognizing with some terror the gap between reality and expectation. Delia, wife of the two-term liberal senator Tom Naughton, is Meri's new neighbor in the adjacent New England town house. Tom's chronic infidelity has been an open secret in Washington circles, but despite the complexity of their relationship, the bond between them remains strong. Soon Delia and Meri find themselves leading strangely parallel lives, as they both reckon with the contours and mysteries of marriage: one refined and abraded by years of complicated intimacy, the other barely begun. It is a highly charged, superlative novel about marriage and forgiveness.

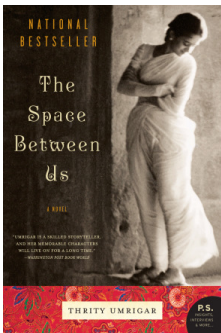
The Septembers of Shiraz by Dalia Sofer



Isaac Amin, an Iranian Jew, is arrested and imprisoned shortly after the 1979 revolution in Iran, accused of being a Zionist Spy. This novel follows his descent from a venerated, wealthy jeweler to a helpless prisoner, and chronicles the disquieting effect of his arrest on his family. As Isaac navigates the tedium and terrors of prison, his wife feverishly searches for him, suspecting that their once-trusted housekeeper has turned on them and is now acting as an informer. His daughter, in a childlike attempt to stop the wave of baseless arrests, engages in illicit activities, while his son, sent to New York before the rise of the Ayatollah, struggles to find happiness even as he realizes that his family may soon be forced to embark on a journey of incalculable danger. *The Septembers of Shiraz* vividly depicts not only the undoing of a family, but also that of an entire country.

Small Island by Andrea Levy

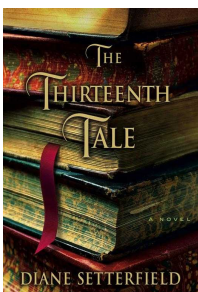
Andrea Levy's award-winning novel, *Small Island*, deftly brings two bleak families into crisp focus. First a Jamaican family, including the well-intentioned Gilbert, who can never manage to say or do exactly the right thing; Romeo Michael, who leaves a wake of women in his path; and finally, Hortense, whose primness belies her huge ambition to become English in every way possible. The other unhappy family is English, starting with Queenie, who escapes the drudgery of being a butcher's daughter only to marry a dull banker. As the chapters reverse chronology and the two groups collide and finally mesh, the book unfolds through time like a photo album, and Levy captures the struggle between class, race, and sex with a humor and tenderness that is both authentic and bracing. The book is cinematic in the best way--lighting up London's bombed-out houses and wartime existence with clarity and verve while never losing her character's voice or story.

The Space Between Us by Thrity Umrigar

Bhima is a domestic servant in contemporary Bombay who leaves her own small shanty in the slums to scrub the floors of a house in which she remains an outsider. Sera, her employer, is an upper-middle-class Parsi housewife whose opulent surroundings hide the shame and disappointment of her abusive marriage. Despite being separated from each other by blood and class, Bhima and Sera find themselves bound by gender and shared life experiences. Everything changes, however, when Bhima's granddaughter, Maya, a university student, becomes pregnant by a man whose identity she refuses to reveal. Bhima's dreams of a better life for Maya, as well as for herself, may be shattered forever and loyalties are put to the test. Poignant and compelling, evocative and unforgettable, *The Space Between Us* is an intimate portrait of a distant yet familiar world.

Snow Flower and the Secret Fan: A Novel by Lisa See

Born into a farmer's family in 19th century China, Lily suffers her fate like many other daughters of that age - she is seen more as a liability than an asset. But the local matchmaker announces that Lily's feet will be flawless if they are bound. Suddenly, a good marriage for Lily and an improvement in fortune for the family are within reach. Lily also meets Snow Flower, a girl with whom she would share the joys and heartaches of the rest of her life. Footbinding, matchmaking, nushu, sworn sisterhood, all traditional practices of old China, figure strongly in this memorable novel about Chinese women, loyalty and love

The Thirteenth Tale: by Diane Setterfield

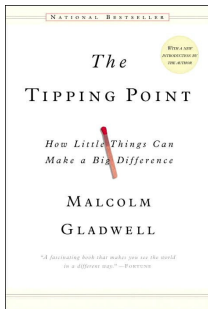
Margaret Lea, a bookish loner, is summoned to the home of Vida Winter, England's most popular novelist, and commanded to write her biography. Miss Winter has been falsifying her life story and her identity for more than 60 years. Facing imminent death and feeling an unexplainable connection to Margaret, Miss Winter begins to spin a haunting, suspenseful tale of an old English estate, a devastating fire, twin girls, a governess, and a ghost. As Margaret carefully records Vida's tale, she ponders her own family secrets. Her research takes her to the English moors to view a mansion's ruins and discover an unexpected ending to Vida's story.

Time and Again by Jack Finney



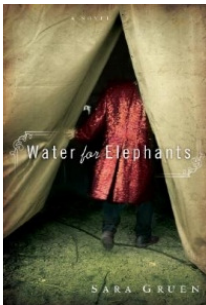
This book is considered a science fiction classic. Written in 1970, it centers on Simon Morley, an artist-illustrator who is recruited into a secret government project that is developing a method of time travel. The plot is absorbing, but the real charm of the book is in Finney's description of people and places of late 19th century New York

The Tipping Point by Malcolm Gladwell



This best seller focuses on non-linear social changes -- the times when an "epidemic" breaks out. Such epidemics can be a fashion fad (the revival of Hush Puppies) or an important cultural change (the sudden reduction in crime in New York in the early 1990's). Gladwell shows how a factor 'tips' - when a critical mass 'catches' the infection and passes it on. This is when a shoe becomes a 'fashion craze', social smoking becomes 'addiction' and crime becomes a 'wave'. The Tipping Point is a manual for understanding and directing change: a revolutionary's handbook.

Water for Elephants by Sara Gruen



Jacob Jankowski, ninety-three years old and living in a nursing home, reminisces about his youth. Set during the Great Depression, Jacob is orphaned two weeks before completing his veterinary degree. He impulsively jumps aboard a train which turns out to be a struggling third rate circus. Although he has no experience, he is given a job as a vet. He has to learn everything about the circus world, the performers, the working men, the animals and the peculiar social hierarchy. Uncle Al is the ruthless director, August the temperamental second in command, and Marlena is August's wife to whom Jacob is very attracted. Into this volatile mix comes Rosie the elephant with the expectation that her act will save the circus. Jacob's memories are interspersed with descriptions of his current life in this heartwarming novel.