

Book Club Set Summaries

After the falls by Catherine Gildiner (October 2010)

Catherine Gildiner recounts her remarkable coming-of-age in the 1960s with the same wit, candour and exhilarating storytelling that has made *Too Close to the Falls* a modern classic. When Cathy McClure is thirteen years old, her parents make the bold decision to move to suburban Buffalo in hopes that it will help Cathy focus on her studies and stay out of trouble. But “normal” has never been Cathy’s forte, and leaving Niagara Falls and Catholic school behind does nothing to quell her spirited nature. As the 1960s dramatically unfold, Cathy takes on many personas — cheerleader, vandal, HoJo hostess, civil rights demonstrator — with the same gusto she exhibited as a child working split shifts in her father’s pharmacy. But when tragedy strikes, it is her role as daughter that proves to be most challenging.

Autobiographies and memoirs; Life stories

Barbarian lost: travels through the New China by Alexandre Trudeau (September 2016)

Accompanied by a Chinese journalist, Sacha Trudeau talks to Chinese people from all walks of life, examining the changes taking place now and looking at the history of this highly codified society.

Canadian, Travel writing, Autobiography

Becoming by Michelle Obama (November 2018)

An intimate memoir by the former First Lady chronicles the experiences that have shaped her remarkable life, from her childhood on the South Side of Chicago through her setbacks and achievements in the White House.

Autobiographies and memoirs; History writing; Life stories

Charlotte’s web by E. B White (June 1952)

The classic children’s story of Wilbur, the pig, smallest of the litter, who is raised by the farmer’s daughter, and who finds a friend in Charlotte, the spider.

Classics, Anthropomorphic, Children’s

Circling the sun by Paula McLain (July 2015)

McLain paints a captivating portrait of Africa in the 1920s and the life of expats making their home there, fictionalizing the grandly adventurous, passionate, and scandalous life of British East African Beryl Markham, the first licensed woman horse trainer and breeder on the continent and an intrepid, record-setting pilot.

Historical, Biographical, Strong female character

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The clockmaker's daughter by Kate Morton (October 2018)

Events that occurred in the late 19th century at Birchwood Manor cast their shadows over the next 150 years, with various mysterious voices explaining how those events affected their lives. Attentive readers will be rewarded as clues are revealed. Atmospheric and perfect for gothic fiction fans of Sarah Waters and Beatriz Williams. -- Virginia Holsten for LibraryReads.

Australian literature; Gothic fiction; Mainstream fiction; Multiple perspectives; Parallel narratives, Award Winner

Crow Lake by Mary Lawson (February 2002)

In the rural farm country of northern Ontario, the lives of two families--the farming Pye family, and zoologist Kate Morrison and her three brothers--are brought together and torn apart by misunderstanding, resentment, family love, and tragedy.

Canadian, Psychological, Character-driven

Educated by Tara Westover (Feb 2018)

Traces the author's experiences as a child born to survivalists in the mountains of Idaho, describing her participation in her family's paranoid stockpiling activities and her resolve to educate herself well enough to earn an acceptance into a prestigious university and the unfamiliar world beyond.

Award winner; Adult books for young adults; Autobiographies and memoirs; Life stories

The exiles by Christina Baker Kline (Aug 2020)

In this gorgeous novel, Christina Baker Kline brilliantly recreates the beginnings of a new society in a beautiful and challenging land, telling the story of Australia from a fresh perspective, through the experiences of Evangeline, Hazel, and Mathinna.

Award winner; Historical fiction; Culturally diverse; Dramatic; Moving

Falling from grace by Coralee Boileau (Nov 2019)

When Grace Chantry moves back to her small hometown of Tarn Junction, she's lost everything from her big-city life except the one thing she's kept secret: her selectively mute foster daughter, Synia, who is withdrawn from everyone—everyone, it seems, except eccentric local recluse Ida Cale. Struggling against the town's disapproval, together Ida and Grace set out to help Synia find her words. But will Ida's strange ways be enough to pull the child from her darkness and save both Synia and Grace from themselves?

A gentleman in Moscow by Amor Towles (Sep 2016)

Deemed unrepentant by a Bolshevik tribunal in 1922, Count Alexander Rostov is sentenced to house arrest in a hotel across the street from the

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Kremlin, where he lives in an attic room while some of the most tumultuous decades in Russian history unfold.

Historical fiction; Literary fiction

The girl on the train by Paula Hawkins (January 2015)

Rachel is a washed-up thirty-something who creates a fantasy about the seemingly perfect couple she sees during her daily train ride into London. When the woman goes missing, Rachel manages to insert herself into the investigation of the woman's disappearance. In the vein of *Gone Girl*, this dark psychological thriller is fast-paced and features some very unreliable narrators.

Thriller, Psychological, Fast-paced

Half-blood blues by Esi Edugyan (June 2011)

Sid, the only one to witness his bandmate's disappearance at the hands of the Gestapo, breaks his silence on the incident over fifty years later when the men are reunited at a documentary premiere.

Canadian, Historical, Literary

The handmaid's tale by Margaret Atwood (1986)

In a future world where the birth rate has declined, fertile women are rounded up, indoctrinated as "handmaids," and forced to bear children to prominent men.

Canadian, Science fiction, Dystopian

The hate u give by Angie Thomas (February 2017)

After witnessing her friend's death at the hands of a police officer, Starr Carter's life is complicated when the police and a local drug lord try to intimidate her in an effort to learn what happened the night Kahlil died.

Award winner; African American fiction; Books to movies; First person narratives; Realistic fiction; Facing racism; Authentic; Culturally diverse; Character-driven; Issue-oriented; Own voices

Heads you win by Jeffrey Archer (November 2018)

Follows a 1968 Russian teen who escapes an oppressive life in Leningrad and is forced to choose between parallel lives in London and New York.

Coming-of-age stories; Mainstream fiction

The henna artist by Alka Joshi (March 2020)

A talented henna artist for wealthy confidantes finds her efforts to control her own destiny in 1950s Jaipur threatened by the abusive husband she fled as a teenage girl.

Historical fiction; Culturally diverse; Atmospheric; Moving; Engaging; Lush

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The high road by Terry Fallis (September 2010)

"A brilliant follow-up to the Stephen Leacock Award winner 'The Best Laid Plans,' this deeply funny satire continues the story of Honest Angus McLintock, an amateur politician who dares to do the unthinkable: tell the truth. Just when Daniel Addison thinks he can escape his job as a political aide, Angus McLintock, the no-hope candidate he helped into Parliament, throws icy cold water over his plans. Angus has just brought down the government with a deciding vote. Now the crusty Scot wants Daniel to manage his next campaign. Soon Daniel is helping Angus fight an uphill battle against "Flamethrower" Fox, a Conservative notorious for his dirty tactics. Together they decide to take 'The High Road' and - against all odds - turn the race into a nail-biter with hilarious ups and downs, cookie-throwing seniors, and even a Watergate-style break-in. But that's only the beginning. Add a political storm in the capital and a side-splitting visit from the U.S. President and his alcoholic wife, and Terry Fallis's second novel is a wildly entertaining read full of deft political satire and laugh-out-loud comedy."--Publisher description

Canadian fiction; Humorous stories

Home before dark: Ottawa diaries 1998-2002 by Rosemary Sexton (January 2014)

A collection of Rosemary Sexton's diaries, chronicling the life of a judge's wife in Ottawa at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Local author, Autobiography

A house in the sky by Amanda Lindhout (September 2013)

With the assistance of New York Times Magazine writer Sara Corbett, Lindhout, who was held hostage in Somalia for more than a year, chronicles her harrowing ordeal and how she found the moral strength to survive.

Autobiography, Canadian

Indiscretion by Charles Dubow (February 2013)

When Harry and Madeleine Winslow meet Claire, they are drawn to her youth, quiet intelligence, and naiveté, and over the course of the summer, reverence transforms into dangerous desire.

Literary, Psychological suspense, Steamy

LaRose by Louise Erdrich (May 2016)

Having accidentally killed his friend's 5-year-old son while hunting, Landreaux Iron gives away his own son to his friend's family according to tradition, leading to a tenuous peace that is threatened by a vengeful adversary.

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*Domestic fiction; Literary fiction; Magical realism
Award Winner*

Massey murder: a maid, her master and the trial that shocked a country by Charlotte Gray (September 2013)

Explores the 1915 murder of Charles "Bert" Massey, a member of one of Canada's wealthiest families and the trial of Carrie Davies, an eighteen-year-old penniless domestic servant who quickly confessed to the crime.

Canadian, True crime, Historical

One brother shy by Terry Fallis (May 2017)

Few people know the real Alex MacAskill, a painfully shy software engineer haunted by an incident from his past. However, when his mother dies, he suddenly has no choice but to face the very thing that he has been avoiding since that night in high school. Alex finds himself trying to piece together the mystery of his identity, on a search for parts of his family he never knew existed--that takes him from Ottawa to London to Moscow.

Canadian, Humorous

The rose garden by Susanna Kearsley (April 2011)

In the present day, Eva Ward travels to the Cornish coast carrying her sister's ashes. As she reconnects with the Hallet family, Eva tries to figure out how to start her life over. Then Eva is transported back to 1715, a time when smuggling was common and hidden Jacobites swarmed the coast.

Canadian, Romance, Time travel

The secret path by Gord Downie (October 2016)

Illustrations by Jeff Lemire accompany the song lyrics of Gord Downie in this graphic novel that tells the story of Chanie "Charlie" Wenjack, a twelve-year-old boy who died in flight from the Cecilia Jeffrey Indian Residential School fifty years ago.

Canadian, Aboriginal, Historical

The silence of Bonaventure arrow by Rita Leganski (February 2013)

Born in the aftermath of a searing family tragedy, Bonaventure Arrow "didn't make a peep when he was born." Never speaking a word, his silence enables him to listen to what no one else can hear. Joining forces with Creole servant Trinidad Prefontaine, young Bonaventure undertakes a quest to unlock a series of family secrets to liberate himself, his dead father, and his

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inconsolable mother from the emotionally and spiritually paralyzing bonds of the past. This mystical fairy tale set in a 1950s-era Louisiana rife with religion, superstition, and tradition draws you in from the wondrous first page.

Magical realism, Literary, Mystery

The Sisters brothers by Partrick deWitt (May 2011)

When a frontier baron known as the Commodore orders Charlie and Eli Sisters, his hired gunslingers, to track down and kill a prospector named Herman Kermit Warm, the brothers journey from Oregon to San Francisco, and eventually to Warm's claim in the Sierra foothills, running into a witch, a bear, a dead Indian, a parlor of drunken floozies, and a gang of murderous fur trappers.

Award winner; Adult books for young adults; Canadian fiction; Literary fiction; Westerns

So you want to talk about race by Ijeoma Oluo (January 2018)

A Seattle-based writer, editor and speaker tackles the sensitive, hyper-charged racial landscape in current America, discussing the issues of privilege, police brutality, intersectionality, micro-aggressions, the Black Lives Matter movement, and the "N" word.

Award winners; Adult books for young adults; Antiracist literature; Society and culture; Issue-oriented; Own voices; Conversational; Persuasive

Stranger in the woods: the extraordinary story of the north pond hermit by Michael Finkel (March 2017)

There are three types of hermits in the world according to Finkel: protesters, pilgrims, and pursuers. Christopher Knight doesn't seem to fit any of these categories, so why, at the age of 20, did he drive into a forest in Maine and disappear for 27 years? This book uses the incredible but true story of Knight, 'the last true hermit,' to explore themes of solitude, introversion and the meaning of life.

Non-fiction, Biography

Sweetland by Michael Crummey (January 2014)

The provincial government is offering resettlement money to Sweetland residents, but only if everyone agrees to leave. Moses Sweetland is 69 years old and has been disfigured by an industrial accident. When the story opens, he is the only person—aside from the man considered the island idiot—who opposes the government's proposition. The novel conveys the way that a

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sense of place is the product of relationships—among the living, with the dead, and, in Moses’s case, arising from intimate connections to land and sea.

Canadian, Literary

The testaments by Margaret Atwood (Sep 2019)

In this sequel to *The Handmaid's Tale*, author Margaret Atwood answers the question that has tantalized readers for decades: What happens to Offred?

Canadian fiction; Dystopian fiction; First person narratives; Literary fiction; Multiple perspectives; Science fiction; Award winner

Wanderers by Chuck Wendig (July 2019)

When her little sister is afflicted by a bizarre sleepwalking disorder that begins to affect people all across the country, Shana is embroiled in an apocalyptic epidemic involving a decadent rock star, a religious radio host and a disgraced scientist.

Award winner; Apocalyptic fiction; Science fiction; Band of survivors; Pandemic apocalypse; Large cast of characters; Intricately plotted; Fast-paced; Dramatic; Suspenseful; Thought-provoking; Stylistically complex

Washington Black by Esi Edugyan (Sep 2018)

Unexpectedly chosen to be a family manservant, an 11-year-old Barbados sugar-plantation slave is initiated into a world of technology and dignity before a devastating betrayal propels him throughout the world in search of his true self.

Adult books for young adults; Black Canadian fiction; Canadian fiction; Historical fiction; Award winner

Where the crawdads sing by Delia Owens (Aug 2018)

Viewed with suspicion in the aftermath of a tragedy, a beautiful hermit who has survived for years in a marsh becomes targeted by unthinkable forces.

Adult books for young adults; Coming-of-age stories; Literary fiction

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