

Book Club In A Bag Titles

Title: Daughter of Fortune

Author: Isabel Allende

Summary: A Chilean woman searches for her lover in the goldfields of 1840s California. Arriving as a stowaway, Eliza finances her search with various jobs, including playing the piano in a brothel.

Title: Fever 1793

Author: Laurie Halse Anderson

Summary: During the summer of 1793, Mattie Cook lives above the family coffee shop with her widowed mother and grandfather. Mattie spends her days avoiding chores and making plans to turn the family business into the finest Philadelphia has ever seen. But then the fever breaks out. Disease sweeps the streets, destroying everything in its path and turning Mattie's world upside down. At her feverish mother's insistence, Mattie flees the city with her grandfather. But she soon discovers that the sickness is everywhere, and Mattie must learn quickly how to survive in a city turned frantic with disease.

Title: The Sea

Author: John Banville

Summary: In this luminous new novel about love, loss, and the unpredictable power of memory, John Banville introduces us to Max Morden, a middle-aged Irishman who has gone back to the seaside town where he spent his summer holidays as a child to cope with the recent loss of his wife. It is also a return to the place where he met the Graces, the well-heeled family with whom he experienced the strange suddenness of both love and death for the first time. What Max comes to understand about the past, and about its indelible effects on him, is at the center of this elegiac, gorgeously written novel – among the finest we have had from this masterful writer.

Title: The Particular Sadness of Lemon Cake

Author: Aimee Bender

Summary: On the eve of her ninth birthday, unassuming Rose Edelstein, a girl at the periphery of schoolyard games and her distracted parents' attention, bites into her mother's homemade lemon-chocolate cake and discovers she has a magical gift: she can taste her mother's emotions in the cake. She discovers this gift to her horror, for her mother—her cheerful, good-with-crafts, can-do mother—tastes of despair and desperation. Suddenly, and for the rest of her life, food becomes a peril and a threat to Rose. The curse her gift has bestowed is the secret knowledge all families keep hidden—her mother's life outside the home, her father's detachment, her brother's clash with the world. Yet as Rose grows up she learns to harness her gift and becomes aware that there are secrets even her taste buds cannot discern. *The Particular Sadness of Lemon Cake* is a luminous tale about the enormous difficulty of loving someone fully when you know too much about them. It is heartbreaking and funny, wise and sad, and confirms Aimee Bender's place as "a writer who makes you grateful for the very existence of language" (*San Francisco Chronicle*).

Title: Those Who Save Us

Author: Jenna Blum

Summary: 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 Obersturmfuhrer of Buchenwald. Driven by the guilt of her heritage, Trudy, now a

professor of German history, begins investigating the past and finally unearths the dramatic and heartbreaking truth of her mother's life. Combining a passionate, doomed love story, a vivid evocation of life during the war, and a poignant mother/daughter drama, *Those Who Save Us* is a profound exploration of what we endure to survive and the legacy of shame.

Title: People of the Book

Author: Geraldine Brooks

Summary: In 1996, Hanna Heath, a young Australian book conservator is called to analyze the famed Sarajevo Haggadah, a priceless six-hundred-year-old Jewish prayer book that has been salvaged from a destroyed Bosnian library. When Hanna discovers a series of artifacts in the centuries' old binding, she unwittingly exposes an international cover up.

Title: Little Bee

Author: Chris Cleave

Summary: From the author of the international bestseller "Incendiary" comes a haunting novel about the tenuous friendship that blooms between two disparate strangers- one an illegal Nigerian refugee, the other a recent widow from suburban London.

Title: Sarah's Key

Author: Tatiana De Rosnay

Summary: Paris, July 1942: Sarah, a ten year-old girl, is brutally arrested with her family by the French police in the Vel d'Hiv' roundup, but not before she locks her younger brother in a cupboard in the family's apartment, thinking that she will be back within a few hours. Paris, May 2002: On Vel d'Hiv's 60th anniversary, journalist Julia Jarmond is asked to write an article about this black day in France's past. Through her contemporary investigation, she stumbles onto a trail of long-hidden family secrets that connect her to Sarah. Julia finds herself compelled to retrace the girl's ordeal, from that terrible term in the Vel d'Hiv', to the camps, and beyond. As she probes into Sarah's past, she begins to question her own place in France, and to reevaluate her marriage and her life.

Title: Before I Die

Author: Jenny Downham

Summary: Tessa has just months to live. Fighting back against hospital visits, endless tests, drugs with excruciating side-effects, Tessa compiles a list. It's her To Do Before I Die list. And number one is Sex. Released from the constraints of 'normal' life, Tessa tastes new experiences to make her feel alive while her failing body struggles to keep up. Tessa's feelings, her relationships with her father and brother, her estranged mother, her best friend, and her new boyfriend, all are painfully crystallised in the precious weeks before Tessa's time finally runs out.

Title: Still Alice

Author: Lisa Genova

Summary: *Still Alice* is a compelling debut novel about a 50-year-old woman's sudden descent into early onset Alzheimer's disease, written by first-time author Lisa Genova, who holds a Ph. D in neuroscience from Harvard University. Alice Howland, happily married with three grown children and a house on the Cape, is a celebrated Harvard professor at the height of her career when she notices a forgetfulness creeping into her life. As confusion starts to cloud her thinking and her memory begins to fail her, 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. In turns heartbreaking,

inspiring and terrifying, *Still Alice* captures in remarkable detail what's it's like to literally lose your mind...

Title: Eat Pray Love

Author: Elizabeth Gilbert

Summary: This beautifully written, heartfelt memoir touched a nerve among both readers and reviewers. Elizabeth Gilbert tells how she made the difficult choice to leave behind all the trappings of modern American success (marriage, house in the country, career) and find, instead, what she truly wanted from life. Setting out for a year to study three different aspects of her nature amid three different cultures, Gilbert explored the art of pleasure in Italy and the art of devotion in India, and then a balance between the two on the Indonesian island of Bali. By turns rapturous and rueful, this wise and funny author (whom *Booklist* calls "Anne Lamott's hip, yoga-practicing, footloose younger sister") is poised to garner yet more adoring fans.

Title: Bee Season

Author: Myla Goldberg

Summary: Nine-year-old Eliza Naumann is considered an unspectacular child--until she surprises everyone by winning her school spelling bee. But just as she begins to shine, her family starts falling apart.

Title: The Poisonwood Bible

Author: Barbara Kingsolver

Summary: The drama of a U.S. missionary family in Africa during a war of decolonization. At its center is Nathan Price, a self-righteous Baptist minister who establishes a mission in a village in 1959 Belgian Congo. The resulting clash of cultures is seen through the eyes of his wife and his four daughters.

Title: The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit

Author: Lucette Lagnado

Summary: Lagnado re-creates the cosmopolitan glamour of Cairo in the years between World War II and Nasser's rise to power. Her father, Leon, was a boulevardier who conducted business in his signature white sharkskin suit on the elegant terrace of Sheppard's Hotel, and later, in the cozy, dark bar of the Nile Hilton. But with the fall of King Farouk, Leon and his family lose everything. As streets are renamed, neighborhoods of their fellow Jews disbanded, and the city purged of foreign influence, the Lagnados, too, must make their escape. With all of their belongings packed into 26 suitcases, their jewels and gold coins hidden in sealed tins of marmalade, Leon and his family depart for any land that will take them. The poverty and hardships they encounter in their flight from Cairo to Paris to New York are strikingly juxtaposed against the beauty and comforts.

Title: The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo

Author: Stieg Larsson

Summary: An international publishing sensation, Stieg Larsson's *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* combines murder mystery, family saga, love story and financial intrigue into one satisfyingly complex and entertainingly atmospheric novel. Harriet Vanger, a scion of one of Sweden's wealthiest families disappeared over forty years ago. All these years later, her aged uncle continues to seek the truth. He hires Mikael Blomkvist, a crusading journalist recently trapped by a libel conviction, to investigate. He is aided by the pierced and tattooed punk prodigy Lisbeth Salander. Together they tap into a vein of unfathomable iniquity and astonishing corruption.

Title: Saturday

Author: Ian McEwan

Summary: 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. Henry wakes to the comfort of his large home in central London on this, his day off. He is as at ease here as he is in the operating room. On this particular Saturday morning, Perowne's day moves through the ordinary to the extraordinary. After an unusual sighting in the early morning sky, he makes his way to his regular squash game with his anaesthetist, trying to avoid the hundreds of thousands of marchers filling the streets of London, protesting against the war. A minor accident in his car brings him into a confrontation with a small-time thug. To Perowne's professional eye, something appears to be profoundly wrong with this young man, who in turn believes the surgeon has humiliated him--with savage consequences that will lead Henry Perowne to deploy all his skills to keep his family alive.

Title: Reading Lolita in Tehran

Author: Azar Nafisi

Summary: This is the story of Azar Nafisi's dream and of the nightmare that made it come true. For two years before she left Iran in 1997, Nafisi gathered seven young women at her house every Thursday morning to read and discuss forbidden works of Western literature. They were all former students whom she had taught at university. They were unaccustomed to being asked to speak their minds, but soon they began to open up and to speak more freely, not only about the novels they were reading but also about themselves, their dreams and disappointments. Nafisi's account flashes back to the early days of the revolution, when she first started teaching at the University of Tehran amid the swirl of protests and demonstrations. Azar Nafisi's 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.

Title: Keeping Faith

Author: Jodi Picoult

Summary: One of America's most powerful and thought-provoking novelists, #1 *New York Times* bestselling author Jodi Picoult brilliantly examines belief, miracles, and the complex core of family. When the marriage of Mariah White and her cheating husband, Colin, turns ugly and disintegrates, their seven-year-old daughter, Faith, is there to witness it all. In the aftermath of a rapid divorce, Mariah falls into a deep depression- and suddenly Faith, a child with no religious background whatsoever, hears divine voices, starts reciting biblical passages, and develops stigmata. And when the miraculous healings begin, mother and daughter are thrust into the volatile center of controversy and into the heat of a custody battle-trapped in a mad media circus that threatens what little stability the family has left.

Title: Three Cups of Tea

Author: Greg Mortenson & David Oliver Relin

Summary: Anyone who despairs of the individual's power to change lives has to read the story of Greg Mortenson, a homeless mountaineer who, following a 1993 climb of Pakistan's treacherous K2, was inspired by a chance encounter with impoverished mountain villagers and promised to build them a school. Over the next decade he built fifty-five schools--especially for girls-- that offer a balanced education in one of the most isolated and dangerous regions on earth. As it chronicles Mortenson's quest, which has brought him into conflict with both enraged Islamists and uncomprehending Americans, *Three Cups of Tea* combines adventure with a celebration of the humanitarian spirit.

Title: Empire Falls

Author: Richard Russo

Summary: The proprietor of a local diner struggles to raise his teenage daughter in a small town in Maine long after the logging and textile industries, that provided its citizens with their livelihood, shut down.

Title: Snow Flower and the Secret Fan

Author: Lisa See

Summary: Lily is haunted by memories--of who she once was, and of a person, long gone, who defined her existence. She has nothing but time now, as she recounts the tale of Snow Flower, and asks the gods for forgiveness. In nineteenth-century China, when wives and daughters were foot-bound and lived in almost total seclusion, the women in one remote Hunan county developed their own secret code for communication: nu shu ("women's writing"). They painted letters on fans, embroidered messages on handkerchiefs, and composed stories, thereby reaching out of their isolation to share their hopes, dreams, and accomplishments. With the arrival of a silk fan on which Snow Flower has composed for Lily a poem of introduction in nu shu, their friendship is sealed and they become "old sames" at the tender age of seven. As the years pass, through famine and rebellion, they reflect upon their arranged marriages, loneliness, and the joys and tragedies of motherhood. The two find solace, developing a bond that keeps their spirits alive. But when a misunderstanding arises, their lifelong friendship suddenly threatens to tear apart.

Title: The Invention of Hugo Cabret

Author: Brian Selznick

Summary: Orphan, clock keeper, and thief, Hugo lives in the walls of a busy Paris train station, where his survival depends on secrets and anonymity. But when his world suddenly interlocks with an eccentric, bookish girl and a bitter old man who runs a toy booth in the station, Hugo's undercover life and his most precious secret are put in jeopardy. A cryptic drawing, a treasured notebook, a stolen key, a mechanical man, and a hidden message from Hugo's dead father form the backbone of this intricate, tender, and spellbinding mystery.

Title: Olive Kitteridge

Author: Elizabeth Strout

Summary: At times stern, at other times patient, at times perceptive, at other times in sad denial, Olive Kitteridge, a retired schoolteacher, deplores 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: a lounge musician haunted by a past romance; a former student who has lost the will to live; Olive's own adult child, who feels tyrannized by her irrational sensitivities; and her husband, Henry, who finds his loyalty to his marriage both a blessing and a curse. 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. Olive Kitteridge offers profound insights into the human condition--its conflicts, its tragedies and joys, and the endurance it requires.

Title: The Accidental Tourist

Author: Anne Tyler

Summary: Macon Leary is a travel writer who hates both travel and anything out of the ordinary. He is grounded by loneliness and an unwillingness to compromise his creature comforts when he meets Muriel, a deliciously peculiar dog-obedience trainer who up-ends Macon's insular world--and thrusts him headlong into a remarkable engagement with life.

Title: Cutting for Stone

Author: Abraham Verghese

Summary: Marion and Shiva Stone are twin brothers born of a secret union between a beautiful Indian nun and a brash British surgeon. Orphaned by their mother's death and their father's disappearance, bound together by a preternatural connection and a shared fascination with medicine, the twins come of age as Ethiopia hovers on the brink of revolution. Moving from Addis Ababa to New York City and back again, *Cutting for Stone* is an unforgettable story of love and betrayal, medicine and ordinary miracles-and two brothers whose fates are forever intertwined.

Title: Big Fish

Author: Daniel Wallace

Summary: When his attempts to get to know his dying father fail, William Bloom makes up stories that recreate his father's life in heroic proportions.

Title: The Night Watch

Author: Sarah Waters

Summary: Moving back through the 1940s, through air raids, blacked-out streets, illicit partying, and sexual adventure, to end with its beginning in 1941, *The Night Watch* tells the story of four Londoners-three women and a young man with a past-whose lives, and those of their friends and lovers, connect in tragedy, stunning surprise and exquisite turns, only to change irreversibly in the shadow of a grand historical event.

Title: The Story of Edgar Sawtelle

Author: David Wroblewski

Summary: Born mute, speaking only in sign, Edgar Sawtelle leads an idyllic life with his parents on their farm in remote northern Wisconsin. For generations, the Sawtelles have raised and trained a fictional breed of dog whose thoughtful companionship is epitomized by Almondine, Edgar's lifelong friend and ally. But with the unexpected return of Claude, Edgar's paternal uncle, turmoil consumes the Sawtelles' once peaceful home. When Edgar's father dies suddenly, Claude insinuates himself into the life of the farm-and into Edgar's mother's affections. Grief-stricken and bewildered, Edgar tries to prove Claude played a role in his father's death, but his plan backfires-spectacularly. Forced to flee into the vast wilderness lying beyond the farm, Edgar comes of age in the wild, fighting for his survival and that of the three yearling dogs who follow him. But his need to face his father's murderer and his devotion to the Sawtelle dogs turn Edgar ever homeward. David Wroblewski is a master storyteller, and his breathtaking scenes- the elemental north woods, the sweep of seasons, an iconic American barn, a fateful vision rendered in the falling rain- create a riveting family saga, a brilliant exploration of the limits of language, and a compulsively readable modern classic.

Title: The Book Thief

Author: Markus Zusak

Summary: Trying to make sense of the horrors of World War II, Death relates the story of Liesel--a young German girl whose book-stealing and story-telling talents help sustain her family and the Jewish man they are hiding, as well as their neighbors.