

Book Kits

These kits are available for check out at the La Crosse Public Library. Kits consist of multiple copies (8 – 15) of the books, discussion questions, author information, reviews and read alikes. Each kit will circulate for six weeks and cannot be reserved in advance for a specific date. Like books, holds can be placed on the kits. For more information call Mary Dunn at 608 789-7145 or email mdunn@lacrosselibrary.org.

Ackerman, Diane – *The Zookeeper's Wife*.

Documents the true story of Warsaw Zoo keepers and resistance activists Jan and Antonina Zabinski, who in the aftermath of Germany's invasion of Poland saved the lives of hundreds of Jewish citizens by smuggling them into empty cages and their home villa. (Nonfiction)

Alcott, Kate – *The Dressmaker*.

A spirited woman survives the sinking of the Titanic only to find herself embroiled in the tumultuous aftermath of that great tragedy. Tess is one of the last people to escape into a lifeboat. When an enterprising reporter turns her employer, Lady Duff Gordon, into an object of scorn, Tess is torn between loyalty and the truth. (Historical)

Amirrezvani, Anita – *The Blood of Flowers*.

After her father dies without leaving her with a dowry, a seventeenth-century Persian teen becomes a servant to her wealthy rug designer uncle in the court of Shah Abbas the Great, where her weaving talents prove both a blessing and curse. (Historical)

Belfoure, Charles – *The Paris Architect*.

A Parisian architect is paid handsomely to devise secret hiding spaces for Jews in his Nazi-occupied country but struggles with risking his life for a cause he is ambivalent towards, until a personal failure brings home their suffering. (Historical)

Benjamin, Melanie – *The Aviator's Wife*.

A story inspired by the marriage between Charles and Anne Morrow Lindbergh traces the romance between a handsome young aviator and a shy ambassador's daughter whose relationship is marked by wild international acclaim. (Historical, Biographical)

Blake, Sarah – *The Postmistress*

The stories of a small Cape Cod postmistress and an American radio reporter stationed in London collide on the eve of the United States's entrance into World War II, a meeting that is shaped by a broken promise to deliver a letter. (Historical)

Bohjalian, Chris – *The Light in the Ruins*

Hoping to safeguard themselves from the ravages of World War II within the walls of their ancient villa in Florence, the noble Rosatis family become prisoners in their home when eighteen-year-old Cristina's courtship by a German lieutenant prompts the Nazis to take over the estate, a situation that leads to a serial murder investigation years later.

Box, C.J. – *Blue Heaven*. * *

Fleeing the killers whom they witnessed committing murder, twelve-year-old Annie and her younger brother William escape into the woods of northern Idaho, not knowing whom they can trust and pursued by the murderers and a group of dirty cops seeking to prevent the youngsters from revealing what they know. (Mystery)

Brennert, Alan – *Molokai*.

Seven-year-old Rachel is forcibly removed from her family's 1890s Honolulu home when she contracts leprosy and is placed in a settlement, where she loses a series of new friends before new medical discoveries enable her to reenter the world. (Historical)

Brown, Daniel – *The Boys in the Boat*.* *

The Boys in the Boat describes how a group of working class youths from the University of Washington rowing team emerged from obscurity to defeat a field of elite international rivals at the 1936 Berlin Olympics. Sports fans who love a good "Cinderella story" will cheer this fast-paced, emotionally charged account of the players' and coaches' struggles set against stark Depression-era realities. (Nonfiction)

Caldwell, Ian – *The Rule of Four*.

Trying to decipher an ancient text that weaves a mathematical labyrinth within a love story, two researchers obtain a diary that may contain the key to the code, but when a fellow researcher is killed, they realize that the book contains a dangerous secret.

Chessman, Harriet Scott – *Lydia Cassatt Reading the Morning Newspaper*.

Using five paintings by Mary Cassatt of her older sister Lydia as inspiration, this lyrical and moving novel dramatizes the relationship between the Impressionist painter and her more conservative sister Lydia who is dying of Bright's disease. (Historical)

Christie, Agatha – *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*.

When a wealthy, elderly woman is poisoned, Belgian detective Hercule Poirot seeks the murderer among a large group of friends and relatives. First book introducing Hercule Poirot. (Mystery)

Clark, Mary Higgins – *We'll Meet Again*.

Years ago Molly Carpenter Lasch pled guilty to killing her husband even though she has no memory of it. Now out on parole, Molly's memory is slowly coming back. (Mystery)

Coel, Margaret – *The Eagle Catcher*.

This first book in the series introduces Arapaho attorney Vicky Holden and Jesuit priest Father John O'Malley joining forces in a tale of misappropriation of Indian lands. (Mystery)

Cooper, Gwen – *Homer's Odyssey*.

The last thing Gwen Cooper wanted was another cat. She already had two, not to mention a phenomenally underpaying job and a recently broken heart. Then Gwen's veterinarian called with a story about a three-week-old eyeless kitten who'd been abandoned. It was love at first sight. (Nonfiction)

Dallas, Sandra – *Whiter Than Snow*.

When a devastating avalanche traps nine children walking home from school in 1920, the disaster has life-changing effects on the people who live in the small Colorado town where it occurs.

Diamant, Anita – *The Red Tent*. **

Loosely based on Biblical stories, this novel recreates the life of Dinah, daughter of Leah and Jacob. (Historical)

Delaney, Frank – *Ireland*.

One evening in 1951, an itinerant storyteller arrives unannounced at a house in the Irish countryside. In exchange for a bed and a warm meal, he invites his hosts and their neighbors to join him by the wintry fireside, and begins to tell formative stories of Ireland's history. (Historical)

Dyer, David – *The Midnight Watch*.

This retelling of the 1912 sinking of the Titanic differs from other accounts in that it focuses on the SS Californian, the nearby ship that ignored the ocean liner's desperate signal flares. The story is told from two viewpoints: one of an alcoholic reporter who suspects that the Californian could have saved lives that night, and the other from the second officer on that ship, whose captain chose not to take action. (Historical)

Egan, Timothy – *The Worst Hard Time*. **

Presents an oral history of the dust storms that devastated the Great Plains during the Depression, following several families and their communities in their struggle to persevere despite the devastation. (Nonfiction)

Enger, Leif – *Peace Like a River*. **

The quiet Midwestern life of the Land family is upended when Davy Land kills two teenage boys who have come to harm the family.

Fairstein, Linda – *Bone Vault*.

A glittering reception featuring a controversial joint project between the Metropolitan Museum and the Museum of Natural History is clouded by the discovery of the body of a young woman in an ancient Egyptian sarcophagus. (Mystery)

Finney, Jack – *Time and Again*.

Simon Morley moves into the Dakota apartments and returns to the year 1882. (Science Fiction)

Flint, Emma – *Little Deaths*. **

A gripping suspense tale set in 1960s New York and inspired by true events follows the investigation of a cocktail waitress whose two young children have been brutally murdered and a rookie tabloid reporter who would uncover the truth. (Mystery)

Follett, Ken – *The Pillars of the Earth* **

Set in twelfth-century England, this epic of kings and peasants juxtaposes the building of a magnificent church with the violence and treachery that often characterized the Middle Ages.

Ford, Jamie – *Hotel on the Corner of Bitter and Sweet*. **

When artifacts from Japanese families sent to internment camps during World War II are uncovered during renovations at a Seattle hotel, Henry Lee embarks on a quest that leads to memories of growing up Chinese in a city rife with anti-Japanese sentiment.

Gaines, Ernest J. – *A Lesson Before Dying*. **

A young illiterate African American man witnesses two black robbers kill a white store owner in Louisiana in the late 1940s, and he is the one convicted.

Gilman, Susan Jane – *The Ice Cream Queen of Orchard Street*.

Russian immigrant Malka arrives in 1913 Manhattan, where she struggles to survive and learns trade secrets from an Italian ices peddler before setting off across America in an ice cream truck with a handsome, illiterate radical to seek their fortunes.

Goolrick, Robert – *A Reliable Wife*.

Ralph Truitt, a wealthy businessman with a troubled past who lives in a remote nineteenth-century Wisconsin town, has advertised for a reliable wife; and his ad is answered by Catherine Land, a woman who makes every effort to hide her own dark secrets.

Goodwin, Doris Kearns – *No Ordinary Time*. **

A superb dual portrait of the 32nd President and his First Lady, whose extraordinary partnership steered the nation through the perilous WW II years. (Nonfiction)

Gortner, C.W. – *Mademoiselle Chanel*.

A creative reimagining of the life of iconic fashion designer Coco Chanel traces the development of her exceptional sewing skills in an orphanage, her transformation into a couturier, and the private struggles behind her subsequent fame. (Historical, Biographical)

Gortner, C.W. – *Marlene*.

A sweeping historical tale inspired by the life of Marlene Dietrich traces her rise from the seedy worlds of Weimar Berlin's cabarets and drag balls to the lush film studios of golden-era Hollywood, where she becomes entangled in a series of stormy love affairs that push the boundaries of convention. (Historical, Biographical)

Gregory, Phillipa – *The Constant Princess*.

A fictional portrait of Henry VIII's first wife, Katherine of Aragon, follows her through her youthful marriage to Henry's older brother, Arthur, her widowhood, her marriage to Henry, and the divorce that led to Henry's marriage to Anne Boleyn. (Historical)

Hahn-Beer, Edith – *The Nazi Officer's Wife*.

The author, a Jewish law student when the war broke out, recounts how she survived the Holocaust as the wife of a Nazi party member in Munich. (Nonfiction)

Hassler, Jon – *Simon's Night*.

Retired professor Simon Shea, decides to commit himself to Norman Home for the elderly after he accidentally causes a fire in his home.

Hillenbrand, Laura – *Seabiscuit*. **

This is a chronicle of one of the most exciting horses in thoroughbred racing history. (Nonfiction)

Horan, Nancy – *Loving Frank*. **

Fact and fiction blend in a historical novel that chronicles the relationship between seminal architect Frank Lloyd Wright and Mamah Cheney, from their meeting, when they were each married to another, to the clandestine affair that shocked Chicago society. (Historical)

Horan, Nancy – *Under the Wide and Starry Sky*.

Imagines the unconventional love affair of Scottish literary giant Robert Louis Stevenson and American divorcée Fanny Van de Grift Osbourne, who after meeting in rural France take refuge from their unhappy lives and embark on two shared decades of international turbulence. (Historical)

Ivey, Eowyn – *The Snow Child*. **

Alaska in the 1920s is a difficult place for Jack and Mabel. Drifting apart, the childless couple discover Faina, a young girl living alone in the wilderness. Soon, Jack and Mabel come to love Faina as their own. But when they learn a surprising truth about the girl, their lives change in profound ways.

Junger, Sebastian. *Perfect Storm*. **

This book chronicles the impact of a storm that ravaged the eastern section of the United States in 1991. (Nonfiction)

Kline, Christina Baker – *The Orphan Train*. **

Close to aging out of the foster care system, Molly Ayer takes a position helping an elderly woman named Vivian and discovers that they are more alike than different as she helps Vivian solve a mystery from her past. (Historical)

Krakauer, Jon – *Into the Wild*. **

In April 1992 a young man from a well-to-do family hitchhiked to Alaska and walked alone into the wilderness north of Mt. McKinley. Four months later, his decomposed body was found by a moose hunter. (Nonfiction)

Kurson, Robert – *The Shadow Divers*. **

Recounts the discovery of a sunken German U-boat by two scuba divers, tracing how they devoted the following years to researching the identities of the submarine and its crew, correcting historical texts and breaking new ground in the world of diving. (Nonfiction)

LaPlante, Alice – *Turn of Mind*. **

Implicated in the murder of her best friend, Jennifer White, a brilliant retired surgeon with dementia, struggles with fractured memories of their complex relationship and wonders if she actually committed the crime.

Larson, Erik – *Dead Wake*. **

A chronicle of the sinking of the Lusitania discusses the factors that led to the tragedy and the contributions of such figures as Woodrow Wilson, bookseller Charles Lauriat, and architect Theodate Pope Riddle. (Historical)

Larson, Erik – *The Devil in the White City*. **

Bringing Chicago circa 1893 to vivid life, Erik Larson's spellbinding bestseller intertwines the true tale of two men--the brilliant architect behind the legendary 1893 World's Fair, striving to secure America's place in the world; and the cunning serial killer who used the fair to lure his victims to their death. (Nonfiction)

Larson, Erik – *Thunderstruck*.

A portrait of the Edwardian era recounts two parallel stories--the case of Dr. Hawley Crippen, who murdered his wife and fled to America, and Guglielmo Marconi, the inventor of wireless communication--as the new technology is used to capture a killer. (Nonfiction)

Laskin, David – *The Children's Blizzard*.

Describes the deadly 1888 snowstorm in the Great Plains that killed more than five hundred people including numerous schoolchildren, describing how the storm devastated immigrant families and dramatically affected pioneer advancement. (Nonfiction)

Levin, Larry – *Oogy*.

Presents the heartwarming story of a puppy brought back from the brink of death, and the family he adopted. (Nonfiction)

Lowry, Lois – *The Giver*. **

In a world with no poverty, crime, sickness or employment and where every family is happy, 12 year old Jonas is chose to be the community's Receiver of Memories. (Science Fiction)

Macdonald, Helen – *H is for Hawk*. **

Recounts how the author, an experienced falconer grieving the sudden death of her father, endeavored to train for the first time a dangerous goshawk predator as part of her personal recovery. (Nonfiction)

McCall Smith, Alexander – *The #1 Ladies' Detective Agency*.

McCall Smith, a law professor and reference book writer, offers a gentle, humorous tale with a memorable private detective, Precious Ramotswe, the first female private detective in her native Botswana. (Mystery)

McLain, Paula – *Circling the Sun*. **

Raised by her father and the Kipsigis tribe in 1920s Kenya, Beryl Markham endures painful losses before entering a passionate love triangle and discovering her unconventional true calling. (Historical)

Millard, Candice – *Destiny of the Republic*. **

A narrative account of James Garfield's political career offers insight into his background as a scholar and Civil War hero, his battles against the corrupt establishment, and Alexander Graham Bell's failed attempt to save him from an assassin's bullet. (Nonfiction)

Millard, Candice – *River of Doubt*. **

Chronicles the 1914 expedition of Theodore Roosevelt into the unexplored heart of the Amazon basin to explore and map the region surrounding a tributary called the River of Doubt, detailing the perilous conditions they faced. (Nonfiction)

Min, Anchee – *Pearl of China*.

In the small southern town of Chin-kiang, in the last days of the nineteenth century, young Willow and young Pearl S. Buck, the headstrong daughter of zealous Christian missionaries, bump heads and embark on a friendship that will sustain both of them through one of the most tumultuous periods in Chinese history. (Historical)

Moriarty, Laura – *The Chaperone*.

A novel about the friendship between an adolescent, pre-movie-star Louise Brooks, and the 36-year-old woman who chaperones her to New York City for a summer, in 1922, and how it changes both their lives. (Historical)

Morton, Kate – *The Forgotten Garden*. **

Abandoned on a 1913 voyage to Australia, Nell is raised by a dock master and his wife who do not tell her until she is an adult that she is not their child, leading Nell to return to England and eventually hand down her quest for answers to her granddaughter.

O'Brien, Stacey – *Wesley the Owl*.

In this touching memoir, biologist and owl expert Stacey O'Brien introduces Wesley the Owl, a once-abandoned baby owl who was rescued by Stacey. Together, they've built a remarkable friendship over the past nineteen years.

Oliveira, Robin – *My Name is Mary Sutter*. **

Traveling to Civil War-era Washington, D.C., to tend wounded soldiers and pursue her dream of becoming a surgeon, headstrong midwife Mary receives guidance from two smitten doctors and resists her mother's pleas for her to return home. (Historical)

Orringer, Julie – *The Invisible Bridge*. **

An unforgettable story of three brothers, of history and love, of marriage tested by disaster, of a Jewish family's struggle against annihilation, and of the dangerous power of art in a time of war. (Historical)

Patchett, Ann – *Bel Canto*. **

When terrorists seize hostages at an embassy party, an unlikely assortment of people is thrown together, including American opera star Roxanne Coss, and Mr. Hosokawa, a Japanese CEO and her biggest fan.

Picoult, Jodi – *Plain Truth*.

The discovery of a dead baby under a pile of old blankets in Aaron Fisher's barn sets off a scandal in Amish country and an investigation that could implicate Fisher's eighteen-year-old daughter.

Picoult, Jodi – *Second Glance*. **

Hired as a "ghost hunter," over-the-edge Ross Wakeman is really hoping to encounter his long-dead fiancé. Instead, he encounters lovely Lia-and a crumbling gravestone carrying her name.

Powell, Margaret – *Below Stairs*.

Chronicles the experiences of a 1920s maid working in the great houses of England, detailing the disparate lives of the upper class and their servants, the class struggles inherent in the relationship, and daily life as a servant. (Nonfiction)

Richards, Susan – *Chosen by a Horse*.

Relates the story of a woman whose hurts from a difficult past are healed with the help of the companionship and affection of a formerly abused horse for which she has agreed to care. (Nonfiction)

Rindell, Suzanne – *The Other Typist*.

Working as a typist for the NYC Police Department in 1923, Rose Baker documents confessions of harrowing crimes and struggles with changing gender roles while clinging to her Victorian ideals and searching for nurturing companionship before becoming obsessed with a glamorous newcomer and her world of bobbed hair, smoking and speakeasies. (Historical)

Rogan, Charlotte – *The Lifeboat*.

Forced into an overcrowded lifeboat after a mysterious explosion on their trans-Atlantic ocean liner, newly widowed Grace Winter battles the elements and her fellow survivors and remembers her husband, Henry, who set his own safety aside to ensure Grace's.

Rosnay, Tatiana de – *Sarah's Key*.

On the sixtieth anniversary of the 1942 roundup of Jews by the French police in the Vel d'Hiv section of Paris, American journalist Julia Jarmond is asked to write an article on this dark episode during World War II and embarks on investigation that leads her to long-hidden family secrets and to the ordeal of Sarah, a young girl caught up in the raid. (Historical)

Ross, Ann – *Miss Julia Throws a Wedding*.

The inimitable Miss Julia pushes an indecisive couple toward matrimony in this Southern comedy-of-manners series' latest installment, which begins with the protagonist frustrated at the inability of her friend, Miss Hazel, to get her beau to propose.

See, Lisa – *Snow Flower and the Secret Fan*.

A story of friendship set in nineteenth-century China follows an elderly woman and her companion as they communicate their hopes, dreams, joys, and tragedies through a unique secret language. (Historical)

Shreve, Anita – *The Stars are Fire*. **

In a book based on the true story of the largest fire in Maine's history, a young woman is tested by a catastrophic event and its devastating aftermath. (Historical)

Slaughter, Karin – *Fallen*. **

Georgia Bureau of Investigations Detective Faith Mitchell, her partner Will Trent, and trauma doctor Sara Linton join forces to find Faith's mother, missing after a deadly hostage situation that leaves Faith a murder suspect -- and the scapegoat for police corruption, bribery, and murder. (Mystery)

Stedman, M. L. – *The Light Between Oceans*. **

After moving with his wife to an isolated Australian lighthouse where they suffer miscarriages and a stillbirth, Tom allows his wife to claim an infant that has washed up on the shore, a decision with devastating consequences. (Historical)

Tan, Amy – *The Valley of Amazement*. **

The Valley of Amazement is a sweeping, evocative epic of two women's intertwined fates and their search for identity that moves from the lavish parlors of Shanghai courtesans to the fog-shrouded mountains of a remote Chinese village. (Historical)

Tey, Josephine – *The Daughter of Time*.

While recuperating in the hospital, police detective Alan Grant tries to solve the mystery of Richard III and the murder of the princes in the Tower. (Mystery)

Trigiani, Adriana – *The Shoemaker's Wife*.

Two star-crossed lovers--Enza and Ciro--meet and separate, until, finally, the power of their love changes both of their lives forever. Set during the years preceding and during World War I.

Twain, Mark – *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*.

The classic hero, Tom Sawyer, suffers through school, plots mischief with Huckleberry Finn, cons Ben to whitewash a fence, meets Becky Thatcher and hunts for buried treasure among other things.

Winchester, Simon – *A Crack in the Edge of the World*.

A Crack in the Edge of the World is the definitive account of the San Francisco earthquake and a fascinating exploration of a legendary event that changed the way we look at the planet on which we live. (Nonfiction)

Watson, Larry – *Montana 1948*. **

This is a provocative story of a family's power struggles, small-town politics, ethics, justice and loyalty vs. the law in 1948 Montana.

Watson, S.J. – *Before I Go to Sleep*. **

An accident in her 20s severely damaged her memory, so although Christine Lucas is now 47, she doesn't recall anything that has happened since the accident. Each morning, her husband has to tell her who she is, and who he is. But each morning after he leaves for work, she receives a phone call and is prompted by a doctor to retrieve her secret journal.

Weir, Andy – *The Martian*. **

Stranded on Mars by a duststorm that compromised his space suit and forced his crew to leave him behind, astronaut Mark Watney struggles to survive in spite of minimal supplies and harsh environmental challenges that test his ingenuity in unique ways.

Wong, Cecily – *Diamond Head*.

A sweeping debut spanning from China to Hawaii that follows four generations of a wealthy shipping family whose rise and decline is riddled with secrets and tragic love--from a young, powerful new voice in fiction.

Yang, Kao Kalia – *Latehomecomer*. **

Presents the journey from refuge camp to America and the hardships and joys of a family's struggle to adapt in a strange culture while holding onto traditions that are passed down from her beloved grandmother. (Nonfiction)

** Notable Book or Award Winner