



BOOK CLUB BOOKS

Below are this winter's Book Club selections. Chosen to represent a range of interests, it is hoped these books will stimulate thought and discussion among our diverse group of readers. As always, your comments and suggestions are welcome.

WINTER 2011

The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind by Will Kamkwamba

Life in Malawi was definitely challenging for famine-stricken young Will, but he didn't let that get in the way of his dreams. Driven by curiosity and inventiveness, he found a way to produce "electric wind" from all sorts of salvage material to harness energy for his family's farm. His story of courage and determination will amaze and inspire readers. (nonfiction)

Just Kids by Patti Smith

Winner of the National Book Award, Smith's intimate memoir chronicles her life with photographer Robert Mapplethorpe during the tumultuous 1960s and '70s in Manhattan. When they met, they were lonely, gifted youths struggling to find their way. As these two soul mates matured and made connections in the New York art world, they found inspiration all around them, in the city that nurtured them and in the many relationships they forged with other celebrities like Janis Joplin and Sam Shepard. Smith has written an exquisite love letter to friendship, creativity, and life. (nonfiction)

Justice: what's the right thing to do? by Michael J. Sandel

A Harvard government professor shines a light on hot topics, including government bailouts, same-sex marriage, and immigration reform. Based on his popular class, Sanders uses an entertaining and compelling mix of news stories, pop-culture tidbits, literary references, and legal cases, while championing the use of reason when figuring out what to think and why. (nonfiction)

Love and Summer by William Trevor

In Ireland in the 1950s, shy orphan Ellie Dillahan begins an affair that forces her to choose between an uncertain future with the man she loves or the unfulfilling but safe life she built for herself as a farmer's wife. While exploring the Catholic Church's influence at the time, Trevor creates unforgettable characters caught in a web of secret passions at odds with their desire to respect traditional values. This is another masterly work from a great writer. (fiction)

Major Pettigrew's Last Stand by Helen Simonson

The Major is all that's traditionally English. A retired military officer whose parents were in India, he is now a widower living in a thatched cottage, keeping up the old values of duty and good manners. In his small village also lives Miss Ali, a widowed shop owner of Pakistani descent. As the two begin a friendship, less tolerant tongues start to wag as racism and xenophobia seep through the polite façade. While combining a winning story with complex characters and some comic relief, this novel reinforces the notion that life is worth pursuing at any age. (fiction)

A Novel Bookstore by Laurence Cosse

A mysterious death, unusual auto accidents, and anonymous threats have one thing in common: the victims are all members of the Good Novel bookstore's secret selection committee. Ivan and Francesca's

Paris bookstore is a dream come true, but when these disturbing mysteries start piling up, they must turn to the law in the form of a veteran publishing industry insider now turned policeman. The author weaves together intrigue and romance while exploring the comfort that reading great literature can bring. Readers will also find lots of book recommendations. (fiction)

Union Atlantic by Adam Haslett

A titan of the banking industry, only interested in profits, does battle with a surprisingly formidable opponent: a retired history teacher. Doug Fanning decides to reward his hard work at the bank by building a mansion in rural Finden, Mass. However, the land he's bought was actually donated for preservation by Charlotte Graves's grandfather, and she's not about to give it up without a fight to the end. Haslett has written a smart page-turner, navigating readers through the maze of Wall Street trading while creating complex characters, flawed but very human. (fiction)

So Much For That by Lionel Shriver

After his wife is diagnosed with cancer, good-natured Shep Knacker's dreams of finally retiring to an exotic locale are shredded, and over the next year his Merrill Lynch account drops to nothing as the family nest egg is spent on chemo and out-of-network specialists. Shriver is adroit at dissecting every aspect of the failures of our health care system, while creating a passionate, provocative family story. Plot twists and an upbeat ending don't feel at all contrived and keep the suspense level high. (fiction)



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