



Book Club Books Summer 2005

Below are this summer'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.

Case Histories by Kate Atkinson

A suspense novel that combines elements of the traditional detective story with riveting psychological character studies. Exploring the fine line between love and obsession, and grief and recovery, three different decades-old mysteries land in the lap of private investigator Jackson Brodie. The result is a very entertaining look into the human heart.

Crossing California by Adam Langer

In Chicago's West Rogers Park neighborhood in 1979, California Avenue divides the "haves" on the west side from the "have nots" on the east. This novel uses that metaphorical division to explore the changes in the lives of three families as they confront universal themes like adolescent angst, the search for love, and finding one's identity.

Four Souls by Louise Erdrich

Fleur Pillager, a young Ojibwe woman, embarks on a journey to avenge the theft of her native land. But revenge exacts many prices that she hasn't foreseen. Rich details of Indian culture and community infuse a story of redemption, healing, and the astonishments of love.

Henderson the Rain King by Saul Bellow

The Nobel Laureate's seriocomic novel examining the midlife crisis of an unhappy millionaire. Henderson is a larger-than-life 55-year-old who feels unfulfilled, even though he has money, a large family, and an important position. Thus he embarks on a spiritual journey to Africa, with important consequences.

Leap of Faith: Memoirs of an Unexpected Life by Queen Noor

A sort of modern "The King and I", the love story of American born Lisa Halaby and the late King Hussein of Jordan is told against the larger canvas of Middle East turmoil. Queen Noor details her husband's struggles to create Arab unity and find peaceful coexistence with Israel. She herself is active in projects to improve Jordan's medical, educational and cultural facilities. This is a "royalty" story told by a smart, courageous woman.

Living to Tell the Tale by Gabriel Garcia Marquez

This is the first installment of the memoirs of this Nobel Laureate. Garcia Marquez's astonishing memory weaves a captivating tale of his formative years. His portrayal of his loving family, his precocious determination to be a writer, his frank account of love affairs, and the story of Colombia's turbulent cultural history, are as powerful as his fiction.

My Sister's Keeper by Jodi Picoult

This novel about a child who sues her parents for the rights to her own body, is a real page-turner. Anna was conceived in order to be the bone marrow donor for her older sister, who has cancer. The dilemmas faced by each member of the family are gripping, as is the court case, which takes a shocking turn. A courageous and heartbreaking story.

The News From Paraguay by Lily Tuck

Winner of the National Book Award, this is a historical epic and a sweeping love story. Franco is the future dictator of Paraguay when he becomes smitten by beautiful Ella as she rides horseback in a Paris park in 1854. He takes her back to his country, and the world she enters is a complicated one, with many adventures and richly drawn characters.

Shadow Divers: The True Adventures of Two Americans Who Risked Everything to Solve One of the Last Mysteries of World War II by Robert Kurson

This is a riveting tale about two deep-sea wreck divers who discovered a mysterious hulk lying at a perilous depth off the coast of New Jersey. While it is an action packed story of the German U-boat and the lives it claimed, it also explores the personal odyssey of the divers.

Sweetwater by Roxana Robinson

After her husband dies, Isabel Green withdraws from life. She decides to remarry, to help her reconnect and find comfort. But that proves more complicated than she imagined. An intelligent novel of family ties, loss, and vulnerability that moves along with gathering force, against the majestic backdrop of the Adirondacks.

The Tipping Point by Malcolm Gladwell

A staff reporter for the *New Yorker*, Gladwell excels at making complex theories clear and understandable. Here he explores the phenomenon that small changes can make big differences, that an idea or trend can have profound influences on social behavior.

Triangle: The Fire That Changed America by David von Drehle

The Triangle Shirtwaist factory in NYC in 1911 became the site of the deadliest workplace fire in American history. This moving tale explains how it helped usher in the push for industry reforms, while giving a shocking, moment- by- moment account of the fire's spread, the lives lost, and the scandalous outcome of the owners' trial for manslaughter.

War Trash by Ha Jin

This powerful novel introduces us to the experience of Chinese soldiers held in U. S. POW camps during the Korean War. Ha Jin is a master at evoking vivid historical detail, building suspense, and exploring humanity in all its complexity.