

## Criteria

The following titles were drawn from a combination of member recommendations and books which were highly reviewed by the *New York Times*, NPR, *Library Journal*, and/or NoveList, a database dedicated to book reviews and publishing information. Books were additionally subject to the following criteria:

- Member recommendations are given preference.
  - Titles must be readily available in adequate quantities and varied formats through the Old Colony Library Network.
  - Books must be less than 500 pages long (approximately) for group members' convenience.
  - A range of genres, authors, writing styles, and topics is represented, to reflect the varying tastes of group members and/or to introduce members to books they might not otherwise consider.
- 

## Fiction

### **Sons and Daughters of Ease and Plenty** by Ramona Ausubel

- 2016, 320 pages
- Complex characters, nonlinear, atmospheric, witty
- Summary: "An imaginative novel about a wealthy New England family in 1960s and '70s Martha's Vineyard that suddenly loses its fortune—and its bearings. This is a story of American wealth, class, family, and mobility."

### **The Widow** by Fiona Barton

- 2016, 368 pages
- Multiple perspectives, suspenseful, intricately plotted
- Summary: "An electrifying debut thriller that will take you into the dark spaces that exist between a husband and a wife. When the police started asking questions, Jean Taylor turned into a different woman—one who enabled her and her husband to carry on when more bad things began to happen. But that woman's husband died last week. And Jean doesn't have to be her anymore."

### **The Life-Writer** by David Constantine

- 2016, 256 pages
- Psychological fiction, introspective, lyrical
- Summary: "A grieving widow decides to write the story of her late husband's early life before he met her."

### **LaRose** by Louise Erdrich

- 2016, 256 pages
- Literary fiction, magical realism, complex, strong sense of place
- Summary: "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."

### **Don't Let My Baby Do Rodeo** by Boris Fishman

- 2016, 352 pages
- Literary fiction, stylistically complex, road novels, moving
- Summary: "When their adopted 8-year-old son Max suddenly turns feral, consorting with wild animals and eating grass, Maya Shulman convinces her husband, Alex, to embark on a cross-country trip to Montana to track down Max's birth parents, which results in unexpected consequences and life-altering changes."

### **History of Wolves** by Emily Fridlund

- 2017, 288 pages
- Literary fiction, flawed characters, atmospheric, compelling
- Summary: "Living with her parents in a nearly abandoned counterculture commune, 14-year-old Linda finds her perspectives and desires changed by the scandal-marked arrest of a teacher and the secrets of a new neighbor family as she wrestles with the consequences of actions and failures in the name of love."

### **Magpie Murders** by Anthony Horowitz

- 2016, 368 pages
- Mysteries, metafiction, intricately plotted
- Summary: "Susan Ryeland is a London book editor who has just received the latest manuscript from one of her most irascible authors, Alan Conway. But the manuscript's ending appears to be missing and she learns that Conway has committed suicide. As Ryeland learns more about his death, she starts to question whether a murder has occurred and begins to investigate."

### **News of the World** by Paulette Jiles

- 2016, 224 pages
- Historical fiction, complex, compelling
- Summary: "In the aftermath of the Civil War, an aging itinerant news reader agrees to transport a young captive of the Kiowa back to her people."

### **The Unseen World** by Liz Moore

- 2016, 416 pages
- Literary fiction, introspective, thought-provoking, Boston
- Summary: “A complex coming of age story intertwined with the science of cryptology and the history of artificial intelligence that simultaneously explores the meaning of love, loss and belonging. The core of the novel explores the relationship between Ada and her scientist father David. When a tragedy upends their routine lives, Ada embarks on a journey of self-discovery that will eventually lead her to new truths.”

### **Anatomy of a Soldier** by Harry Parker

- 2016, 320 pages
- Multiple perspectives, war stories, nonlinear, moving
- Summary: “In this unusual and compelling war story, each chapter is narrated by a different object, allowing readers to piece together the stories of a British Army officer in an unnamed war zone and two local childhood friends separated by insurgency. Because the objects—a bullet, part of an IED, the soldier's boots—are parts of the conflict itself, this debut offers an extraordinary depiction of both the sensory and the symbolic experiences of war.”

### **Ministry of Utmost Happiness** by Arundhati Roy

- 2017, 464 pages
- Literary fiction, richly detailed, interpersonal relations, self-fulfillment
- Summary: “A provocative love story explores a spectrum of powerful emotions experienced by diverse protagonists, each of them searching for meaning, love, and a place of safety.”

### **The Gilded Years** by Karin Tanabe

- 2016, 352 pages
- Historical fiction, identity, social classes
- Summary: “A senior at Vassar in 1897, Anita Hemmings is close to achieving her childhood dream of graduating from the prestigious women’s college. However, Anita has a secret: she’s passing for white in order to attend a school that would otherwise never admit her. So far she has successfully concealed both her race and her working-class roots. That changes when she gets a new roommate, Louise ‘Lottie’ Taylor, the privileged daughter of one of New York’s wealthiest and most socially prominent families. Despite their different backgrounds, the girls become friends. But Anita, seduced by Lottie’s sparkling social circle, risks exposure and the loss of everything she’s worked for.”

### **A Gentleman in Moscow** by Amor Towles

- 2016, 448 pages
- Historical fiction, character-driven, strong sense of place, witty
- Summary: “Deemed unrepentant by a Bolshevik tribunal in 1922, Count Alexander Rostov is sentenced to house arrest in a hotel across the street from the Kremlin, where he lives in an attic room while some of the most tumultuous decades in Russian history unfold.”

### **Reputations** by Juan Gabriel Vasquez

- 2016, 208 pages
- Psychological fiction, Introspective, Character-driven, Compelling
- Summary: “An influential political cartoonist is paid an unexpected visit by a young woman who upends his sense of personal history and forces him to reevaluate his life, work and position in the world.”

### **The Underground Railroad** by Colson Whitehead

- 2016, 304 pages
- Unconventional, historical fiction, moving, thought-provoking
- Summary: “Chronicles the daring survival story of a cotton plantation slave in Georgia, who, after suffering at the hands of both her owners and fellow slaves, races through the Underground Railroad with a relentless slave-catcher close behind.”

### **Another Brooklyn** by Jacqueline Woodson

- 2016, 192 pages
- Literary fiction, lyrical, first-person narratives, coming-of-age stories
- Summary: “August is 35 the year she returns to Brooklyn to bury her father, and a chance encounter with a friend in her old neighborhood prompts a flood of memories from her youth. Having first moved to Brooklyn at 8, August’s coming of age was marked by a search for belonging, close friendships, freedom, and the little-understood absence of her mother. Her memories explore what it was like to be an African-American girl (and teen) in the 1970s, what possibilities existed—and what challenges. This tale of friendship, love, and loss cuts back and forth through time.”

## Non-Fiction

### **The Zookeeper’s Wife: A War Story** by Diane Ackerman

- 2008, 288 pages
- Biography, history writing, richly detailed, strong sense of place

- Summary: “Documents the true story of Warsaw zookeepers 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.”

**Silent Spring** by Rachel Carson

- 1962, 368 pages
- Nature writing, thought-provoking, lyrical
- Summary: “Discusses the reckless annihilation of fish and birds by the use of pesticides and warns of the possible genetic effects on humans.”

**The Stranger in the Woods: The Extraordinary Story of the Last True Hermit** by Michael Finkel

- 2017, 224 pages
- Biography, engaging, thought-provoking, Maine
- Summary: “This book uses the incredible but true story of Christopher Knight, ‘the last true hermit,’ to explore themes of solitude, introversion and the meaning of life.”

**War and Turpentine** by Stefan Hertmans [trans. from Dutch by David McKay]

- 2017, 304 pages
- Memoir, character-driven, lyrical, World War I
- Summary: “A Flemish man reconstructs his grandfather’s story—his life, loves, and art, all disrupted by the first World War—from the unflinching notebooks he left behind. Translated from the Dutch by David McKay.”

**The American Spirit: Who We Are and What We Stand For** by David McCullough

- 2017, 192 pages
- Essays, society and culture, engaging, American national characteristics
- Summary: “A timely collection of speeches by David McCullough, the most honored historian in the United States—winner of two Pulitzer Prizes, two National Book Awards, and the Presidential Medal of Freedom, among many others—that reminds us of fundamental American principles.”

**The Radium Girls: The Dark Story of America’s Shining Women** by Kate Moore

- 2017, 480 pages
- History writing, compelling, women’s rights, radiation
- Summary: “The story of hundreds of young women, so-called ‘Radium Girls,’ who painted luminescent faces on clock and watch dials using a paint mixture that contained radium. When the effects of the radium led to horrific disfigurement and pain, the company refused to take responsibility.”

**Hidden Figures: The American Dream and the Untold Story of the Black Women Mathematicians Who Helped Win the Space Race** by Margot Lee Shetterly

- 2016, 368 pages
- History writing, science writing, inspiring
- Summary: "An account of the previously unheralded but pivotal contributions of NASA's African-American women mathematicians to America's space program describes how they were segregated from their white counterparts by Jim Crow laws in spite of their groundbreaking successes."

**Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis** by J.D. Vance

- 2016, 272 pages
- Memoir, society and culture, candid, poverty
- Summary: "Shares the poignant story of the author's family and upbringing, describing how they moved from poverty to an upwardly mobile clan that included the author, a Yale Law School graduate, while navigating the demands of middle-class life and the collective demons of the past."