

Criteria

The following titles were drawn from a combination of member recommendations and books which were highly reviewed by the *New York Times*, *Library Journal*, independent book review sites, 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 400 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

The Other Einstein by Marie Benedict

- 2016, 336 pages
- Historical fiction, flawed characters, authentic, richly detailed
- Inspired by the first wife of Albert Einstein, this book follows the experiences of Mitza Mari, a female physics student at an elite, late nineteenth-century school in Zurich. She falls in love with a charismatic fellow student, who eclipses her contributions to his theory of relativity.
- Reads like: *Enchantress of Numbers* by Jennifer Chiaverini, *Loving Frank* by Nancy Horan

White Chrysanthemum by Mary Lynn Bracht

- 2018, 320 pages
- Historical fiction, heart-wrenching, compelling, richly detailed
- A sweeping historical novel that brings to life the heartbreaking story of Korea through the deeply moving and redemptive story of two sisters separated by World War II.
- Reads like: *Lilac Girls* by Martha Hall Kelly, *Memoirs of a Geisha* by Arthur Golden

Three Things About Elsie by Joanna Cannon

- 2018, 384 pages

- Psychological fiction, unreliable narrator, sympathetic characters, engaging
- The story of an injured woman who meditates on her complicated relationship with a best friend; then, a man they believed was dead joins her retirement community.
- Reads like: *The Remains of the Day* by Kazuo Ishiguro, *Exit Ghost* by Philip Roth

The River at Night by Erica Ferencik

- 2017, 320 pages
- Thriller, complex characters, suspenseful tone, compelling
- The journey of four friends in their forties fighting to survive the aftermath of a white water rafting accident.
- Reads like: *The River* by Peter Heller, *Micro* by Michael Crichton

Unsheltered by Barbara Kingsolver

- 2018, 464 pages
- Literary fiction, parallel narratives, character-driven, thought-provoking
- This novel traces the experiences of a woman whose efforts to protect her family from sudden unemployment are shaped by the story of an ostracized nineteenth-century science teacher.
- Reads like: *The Signature of All Things* by Elizabeth Gilbert, *Human Acts* by Kang Han

A Piece of the World by Christina Baker Kline

- 2017, 352 pages
- Historical fiction, sympathetic characters, melancholy tone, lyrical
- This is the story of Christina Olson, who served as the host and inspiration for artist Andrew Wyeth, despite an incapacitating illness.
- Reads like: *Lisette's List* by Susan Vreeland, *All the Light We Cannot See* by Anthony Doerr

Ordinary Grace by William Kent Krueger

- 2013, 336 pages
- Mystery, child narrator, character-driven, nostalgic
- Looking back at a tragic event that occurred during his thirteenth year, a man explores how a complicated web of secrets, adultery, and betrayal shattered his Methodist family and their small 1961 Minnesota community.
- Reads like: *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee, *Setting Free the Kites* by Alex George

Circe by Madeline Miller

- 2018, 400 pages
- Mythological fiction, strong female characters, novel of place, dramatic writing
- This story follows the banished witch and daughter of Titans, Circe, as she hones her powers and interacts with famous mythological beings. A conflict with one of the most vengeful Olympians forces her to choose between the world of the gods and that of mortals.
- Reads like: *The Penelopiad* by Margaret Atwood, *Lavinia* by Ursula K. Le Guin

The Tattooist of Auschwitz by Heather Morris

- 2018, 288 pages
- Historical fiction, religiously diverse characters, complex story, power of love
- Based on the true story of an Auschwitz-Birkenau survivor, this novel traces the experiences of a Jewish Slovakian who uses his position as a concentration camp tattooist to secure food for his fellow prisoners.
- Reads like: *We Were the Lucky Ones* by Georgia Hunter, *Schindler's List* by Thomas Keneally

Pieces of Happiness by Anne Østby

- 2017, 350 pages
- Multiple perspectives, well-developed characters, intricately plotted, engaging
- A novel of five lifelong friends who, in their sixties, decide to live together on a cocoa farm in Fiji. There, they not only start a chocolate business but strengthen their friendships and rediscover themselves.
- Reads like: *After You* by Jojo Moyes, *The Fifth Letter* by Nicola Moriarty

Where the Crawdads Sing by Delia Owens

- 2018, 368 pages
- Literary fiction, coming-of-age, sympathetic characters, romantic style
- Viewed with suspicion in the aftermath of a tragedy, a beautiful hermit who has survived for years in a marsh becomes targeted by unthinkable forces.
- Reads like: *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee, *My Absolute Darling* by Gabriel Tallent

The Overstory by Richard Powers

- 2018, 512 pages

- Literary fiction, complex characters, issue-oriented, hopeful
- An impassioned novel of activism and natural-world power that is comprised of interlocking fables about nine remarkable strangers who are summoned in different ways by trees for an ultimate, brutal stand to save the continent's few remaining acres of virgin forest.
- Reads like: *Clock Dance* by Anne Tyler, *Sugar Land* by Tammy Lynne Stoner

The Sisters of the Winter Wood by Rena Rossner

- 2018, 464 pages
- Historical fantasy, multiple perspectives, character-driven, haunting
- A tale inspired by Jewish mythology is set in a woodland village on the border of Moldova and Ukraine and follows the experiences of two sheltered sisters who uncover a secret magical heritage.
- Reads like: *The Buried Giant* by Kazuo Ishiguro, *The Mists of Avalon* by Marion Zimmer Bradley

Once Upon a River by Diane Setterfield

- 2018, 464 pages
- Historical fiction, magical realism, ensemble cast, leisurely paced
- When the seemingly dead body of a child reanimates hours after arriving at an ancient inn on the Thames, three families try to claim her.
- Reads like: *The Clockmaker's Daughter* by Kate Morton, *The Sealed Letter* by Emma Donoghue

The Death of Mrs Westaway by Ruth Ware

- 2018, 384 pages
- Psychological suspense, flawed characters, nonlinear storyline, atmospheric
- When 21-year-old orphan Hal receives a letter stating that her grandmother is dead and Hal a beneficiary of her will, Hal knows it is a mistake, but decides to use her fortune-teller's skills to try to claim the money regardless. But what she finds at the Westaways' estate is not what she expected.
- Reads like: *An Anonymous Girl* by Greer Hendricks, *Endless Night* by Agatha Christie

Before We Were Yours by Lisa Wingate

- 2017, 368 pages
- Historical fiction, parallel narratives, sympathetic characters, bittersweet

- A tale inspired by firsthand accounts about the notoriously corrupt Tennessee Children's Home Society follows the efforts of a Baltimore assistant D.A. to uncover her parents' fateful secrets in the wake of a political attack and a chance encounter with a stranger.
- Reads like: *Necessary Lies* by Diane Chamberlain, *Orphan Train* by Christina Baker Kline

Non-Fiction

Note: We will be carrying over **Educated: A Memoir** by Tara Westover, as we were unable to secure enough copies for members to read it as part of our 2019 reading list.

The Pioneers: The Heroic Story of the Settlers Who Brought the American Ideal West by David McCullough

- 2019, 352 pages
- Collective biographies, history, life stories, well researched
- A chronicle of the lesser-known settling of the Northwest Territory by dauntless pioneers whose community ideals shaped a fledgling America.
- Reads like: *Frontier Grit* by Marianne Monson, *The Rush* by Edward Dolnick

Killers of the Flower Moon: The Osage Murders and the Birth of the FBI by David Grann

- 2017, 347 pages
- History, true crime, compelling, richly detailed
- A true account of the early twentieth-century murders of dozens of wealthy Osage and law-enforcement officials, citing the contributions and missteps of a fledgling FBI that eventually uncovered one of the most chilling conspiracies in American history.
- Reads like: *Love and Death in the Sunshine State* by Cutter Wood, *Shot in the Dark* by Scott Bainbridge

The Library Book by Susan Orlean

- 2018, 336 pages
- History, dramatic tone, compelling, witty
- The author reopens the unsolved mystery of the most catastrophic library fire in American history, and delivers a dazzling love letter to the beloved institution of American libraries.

- Reads like: *The Circus Fire* by Stewart O’Nan, *The City of Falling Angels* by John Berendt

The Lost City of the Monkey God A True Story by Douglas Preston

- 2017, 336 pages
- Travel writing, adventure, action-packed, fast-paced
- A real-life adventure tale following the author’s travels in Honduras’ Mosquitia area, where he’s part of a team looking for evidence of the fabled Ciudad Blanca, also known as the White City or “the Lost City of the Monkey God.” The group must deal with unfriendly soldiers, parasites, predators, and more.
- Reads like: *The Lost City of Z* by David Grann, *Jungleland* by Christopher S. Stewart