



PARK RIDGE PUBLIC LIBRARY BOOK DISCUSSION SETS

Alvarez, Julia **IN THE TIME OF THE BUTTERFLIES**

In 1960 the bodies of three sisters have been found near their wrecked Jeep on the north coast of the Dominican Republic. El Caribe, the official newspaper, reports their deaths as an accident. It does not mention that a fourth sister lives. Nor does it explain that they were among the leading opponents of Gen. Trujillo's dictatorship.

Baker, Tiffany **LITTLE GIANT OF ABERDEEN COUNTY**

Truly, massive from birth, has a bleak existence with her depressed father and her china-doll-like sister. Truly's father dies when she is 12 and she goes to live with the Dyersons, a hapless farming family. She befriends the Dyersons' outcast daughter, Amelia, and later takes care of her sister's husband and son after her sister leaves them.

Benioff, David **CITY OF THIEVES**

Lev, the mousy son of a disappeared Jewish poet, is jailed by the Russian Army during the siege of Leningrad. In prison awaiting execution, he is offered an impossible task in exchange for his life. He sets off on a journey through nightmarish war zones populated by cannibals, prostitutes, and demonic Nazi chess enthusiasts.

Bohjalian, Chris **THE DOUBLE BIND**

Working at a homeless shelter, student Laurel Estabrook encounters Bobbie Crocker, a man with a history of mental illness and a box of secret photos, but when Bobbie dies suddenly, Laurel embarks on an obsessive search for the truth behind the photos.

Brennert, Alan **MOLOKA'I**

Young Rachel Kalama, growing up in 1890s Honolulu, is part of a big, loving Hawaiian family, and dreams of seeing the far-off lands that her father often visits. But at age seven, Rachel's dreams are shattered by leprosy. Forcibly removed from her family, she is sent to Kalaupapa, the isolated leper colony on the island of Moloka'i.

Brennert, Alan **HONOLULU**

A young "picture bride" leaves her native Korea, where girls are so little valued that she is known as Regret, and journeys to Hawaii in 1914 in search of a better life. Jin is quickly married off to a poor, embittered laborer who takes his disappointments out on his new wife, forcing her to make her own way in a strange land.

Boyle, T. C. **TORTILLA CURTAIN**

The story of illegal aliens in California, told through the eyes of two very different couples, one well-off Anglos, the other illegal Mexicans living in a canyon. The novel chronicles their relationship against the background of growing hostility between immigrants and natives.

Cisneros, Sandra **HOUSE ON MANGO STREET**

Sometimes heartbreaking, sometimes deeply joyous, *The House on Mango Street* tells the story of Esperanza Cordero, whose Chicago neighborhood is one of harsh realities and harsh beauty. Esperanza's story is that of a young girl inventing for herself what she will become.

Cleave, Chris **LITTLE BEE**

The story of two women whose lives collide; and one must make a terrible choice. Two years later, they meet again. Once you have read it you'll want to tell your friends about it. When you do, please don't tell them what happens—the magic is in how they story unfolds.

Collins, Suzanne **THE HUNGER GAMES**

In a future North America, where Panem rulers maintain control through a televised survival competition pitting young people against one another, sixteen-year-old Katniss's skills are put to the test when she voluntarily takes her younger sister's place.

Diamant, Anita **THE RED TENT**

The ancient world of biblical times comes alive with the fictional story of Dinah, as do stories and traditions of the women of the red tent.

*Denotes most recent additions.

*Dilloway, Margaret **HOW TO BE AN AMERICAN HOUSEWIFE**

Entreated to visit her ancestral family in Japan in place of her ailing mother, Sue uncovers family secrets that influence her life in unforeseen ways, offer insight into her mother's marriage to an American GI, and reveal the role of tradition in shaping personal choice.

Eggers, Dave **ZEITOUN**

Abdulrahman and Kathy Zeitoun run a house-painting business in New Orleans. In August of 2005, as Hurricane Katrina approaches, Kathy evacuates with their four young children, leaving Zeitoun to watch over the business. In the days following the storm he travels the city by canoe, feeding abandoned animals and helping elderly neighbors. Then, on September 6th, police officers armed with M-16s arrest Zeitoun in his home. Nonfiction.

Ford, Jamie **HOTEL ON THE CORNER OF BITTER AND SWEET**

Set in the ethnic neighborhoods of Seattle during World War II and Japanese American internment camps, this debut novel tells the story of widower Henry Lee, his father, and his first love Keiko.

*Genova, Lisa **STILL ALICE**

Feeling at the top of her game when she is suddenly diagnosed with early onset Alzheimer's disease, Harvard psychologist Alice Howland struggles to find meaning and purpose in her life as her concept of self gradually slips away.

Goolrick, Robert **A RELIABLE WIFE**

Ralph Truitt, a wealthy businessman who lives in a remote 19th century Wisconsin town, has advertised for a reliable wife; and his ad is answered by Catherine Land, a woman hiding dark secrets.

*Grissom, Kathleen **THE KITCHEN HOUSE**

Working as an indentured servant alongside slaves on a tobacco plantation, Lavinia, a seven-year-old Irish orphan with no memory of her past, finds her light skin and situation placing her between two very different worlds that test her loyalties.

Gruen, Sara **WATER FOR ELEPHANTS**

Set in the Depression era, an orphaned and penniless circus worker finds refuge working with the animals and love with the sadistic ring master's wife.

*Hoffman, Beth **SAVING CEECEE HONEYCUTT**

Relegated to the care of an eccentric great-aunt after her mentally unbalanced mother's accidental death, 12-year-old CeeCee is quickly surrounded by the strong women and cultural elements of her new Savannah community.

Horan, Nancy **LOVING FRANK**

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

Jordan, Hilary **MUDBOUND**

In 1946, city girl Laura McAllan tries to adjust after moving with her husband and two children to an isolated cotton farm in Mississippi. Tensions rise when her brother-in-law and the son of sharecroppers return from World War II as men changed by the scars of combat.

*Kwok, Jean **GIRL IN TRANSLATION**

Emigrating with her mother from Hong Kong to Brooklyn, Kimberly Chang begins a secret double life as an exceptional schoolgirl during the day and sweatshop worker at night, an existence also marked by her first crush and the pressure to save her family from poverty.

Lahiri, Jhumpa **UNACUSTOMED EARTH**

Eight stories take the reader from Cambridge and Seattle to India and Thailand, and explore exile, identity, disappointment and maturation with a subtle mastery that has few equals.

*Denotes most recent additions.

Larsson, Stieg **THE GIRL WITH THE DRAGON TATTOO**

Forty years after the disappearance of Harriet Vanger from the secluded island owned and inhabited by the powerful Vanger family, her octogenarian uncle is determined to know the truth.

Larsson, Stieg **THE GIRL WHO PLAYED WITH FIRE**

Two reporters responsible for a sex-trafficking exposé are murdered, and the fingerprints on the murder weapon belong to Lisbeth Salander, prompting journalist Mikael Blomkvist, to launch his own investigation to vindicate Salander.

Lawson, Mary **CROW LAKE**

Set against the wild terrain of northern Ontario, this drama of love and misunderstanding recounts a family's tragic past.

Lee, Harper **TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD**

Growing up in the 1930's, a six-year-old experiences Southern prejudice when her father, a lawyer, is asked to represent a black man accused of beating and raping a white girl.

Lipman, Elinor **THE INN AT LAKE DEVINE**

It's 1962 and all across America barriers are collapsing. But when Natalie Marx's mother inquires about summer accommodations in Vermont in 1962, she is told accommodations are for Gentiles only. For twelve-year-old Natalie, who has a stubborn sense of justice, the words are not a rebuff but an infuriating, irresistible challenge.

McCall Smith, Alexander **NO. 1 LADIES DETECTIVE AGENCY**

Working in Botswana, Precious Ramotswe investigates several local mysteries, including a search for a missing boy and the case of the clinic doctor with different personalities for different days of the week.

McCann, Colum **LET THE GREAT WORLD SPIN**

This novel follows the fortunes of a menagerie of New Yorkers through a day in 1974, the day of Philippe Petit's death defying tightrope walk between the newly built Twin Towers.

Mehran, Marsha **POMEGRANATE SOUP**

Three Iranian sisters, Marjan, Layla, and Bahar Aminpour, flee the turmoil of the Islamic Revolution in their native country to seek refuge in Ireland, where they open the exotic Babylon Café amongst the quirky inhabitants of a colorful Irish town.

Mitchard, Jacquelyn **CAGE OF STARS**

Twelve-year-old Veronica Swan's idyllic life in a close-knit Mormon community is shattered when her two younger sisters are brutally murdered. Although her parents find the strength to forgive the deranged killer, Scott Early, Veronica cannot do the same.

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.

Niffenegger, Audrey **THE TIME TRAVELER'S WIFE**

Passionately in love, Clare and Henry vow to hold onto each other and their marriage as they struggle with the effects of Chrono-Displacement Disorder, a condition that casts Henry involuntarily into the world of time travel.

*Patchett, Ann **STATE OF WONDER**

When her research partner dies in the Amazon, Dr. Marina Singh agrees to go find out what happened. Her purpose is to find out for her boss what progress her former teacher is making on the drug under development. Marina finds that she has more strength and ability, as a doctor, friend, and human being, than she knew as she navigates the hazardous waters of the Amazon and her own psyche

Picoult, Jodi **MY SISTER'S KEEPER**

Anna came into the world by in-vitro fertilization so that she would be a genetic match for her older sister Kate, who was diagnosed with leukemia at two years old. When Anna is expected to save her sister, she decides to hire a lawyer to become medically emancipated from her parents in order to gain the right to make the decision for herself.

Rosnay, Tatiana de **SARAH'S KEY**

On the sixtieth anniversary of the 1942 roundup of Jews by the French police in 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.

Ruiz Zafon, Carlos **THE SHADOW OF THE WIND**

In 1945 Barcelona, Daniel is taken to the Cemetery of Forgotten Books by his father, a secondhand book merchant. Here under the auspices of his father and of Sr. Isaac, the guardian of the Cemetery, Daniel chooses a book, *The Shadow of the Wind*, written by an unknown author. Daniel embarks on a search to find out more about the book, its mysterious author and his life story.

*Schiff, Stacy **CLEOPATRA**

The Pulitzer Prize-winning biographer brings to life the most intriguing woman in the history of the world: Cleopatra, the last queen of Egypt. Though her life spanned fewer than 40 years, it reshaped the contours of the ancient world.

See, Lisa **SNOW FLOWER AND THE SECRET FAN**

In a 19th century remote Hunan village, seven year-old Lily is paired with a laotong, a kind of sister, in an emotional match that will last a lifetime. The two exchange messages written in a secret language, but a misunderstanding threatens to tear their friendship apart.

See, Lisa **SHANGHAI GIRLS**

Forced to leave Shanghai when their father sells them to California suitors, sisters May and Pearl struggle to adapt to life in 1930s Los Angeles while still bound to old customs.

Shaffer, Mary Ann **THE GUERNSEY LITERARY AND POTATO PEEL SOCIETY**

As London is emerging from the shadow of World War II, writer Juliet Ashton discovers her next subject in a book club on Guernsey; a club born as a spur-of-the-moment alibi after its members are discovered breaking curfew by the Germans occupying their island.

Shors, John **BENEATH A MARBLE SKY**

The eldest daughter of the 17th century emperor who built the Taj Mahal recounts her childhood, her parents, and the events of war, rebellion, and religious fundamentalism that occurred during the construction of the mausoleum.

Shreve, Anita **TESTIMONY**

A New England boarding school is rocked in the wake of a sex scandal in which participants were caught on videotape, a situation that derails the innocence and best intentions of students, parents, and others in life-shattering ways.

*Shriver, Lionel **WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT KEVIN**

A tormented mother grapples with feelings of accountability and intense grief after her troubled 15-year-old son commits an act of violence that shakes their community to its very core.

Simonson, Helen **MAJOR PETTIGREW'S LAST STAND**

Major Pettigrew leads a quiet life in a small English village until his brother's death sparks an unexpected friendship with Mrs. Ali, the Pakistani shopkeeper from the village. Drawn together by a shared love of literature and the loss of their respective spouses, the Major and Mrs. Ali soon find their friendship on the cusp of blossoming into something more.

*Denotes most recent additions.

Skloot, Rebecca **IMMORTAL LIFE OF HENRIETTA LACKS**

Documents the story of how scientists took cells from an unsuspecting descendant of freed slaves and created a human cell line that has been kept alive indefinitely, enabling discoveries in such areas as cancer research, in vitro fertilization, and gene mapping. Nonfiction.

Stein, Garth **THE ART OF RACING IN THE RAIN**

Nearing the end of his life, Enzo, a dog with a philosopher's soul, tries to bring together the family, pulled apart by a three year custody battle between daughter Zoe's maternal grandparents and her father Denny, a race car driver.

Stockett, Kathryn **THE HELP**

Limited and persecuted by racial divides in 1962 Jackson, Mississippi, three women, including an African-American maid, her sassy and chronically unemployed friend, and a recently graduated white woman, team up for a project on the sly.

Strout, Elizabeth **OLIVE KITTERIDGE**

At the edge of the continent, in the small town of Crosby, Maine, lives Olive Kitteridge, a retired schoolteacher who deplores the changes in her town and in the world at large but doesn't always recognize the changes in those around her. In these linked short stories, Olive is brought to a deeper understanding of herself and her life.

Tan, Amy **THE BONESETTER'S DAUGHTER**

The deterioration of Ruth's romantic relationship renders Ruth unable to speak. Her Chinese mother, LuLing, who has Alzheimer's, is another factor in her life, but the diary she kept as a young woman still exists, and when Ruth reads it she comes to an understanding of her family's history, her mother's sadness, and her own problems.

Tsukiyama, Gail **THE SAMURAI'S GARDEN**

Stephen leaves his home in Hong Kong just as the Japanese are poised to invade China. He is sent to a small Japanese village to recuperate from tuberculosis. There, he meets and develops friendships with adults Matsu, Kenzo, and Sachi, and a young woman, Keiko, his own age. The unwinding stories of his new friends bring him to the beginnings of wisdom, love, honor, and loss.

Umrigar, Thrity **THE SPACE BETWEEN US**

Bhima, a 65-year-old slum dweller, has worked for Sera Dubash for years: cooking, cleaning and tending Sera after the beatings she endures from her abusive husband. Sera, in turn, nurses Bhima back to health from typhoid and sends her granddaughter Maya to college. But Sera's affection wars with prejudice against lower classes.

Vergheese, Abraham **CUTTING FOR STONE**

Marion and Shiva Stone are twin brothers born of a secret union between a beautiful Indian nun and a brash British surgeon. Orphaned by their mother's death and their father's disappearance, bound together by a shared fascination with medicine, the twins come of age as Ethiopia hovers on the brink of revolution.

Walls, Jeannette **THE GLASS CASTLE**

The child of an alcoholic father and an eccentric artist mother discusses her family's nomadic upbringing, during which she and her siblings fended for themselves while their parents outmaneuvered bill collectors and the authorities.

Zusak, Markus **THE BOOK THIEF**

In World War II Germany, Liesel Meminger is a foster girl living outside of Munich who scratches out a meager existence by stealing when she encounters something she can't resist – books. With the help of her foster father, she learns to read and shares her stolen books with her neighbors during bombing raids as well as with the Jewish man hidden in her basement before he is marched to Dachau.