

Book Club Books



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.

2001 - 2002

BEE SEASON by Myla Goldberg

“Nine-year-old Eliza is a seemingly unremarkable girl who is caught by surprise by an extraordinary gift for spelling, which rescues her from the oblivion of the ordinary. This beautifully wrought story of a child’s pains and joys and a family’s unraveling marks the memorable debut of a talented storyteller.” Library Journal March 1, 2000.

BEING DEAD by Jim Crace

“In his latest novel, Crace archly explores life and death and the effect of chance upon the two. From the very beginning we learn that Celice and Joseph, two married, middle-aged zoologists, are murder victims. From there the book moves backward and forward in time, changing points of view along the way, to show why they came to be where they were when they were murdered and what happened after their deaths.”

Booklist April 1, 2000.

CORELLI’S MANDOLIN by Louis de Bernieres

“This novel, set on the idyllic Greek Island of Cephallonia, follows the lives of its inhabitants from the peaceful days before World War II through the Italian occupation of the island... It is funny, heartbreaking, and horrifying in its fictional testimony to the changes war exacts...A tour de force depiction of the triumph of life over evil.”

Booklist September 15, 1994.

DISGRACE by J.M. Coetzee

“David Lurie, 52-year-old divorced literary scholar, is disgraced for sexually harassing one of his college students. Refusing to submit to ‘counseling,’ he loses his job... and moves in with his beloved daughter Lucy on her small farm in the eastern Cape [South Africa].” Winner of the Booker Prize in 1999.

Booklist November 15, 1999.

ENGLISH PASSENGERS by Matthew Kneale

“The novel follows the voyage of the *Sincerity*, a smuggling vessel that takes on a party of highbrow landlubbers bound for the island of Tasmania...These men have a terrible surprise in store for them. Tasmania’s British colonists have been warring with the Aborigines, and the *Sincerity* is sailing unwittingly into the heart of darkness.” Winner of the Whitbread Award for Book of the Year in 2000.

Time February 19, 2001.

A HEARTBREAKING WORK OF STAGGERING GENIUS by Dave Eggers

“Eggers describes his parents’ horrific deaths from cancer within a few weeks of each other during his senior year of college, and his decision to move with his eight year-old brother, Toph, from the suburbs of Chicago to Berkeley, near where his sister, Beth, lives.” Publishers Weekly December 13, 1999.

HUMAN STAIN by Philip Roth

“Coleman Silk, at 71 a distinguished professor at a small New England college, has been harried from his position because of what has been perceived as a racist slur...In a dazzling coup, Roth turns all expectations on their heads, and begins to show Silk in a new and astounding light, as someone who has lived a huge lie all his life, making the fuss over his alleged racism even more surreal.” Winner of the PEN/Faulkner Award in 2001. Publishers Weekly March 27, 2000.

LADIES AUXILIARY by Tova Mirvis

“The world of this confident, insightful debut novel is the tightly knit Orthodox Jewish community of Memphis, Tenn., a social structure that unravels when an unconventional New York convert settles there with her five-year-old daughter...Generous with humor and compassion, Mirvis paints tenderly nuanced portraits of strong female characters while scrutinizing an entrenched religious subculture whose traditions are threatened by modern temptations.” Publishers Weekly August 9, 1999.

ON THE REZ by Ian Frazier

Frazier’s book is about the Oglala Sioux who live on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. “As Frazier serendipitously shuttles his narrative between Pine Ridge visits and snippets of Indian history, a fascinating picture emerges of a people struggling with the consequences of old wrongs and human orneriness.”

Time January 24, 2000.

SAMURAI’S GARDEN by Gail Tsukiyama

“An extraordinarily graceful and moving novel about goodness and beauty...Tsukiyama uses the Japanese invasion of China during the late 1930s as a somber backdrop for her unusual story about a 20-year-old Chinese painter named Stephen who is sent to his family’s summer home in a Japanese coastal village to recover from a bout with tuberculosis.” Booklist March 1, 1995.

WHITE TEETH by Zadie Smith

“White Teeth, a multigenerational, multiethnic, somewhat zany novel, is the ambitious undertaking of first-time novelist Smith. Set in London and spanning more than 25 years, with recollections and accounts back to earlier days, it presents the combined story of the Jones and Iqbal families.” Winner of the Whitbread Award for First Novel in 2000.

Booklist April 1, 2000.

A YEAR BY THE SEA by Joan Anderson

“Curling up with this autobiography will refresh readers’ souls and adjust their attitudes. With their two sons grown and married, Anderson and her husband decided to take a ‘vacation’ from their long marriage...During the year-long separation, Anderson reestablished her connection to nature and was able to discover new hope.”

Library Journal March 15, 1999.