

Book Discussion Kit Titles – Main Library and South Branch

A Fierce Radiance by Lauren Belfer

In the anxious days after Pearl Harbor, talented Life Magazine reporter, Clare Shipley, finds herself on top of the nation's most important story – the race to discover penicillin at the Rockefeller Institute. When a researcher at the Institute dies under suspicious circumstances, the stakes become clear – a murder has been committed to obtain this new drug. The novel blends fact with fiction and includes romance, espionage, murder, crime, deceptions by big business, intrigue and family estrangements.

The Postmistress by Sarah Blake

During the London Blitz, on the eve of the United States' entrance to WWII, Frankie Bard is covering the news with Edward R. Murrow. She meets a doctor from Cape Cod in a bomb shelter and promises to deliver a letter for him when she returns to the U.S. The novel is a revealing and intimate look at this moment in history moving back and forth between small town America and war-torn Europe. It is the convergence of three strong women: an American journalist with gumption and vision, a 40-year-old postmistress in love for the first time, and the waif-like wife of the town doctor. The author raises unsettling questions about the randomness of violence and death. An emotional saga of conscience and genocide.

People of the Book by Geraldine Brooks

Offered a coveted job to analyze and conserve a priceless Sarajevo Haggadah, Australian rare book expert Hanna Heath discovers a series of tiny artifacts in the volume's ancient binding that reveal its historically significant origins. The author fictionalizes the history of an actual book: the Hebrew codex known as the Sarajevo Haggadah, an extremely precious illuminated manuscript originally from medieval Spain. In 1996, a ceasefire is effected to quell the bloody violence in Bosnia and Australian book conservator Heath is called to restore the famous Sarajevo Haggadah. The condition of the manuscript leads her on a search as she journeys back in time, to periods of major religious strife and persecution, from the 1940 German occupation of Yugoslavia, to 1894 and 1609 Venice, to 1492 Barcelona, and finally, 1480 Seville. The Sarajevo Haggadah remains an artistic treasure despite being caught between opposing sides in battles of greed, intolerance, and bloodlust.

Tell the Wolves I'm Home by Carol Rifka Brunt

In this striking literary debut, Carol Rifka Brunt unfolds a moving story of love, grief, and renewal as two lonely people become the unlikeliest of friends and find that sometimes you don't know you've lost someone until you've found them.

1987. There's only one person who has ever truly understood fourteen-year-old June Elbus, and that's her uncle, the renowned painter Finn Weiss. Shy at school and distant from her older

sister, June can only be herself in Finn's company; he is her godfather, confidant, and best friend. So when he dies, far too young, of a mysterious illness her mother can barely speak about, June's world is turned upside down. But Finn's death brings a surprise acquaintance into June's life—someone who will help her to heal, and to question what she thinks she knows about Finn, her family, and even her own heart.

At Finn's funeral, June notices a strange man lingering just beyond the crowd. A few days later, she receives a package in the mail. Inside is a beautiful teapot she recognizes from Finn's apartment, and a note from Toby, the stranger, asking for an opportunity to meet. As the two begin to spend time together, June realizes she's not the only one who misses Finn, and if she can bring herself to trust this unexpected friend, he just might be the one she needs the most.

An emotionally charged coming-of-age novel, *Tell the Wolves I'm Home* is a tender story of love lost and found, an unforgettable portrait of the way compassion can make us whole again. (From the publisher.)

Can't We Talk About Something More Pleasant? By Roz Chast (Non-fiction memoir)

In her first memoir, Roz Chast brings her signature wit to the topic of aging parents. Spanning the last several years of their lives and told through four-color cartoons, family photos, and documents, and a narrative as rife with laughs as it is with tears, Chast's memoir is both comfort and comic relief for anyone experiencing the life-altering loss of elderly parents. When it came to her elderly mother and father, Roz held to the practices of denial, avoidance, and distraction. But when Elizabeth Chast climbed a ladder to locate an old souvenir from the "crazy closet" – with predictable results – the tools that had served Roz well through her parents' seventies, eighties, and into their early nineties could no longer be deployed. While the particulars are Chast-ian in their idiosyncrasies--an anxious father who had relied heavily on his wife for stability as he slipped into dementia and a former assistant principal mother whose overbearing personality had sidelined Roz for decades – the themes are universal: adult children accepting a parental role; aging and unstable parents leaving a family home for an institution; dealing with uncomfortable physical intimacies; managing logistics; and hiring strangers to provide the most personal care" -- from publisher's web site.

Prayers for Sale by Sandra Dallas

Set in the high country of Colorado during the Depression, this is the story of an unforgettable friendship between two women – eight-six-year-old Hennie Comfort and seventeen-year-old Nit Spindle – and the deepest hardships and darkest secrets they shared with each other.

All the Light We Cannot See by Anthony Doerr

From the highly acclaimed, multiple award-winning Anthony Doerr, a stunningly ambitious and beautiful novel about a blind French girl and a German boy whose paths collide in occupied France as both try to survive the devastation of World War II.

Marie-Laure lives with her father in Paris near the Museum of Natural History, where he works as the master of its thousands of locks. When she is six, Marie-Laure goes blind and her father builds a perfect miniature of their neighborhood so she can memorize it by touch and navigate her way home.

When she is twelve, the Nazis occupy Paris and father and daughter flee to the walled citadel of Saint-Malo, where Marie-Laure's reclusive great-uncle lives in a tall house by the sea. With them they carry what might be the museum's most valuable and dangerous jewel.

In a mining town in Germany, the orphan Werner grows up with his younger sister, enchanted by a crude radio they find. Werner becomes an expert at building and fixing these crucial new instruments, a talent that wins him a place at a brutal academy for Hitler Youth, then a special assignment to track the resistance. More and more aware of the human cost of his intelligence, Werner travels through the heart of the war and, finally, into Saint-Malo, where his story and Marie-Laure's converge.

Ten years in the writing, *All the Light We Cannot See* is a magnificent, deeply moving novel from a writer, says the *Los Angeles Times*, "whose sentences never fail to thrill." (*From the publisher.*)

The Great Gatsby by F. Scott Fitzgerald – CMS BDK – patron must place hold with staff at South Branch

The exemplary novel of the Jazz Age, F. Scott Fitzgerald's third book, *The Great Gatsby* (1925), stands as the supreme achievement of his career. T. S. Eliot read it three times and saw it as the "first step" American fiction had taken since Henry James; H. L. Mencken praised "the charm and beauty of the writing," as well as Fitzgerald's sharp social sense; and Thomas Wolfe hailed it as Fitzgerald's "best work" thus far. The story of the fabulously wealthy Jay Gatsby and his love for the beautiful Daisy Buchanan, of lavish parties on Long Island at a time when, *The New York Times* remarked, "gin was the national drink and sex the national obsession," it is an exquisitely crafted tale of America in the 1920s that resonates with the power of myth. A novel of lyrical beauty yet brutal realism, of magic, romance, and mysticism, *The Great Gatsby* is one of the great classics of twentieth-century literature.

Hotel on the Corner of Bitter and Sweet by Jamie Ford

When artifacts from Japanese families sent to internment camps during World War II are uncovered during renovations at a Seattle hotel, Henry Lee embarks on a quest that leads to memories of growing up Chinese in a city rife with anti-Japanese sentiment. This heartfelt novel portrays two children separated during the internment of Japanese-Americans during World War II. In 1940s Seattle, ethnicities do not mix. Whites, blacks, Chinese and Japanese live in separate neighborhoods, and their children attend different schools. When Henry Lee's staunchly nationalistic father pins an "I am Chinese" button to his 12-year-old son's shirt and enrolls him in an all-white prep school, Henry finds himself friendless and at the mercy of schoolyard bullies. His salvation arrives in the form of Keiko, a Japanese girl with whom Henry forms an instant – and forbidden – bond. 40+ years later, the older Henry, a recent widower living in 1980s Seattle, reflects in a series of flashbacks on his burgeoning romance with Keiko and its abrupt ending when her family was evacuated. A chance discovery of items left behind by Japanese-Americans during the evacuation inspires Henry to share his and Keiko's story with his own son, in hopes of preventing the dysfunctional parent-child relationship he experienced with his own father. This is a novel that not only reminds readers of a shameful episode in American history, but cautions us to examine the present and take heed we don't repeat those injustices.

Mistress of the Art of Death by Ariana Franklin

First of the Adelia Aguilar series, an original historical thriller. Adelia is an extraordinary woman for the times: a University of Salerno medical forensic expert, when women were not permitted to study medicine in England, and most importantly, an independent thinker. She is sent to medieval Cambridge at the request of Henry II because the Jewish community has been accused of ritual child murder. It is up to Vesuvia Adelia Rachel Ortese Aguilar to reveal the secrets of the dead; her lack of religious prejudice and skill at detective pathology make her a "mistress of the art of death".

The Secret Place by Tana French

"The photo on the card shows a boy who was found murdered, a year ago, on the grounds of a girls' boarding school in the leafy suburbs of Dublin. The caption says I KNOW WHO KILLED HIM. Detective Stephen Moran has been waiting for his chance to get a foot in the door of Dublin's Murder Squad – and one morning, sixteen-year-old Holly Mackey brings him this photo.

"The Secret Place," a board where the girls at St. Kilda's School can pin up their secrets anonymously, is normally a mishmash of gossip and covert cruelty, but today someone has used it to reignite the stalled investigation into the murder of handsome, popular Chris Harper. Stephen joins forces with the abrasive Detective Antoinette Conway to find out who and why. But everything they discover leads them back to Holly's close-knit group of friends and their fierce enemies, a rival clique – and to the tangled web of relationships that bound all the girls to Chris Harper. Every step in their direction turns up the pressure. Antoinette Conway is already

suspicious of Stephen's links to the Mackey family. St. Kilda's will go a long way to keep murder outside their walls. Holly's father, Detective Frank Mackey, is circling, ready to pounce if any of the new evidence points toward his daughter. And the private underworld of teenage girls can be more mysterious and more dangerous than either of the detectives imagined" -- from publisher's web site.

The Metropolis Case by Matthew Gallaway – CMS BDK – patron must place hold with staff at South Branch

From smoky music halls of 1860s Paris to the tumbling skyscrapers of twenty-first-century New York, a sweeping tale of passion, music, and the human heart's yearning for connection. Martin is a forty-year-old lawyer who, despite his success, feels disoriented and disconnected from his life in post-9/11 Manhattan. But even as he comes to terms with the missteps of his past, he questions whether his life will feel more genuine going forward. Decades earlier, in the New York of the 1960s, Anna is destined to be a grande dame of the international stage. As she steps into the spotlight, however, she realizes that the harsh glare of fame may be more than she bargained for. Maria is a tall, awkward, ostracized teenager desperate to break free from the doldrums of 1970s Pittsburgh. When the operatic power of her extraordinary voice leads Maria to Juilliard, New York seems to hold possibilities that are both exhilarating and uncertain. Lucien is a young Parisian at the birth of the modern era, racing through the streets of Europe in an exuberant bid to become a singer for the ages. When tragedy leads him to a magical discovery, Lucien embarks on a journey that will help him – and Martin, Maria, and Anna – learn that it's not how many breaths you take, it's what you do with those you're given. This unlikely quartet is bound together across centuries and continents by the strange and spectacular history of Richard Wagner's masterpiece opera *Tristan and Isolde*. Grandly operatic in scale, their story is one of music and magic, love and death, betrayal and fate. Matthew Gallaway's riveting debut will have readers spellbound from the opening page to its breathtaking conclusion.

The Love of My Youth by Mary Gordon (Large Print – 7 copies)

High School sweethearts, now in their 50s, arrive, by chance, in Rome at the same time. They had spent summer in Rome, many years earlier, deeply in love and living together blissfully. It is an awkward reunion, with different interpretations of the events and of who betrayed whom. Once they separated, they went on to their own lives and families and careers. Now they warily get together for daily walks to reacquaint with each other and the city, coming to an eventual peace with how their lives spun out. Mary Gordon skillfully speaks to the ardor and vulnerability of young love and the cautious circumspection of middle age.

A Cold Day in Paradise by Steve Hamilton

Alex McKnight is a retired Detroit cop living in Paradise, Michigan, on disability with a bullet next to his heart. He rents cabins to hunters and has recently taken out a private detective

license at the suggestion of Lane Uttley, a local lawyer. The book begins fast, with a lot of background deftly woven into the narrative. At a local bar, the lawyer's former investigator accuses Alex of stealing his business. Later, Edwin Fulton, the scion of a wealthy Detroit family and a compulsive gambler, calls Alex from a nearby motel where he has found the murdered body of his bookie. Edwin's strong-willed mother hires Alex to protect the family, another local bookie is murdered and Edwin disappears, prompting Alex and the lawyer to start a search of their own. Meanwhile, Alex receives letters and calls that appear to be from the Detroit man who shot him, the same man that Alex helped send to prison for life without parole 14 years earlier. Hamilton cleverly joins the plots, leaving but one disappointment: how long it takes Alex to learn to place his trust in others with care. (Publishers Weekly)

The Last Child by John Hart

Thirteen-year-old Johnny Merrimon had the perfect life: a warm home and loving parents; a twin sister, Alyssa, with whom he shared an irreplaceable bond. He knew nothing of loss, until the day Alyssa vanished from the side of a lonely street. Now, a year later, Johnny finds himself isolated and alone, failed by the people he'd been taught since birth to trust. No one else believes that Alyssa is still alive, but Johnny is certain that she is. Determined to find his sister, Johnny risks everything to explore the dark side of his hometown. Traveling the wilderness between innocence and hard wisdom, between hopelessness and faith, *The Last Child* leaves all categories behind and establishes John Hart as a writer of unique power.

Our Souls at Night by Kent Haruf

A spare yet eloquent, bittersweet yet inspiring story of a man and a woman who, in advanced age, come together to wrestle with the events of their lives and their hopes for the imminent future.

In the familiar setting of Holt, Colorado, home to all of Kent Haruf's inimitable fiction, Addie Moore pays an unexpected visit to a neighbor, Louis Waters. Her husband died years ago, as did his wife, and in such a small town they naturally have known of each other for decades; in fact, Addie was quite fond of Louis's wife. His daughter lives hours away in Colorado Springs, her son even farther away in Grand Junction, and Addie and Louis have long been living alone in houses now empty of family, the nights so terribly lonely, especially with no one to talk with.

Their brave adventures—their pleasures and their difficulties—are hugely involving and truly resonant, making *Our Souls at Night* the perfect final installment to this beloved writer's enduring contribution to American literature.

The Girl on the Train by Paula Hawkins

Rachel takes the same commuter train every morning. Every day she rattles down the track, flashes past a stretch of cozy suburban homes, and stops at the signal that allows her to daily

watch the same couple breakfasting on their deck. She's even started to feel like she knows them. Their life—as she sees it—is perfect. Not unlike the life she recently lost. And then she sees something shocking. It's only a minute until the train moves on, but it's enough. Now everything's changed. Unable to keep it to herself, Rachel offers what she knows to the police, and becomes inextricably entwined in what happens next, as well as in the lives of everyone involved. Has she done more harm than good?

Compulsively readable, *The Girl on the Train* is an emotionally immersive, Hitchcockian thriller and an electrifying debut. (*From the publisher.*)

A Moveable Feast by Ernest Hemingway – CMS BDK – patron must place hold with staff at South Branch

Published posthumously in 1964, *A Moveable Feast* remains one of Ernest Hemingway's most beloved works. It is his classic memoir of Paris in the 1920s, filled with irreverent portraits of other expatriate luminaries such as F. Scott Fitzgerald and Gertrude Stein; tender memories of his first wife, Hadley; and insightful recollections of his own early experiments with his craft. It is a literary feast, brilliantly evoking the exuberant mood of Paris after World War I and the youthful spirit, unbridled creativity, and unquenchable enthusiasm that Hemingway himself epitomized.

Mennonite in a Little Black Dress by Rhoda Janzen

Not long after Rhoda Janzen turned forty, her world turned upside down. It was bad enough that her husband of fifteen years left her for Bob, a guy he met on Gay.com, but that same week a car accident left her injured. Needing a place to rest and pick up the pieces of her life, Rhoda packed her bags, crossed the country, and returned to her quirky Mennonite family's home, where she was welcomed back with open arms and offbeat advice. (Rhoda's good-natured mother suggested she get over her heartbreak by dating her first cousin – he owned a tractor, see.) Written with wry humor and huge personality – and tackling faith, love, family and aging – *Mennonite in a Little Black Dress* is an immensely moving memoir of healing, certain to touch anyone who has ever had to look homeward in order to move ahead.

Russian Winter by Daphne Kalotay

Interweaving past and present, Moscow and New England, the backstage tumult of the dance world and the transformative power of art, Daphne Kalotay's luminous first novel – a literary page-turner of the highest order – captures the uncertainty and terror of individuals powerless to withstand the forces of history, while affirming that even in times of great strife, the human spirit reaches for beauty and grace, forgiveness and transcendence.

Fever by Mary Beth Keane

On the eve of the twentieth century, Mary Mallon emigrated from Ireland at age fifteen to make her way in New York City. Brave, headstrong, and dreaming of being a cook, she fought to climb up from the lowest rung of the domestic-service ladder. Canny and enterprising, she worked her way to the kitchen, and discovered in herself the true talent of a chef. Sought after by New York aristocracy, and with an independence rare for a woman of the time, she seemed to have achieved the life she'd aimed for when she arrived in Castle Garden. Then one determined "medical engineer" noticed that she left a trail of disease wherever she cooked, and identified her as an "asymptomatic carrier" of Typhoid Fever. With this seemingly preposterous theory, he made Mallon a hunted woman.

The Invention of Wings by Sue Monk Kidd

Writing at the height of her narrative and imaginative gifts, Sue Monk Kidd presents a masterpiece of hope, daring, the quest for freedom, and the desire to have a voice in the world—and it is now the newest Oprah's Book Club 2.0 selection.

Hetty "Handful" Grimke, an urban slave in early nineteenth century Charleston, yearns for life beyond the suffocating walls that enclose her within the wealthy Grimke household. The Grimke's daughter, Sarah, has known from an early age she is meant to do something large in the world, but she is hemmed in by the limits imposed on women.

Kidd's sweeping novel is set in motion on Sarah's eleventh birthday, when she is given ownership of ten year old Handful, who is to be her handmaid. We follow their remarkable journeys over the next thirty five years, as both strive for a life of their own, dramatically shaping each other's destinies and forming a complex relationship marked by guilt, defiance, estrangement and the uneasy ways of love.

As the stories build to a riveting climax, Handful will endure loss and sorrow, finding courage and a sense of self in the process. Sarah will experience crushed hopes, betrayal, unrequited love, and ostracism before leaving Charleston to find her place alongside her fearless younger sister, Angelina, as one of the early pioneers in the abolition and women's rights movements.

Inspired by the historical figure of Sarah Grimke, Kidd goes beyond the record to flesh out the rich interior lives of all of her characters, both real and invented, including Handful's cunning mother, Charlotte, who courts danger in her search for something better.

Orphan Train by Christina Baker Kline

Between 1854 and 1929, so-called orphan trains ran regularly from the cities of the East Coast to the farmlands of the Midwest, carrying thousands of abandoned children whose fates would be determined by luck or chance. Would they be adopted by a kind and loving family, or would

they face a childhood and adolescence of hard labor and servitude? As a young Irish immigrant, Vivian Daly was one such child, sent by rail from New York City to an uncertain future a world away. Returning east later in life, Vivian leads a quiet, peaceful existence on the coast of Maine; the memories of her upbringing rendered a hazy blur. But in her attic, hidden in trunks, are vestiges of a turbulent past. Seventeen-year-old Molly Ayer knows that a community-service position helping an elderly widow clean out her attic is the only thing keeping her out of juvenile hall. But as Molly helps Vivian sort through her keepsakes and possessions, she discovers that she and Vivian aren't as different as they appear. A Penobscot Indian who has spent her youth in and out of foster homes, Molly is also an outsider being raised by strangers, and she, too, has unanswered questions about the past. Moving between contemporary Maine and Depression-era Minnesota, *Orphan Train* is a powerful tale of upheaval and resilience, second chances, and unexpected friendship. (From the author's website)

The Astronaut Wives Club by Lily Koppel

As America's Mercury Seven astronauts were launched on death-defying missions, television cameras focused on the brave smiles of their young wives. Overnight, these women were transformed from military spouses into American royalty. They had tea with Jackie Kennedy, appeared on the cover of *Life* magazine, and quickly grew into fashion icons.

Annie Glenn, with her picture-perfect marriage, was the envy of the other wives; platinum-blond Rene Carpenter was proclaimed JFK's favorite; and licensed pilot Trudy Cooper arrived on base with a secret. Together with the other wives they formed the Astronaut Wives Club, meeting regularly to provide support and friendship. Many became next-door neighbors and helped to raise each other's children by day, while going to glam parties at night as the country raced to land a man on the Moon.

As their celebrity rose—and as divorce and tragic death began to touch their lives—they continued to rally together, and the wives have now been friends for more than fifty years. *The Astronaut Wives Club* tells the real story of the women who stood beside some of the biggest heroes in American history. (From the publisher.)

Turn of Mind by Alice LaPlante

Is the perfect murder the one you can't forget or the one you can't remember? As the story opens, Dr. Jennifer White's life-long friend and neighbor, Amanda, has been killed, and four fingers surgically removed. Dr. White is the prime suspect in the murder and she doesn't know if she did it or not. Narrated in her voice, fractured and eloquent, a picture emerges of the surprisingly intimate, complex alliance between this pair, two proud, forceful women who were at times each other's most formidable adversaries.

Annie's Ghosts by Steve Luxemburg – CMS BDK – patron must place hold with staff at South Branch

Annie's Ghosts is part memoir, part detective story, and part history. Employing his skills as a journalist while struggling to maintain his empathy as a son, author Steve Luxemburg pieces together the story of his mother's motivations, his aunt's unknown life, and the times in which they lived. His search takes him to imperial Russia and Depression-era Detroit, through the Holocaust in Ukraine and the Philippine war zone, and back to the hospitals where Annie and many others languished in anonymity. *Annie's Ghosts* is a story about family secrets, personal journeys, genealogy, mental disability and illness, poverty, and immigration. It is a story of reframing one's self-understanding once a family secret is revealed, providing insight into how our identities are shaped by learning something shockingly new about our family history. Great Michigan Read 2013-14.

The Paris Wife by Paula McLain – CMS BDK – patron must place hold with staff at South Branch

A deeply evocative story of ambition and betrayal, *The Paris Wife* captures a remarkable period of time and a love affair between two unforgettable people: Ernest Hemingway and his wife Hadley.

Chicago, 1920: Hadley Richardson is a quiet 28-year-old who has all but given up on love and happiness – until she meets Ernest Hemingway and her life changes forever. Following a whirlwind courtship and wedding, the pair set sail for Paris, where they became the golden couple in a lively and volatile group – the fabled “Lost Generation” – that included Gertrude Stein, Ezra Pound, and F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald.

Though deeply in love, the Hemingways are ill prepared for the hard-drinking and fast-living life of Jazz Age Paris, which hardly values traditional notions of family and monogamy. Surrounded by beautiful women and competing egos, Ernest struggles to find the voice that will earn him a place in history, pouring all the richness and intensity of his life with Hadley and their circle of friends into the novel that will become *The Sun Also Rises*. Hadley, meanwhile, strives to hold on to her sense of self as the demands of life with Ernest grow costly and her roles as wife, friend, and muse become more challenging. Despite their extraordinary bond, they eventually find themselves facing the ultimate crisis of their marriage – a deception that will lead to the unraveling of everything they've fought so hard for.

Big Little Lies by Lianne Moriarty

It begins with a murder. It's not clear who was killed, but it was definitely someone at the Audrey and Elvis Trivia Night fund-raiser at Piriwee Public School on the coast of Australia. Back up six months, to when Madeline Mackenzie celebrated her fortieth birthday with kindergarten orientation for her youngest daughter, Chloe. She runs into the gorgeous, if spacey, Celeste

White and her twin boys; new kid Ziggy Chapman and his mom, shy, jumpy, Jane; and, unfortunately, her ex-husband and his New Age wife, Bonnie, and their daughter, Skye. When a little girl accuses Ziggy of choking her, the class moms begin to divide. As antibullying fervor escalates, Jane grows closer to Madeline, with whom she shares her terrible secret, and Celeste, who is hiding an insidious secret of her own, not that she will admit it. What starts as a send-up of suburban helicopter parenting turns darker as the pages flip by, building to a tense climax at Trivia Night, where one too many fizzy pink cocktails leads to . . . well, murder. Funny and thrilling, page-turning but with emotional depth, *Big Little Lies* is a terrific follow-up to *The Husband's Secret* (2013). Copyright 2014 Booklist Reviews.

The Distant Hours by Kate Morton – CMS BDK – patron must place hold with staff at South Branch

A long lost letter arrives in the post and Edie Burchill finds herself on a journey to Milderhurst Castle, a great but moldering old house, where the Blythe spinsters live and where her mother was billeted 50 years before as a 13-year-old child during WWII. The elder Blythe sisters are twins and have spent most of their lives looking after the third and youngest sister, Juniper, who hasn't been the same since her fiancé jilted her in 1941. Inside the decaying castle, Edie begins to unravel her mother's past. But there are other secrets hidden in the stones of Milderhurst, and Edie is about to learn more than she expected. The truth of what happened in 'the distant hours' of the past has been waiting a long time for someone to find it. Morton once again enthralls readers with an atmospheric story featuring unforgettable characters beset by love and circumstance and haunted by memory that reminds us of the rich power of storytelling.

The Forgotten Garden by Kate Morton – CMS BDK – patron must place hold with staff at South Branch

From the internationally bestselling author of *The House at Riverton*, an unforgettable new novel that transports the reader from the impoverished back alleys of pre-World War I London to the shores of colonial Australia where so many made a fresh start, and back to the windswept coast of Cornwall, England, past and present. A tiny girl is abandoned on a ship headed for Australia in 1913. She arrives completely alone with nothing but a small suitcase containing a few clothes and a single book – a beautiful volume of fairy tales. She is taken in by the dock master and his wife and raised as their own. On her twenty-first birthday they tell her the truth. With her sense of self shattered and with very little to go on, "Nell" sets out on a journey to England in an effort to trace her story and find her real identity. Her quest leads her to Blackhurst Manor on the Cornish coast and the secrets of the doomed Mountrachet family. But it is not until her granddaughter, Cassandra, takes up the search after Nell's death that all the pieces of the puzzle are assembled. At Cliff Cottage, on the grounds of Blackhurst Manor, Cassandra discovers the forgotten garden of the book's title and is able to unlock the secrets of the beautiful book of fairy tales.

The House at Riverton by Kate Morton – CMS BDK – patron must place hold with staff at South Branch

Grace Bradley went to work at Riverton House as a servant when she was just a girl, before the First World War. For years her life was inextricably tied to the Hartford family, most particularly the two daughters, Hannah and Emmeline. In the summer of 1924, at a glittering society party held at the house, a young poet shoots himself. The only witnesses are Hannah and Emmeline and only they – and Grace – know the truth. In 1999, when Grace is ninety-eight years old and living out her last days in a nursing home, she is visited by a young director who is making a film about the events of that summer. She takes Grace back to Riverton House and reawakens her memories. Told in flashback, this is the story of Grace’s youth during the last days of Edwardian aristocratic privilege shattered by war, of the vibrant twenties and the changes she witnessed as an entire way of life vanished forever. The novel is full of secrets – some revealed, others hidden forever, reminiscent of the romantic suspense of Daphne du Maurier. It is also a meditation on memory, the devastation of war and a beautifully rendered window into a fascinating time in history.

Me Before You by JoJo Moyes

They had nothing in common until love gave them everything to lose.

Louisa Clark is an ordinary girl living an exceedingly ordinary life—steady boyfriend, close family—who has never been farther afield than their tiny village. She takes a badly needed job working for ex-Master of the Universe Will Traynor, who is wheelchair bound after an accident. Will has always lived a huge life—big deals, extreme sports, worldwide travel—and now he’s pretty sure he cannot live the way he is.

Will is acerbic, moody, bossy—but Lou refuses to treat him with kid gloves, and soon his happiness means more to her than she expected. When she learns that Will has shocking plans of his own, she sets out to show him that life is still worth living.

A Love Story for this generation, *Me Before You* brings to life two people who couldn’t have less in common—a heartbreakingly romantic novel that asks, What do you do when making the person you love happy also means breaking your own heart? *(From the publisher.)*

State of Wonder by Ann Patchett – CMS BDK – patron must place hold with staff at South Branch

Ann Patchett has dazzled readers with her award-winning books, including *The Magician’s Assistant* and the New York Times bestselling *Bel Canto*. Now she raises the bar with *State of Wonder*, a provocative and ambitious novel set deep in the Amazon jungle. Dr. Marina Singh, a research scientist with a Minnesota pharmaceutical company, is sent to Brazil to track down her

former mentor, Dr. Annick Swenson, who seems to have all but disappeared in the Amazon while working on what is destined to be an extremely valuable new drug, the development of which has already cost the company a fortune. Nothing about Marina's assignment is easy; not only does no one know where Dr. Swenson is, but the last person who was sent to find her, Marina's research partner Anders Eckman, died before he could complete his mission. Marina embarks on an odyssey into the insect-infested jungle in hopes of finding her former mentor as well as answers to several troubling questions about her friend's death, the state of her company's future, and her own past.

Once found, Dr. Swenson, now in her seventies, is as ruthless and uncompromising as she ever was back in the days of Grand Rounds at Johns Hopkins. With a combination of science and subterfuge, she dominates her research team and the natives she is studying with the force of an imperial ruler. But while she is as threatening as anything the jungle has to offer, the greatest sacrifices to be made are the ones Dr. Swenson asks of herself, and will ultimately ask of Marina, who finds she may still be unable to live up to her teacher's expectations. In a narrative replete with poison arrows, devouring snakes, and a neighboring tribe of cannibals, *State of Wonder* is a world unto itself, where unlikely beauty stands beside unimaginable loss. It is a tale that leads the reader into the very heart of darkness, and then shows what lies on the other side.

The Crying Tree by Naseem Rakha

This is a complex story of a family's journey toward justice and forgiveness. After a recent move to Oregon, a father returns home to find his 15-year-old son beaten and shot to death. Following the son's death, the family seeks vengeance against the young man accused of his murder. In the nineteen years between the murder and the execution date, the daughter assumes a caretaker role for her damaged parents. The victim's grieving mother secretly exchanges letters with the killer in a desperate hope to forgive him and move on. Finally, a crisis pushes the mother toward the truth about what happened to her son. The author has created wonderfully realized characters and the narrative retains its tension to the end.

Mozart's Last Aria by Matt Rees

The news arrives in a letter to his sister, Nannerl, in December 1791. But the message carries more than word of Nannerl's brother's demise. Two months earlier, Mozart confided to his wife that his life was rapidly drawing to a close, and that he knew he had been poisoned. In Vienna to pay her final respects, Nannerl soon finds herself ensnared in a web of suspicion and intrigue – as the actions of jealous lovers, sinister creditors, rival composers, and Mozart's Masonic brothers suggest that dark secrets hastened the genius to his grave. As Nannerl digs deeper into the mystery surrounding her brother's passing, Mozart's black fate threatens to overtake her as well. Transporting readers to the salons and concert halls of eighteenth-century Austria, *Mozart's Last Aria* is a magnificent historical mystery that pulls back the curtain on a world of soaring music, burning passion and powerful secrets.

When We Were Strangers by Pamela Schoenwaldt – CMS BDK – patron must place hold with staff at South Branch

“If you leave Opi, you’ll die with strangers,” Irma Vitale’s mother always warned. Even after her beloved mother’s passing, 20-year-old Irma longs to stay in her Abruzzo mountain village, plying her needle. But too poor and plain to marry, and subject to growing danger in her own home, she risks rough passage to America and workhouse servitude to achieve her dream of making dresses for gentlewomen.

In the raw immigrant quarters and with the help of an entrepreneurial Irish serving girl, ribbon-bedecked Polish ragman, and austere Alsatian dressmaker, Irma begins to stitch together a new life – until her peace and self are shattered in the charred remains of the Great Chicago Fire. Enduring a painful recovery, Irma reaches deep within to find that she has even more to offer the world than her remarkable ability with a needle and thread.

The Art of Hearing Heartbeats by Jan-Philipp Sendker – CMS BDK – patron must place hold with staff at South Branch

On the day after her graduation from law school, Julia Win’s father disappears without a trace, leaving her family unsettled and confused. It is not until a few years later that her mother finds a piece of the puzzle – an unmailed love letter to a Burmese woman named Mi Mi. Intent on solving the mystery and coming to terms with her father’s past, Julia puts her career and her life on hold to travel to the village where Mi Mi once lived. Her journey takes her to the small mountain village of Kalaw, where she is approached by a man who claims to know her father, and who seems to have an uncanny knowledge of Julia herself. Intrigued, she returns to meet him every afternoon and listen to his incredible tales of her father’s youth – of his childhood blindness, his education at a monastery, and, most of all, about his passionate relationship with a local girl. *The Art of Hearing Heartbeats* is a magical, uplifting tale of hardship and resilience, and the unyielding power of love to move mountains.

The Rosie Project by Graeme Simsion

Don Tillman, professor of genetics, has never been on a second date. He is a man who can count all his friends on the fingers of one hand, and whose lifelong difficulty with social rituals has convinced him that he is simply not wired for romance. So when an acquaintance informs him that he would make a "wonderful" husband, his first reaction is shock. Yet he must concede to the statistical probability that there is someone for everyone, and he embarks upon The Wife Project. In the orderly, evidence-based manner with which he approaches all things, Don sets out to find the perfect partner. She will be punctual and logical – most definitely not a barmaid, a smoker, a drinker, or a late-arriver . . . yet Rosie is all these things. She is also beguiling, fiery, intelligent – and on a quest of her own. She is looking for her biological father, a search that a certain DNA expert might be able to help her with. Don's Wife Project takes a back burner to The Father Project and an unlikely relationship blooms, forcing the scientifically

minded geneticist to confront the spontaneous whirlwind that is Rosie – and the realization that love is not always what looks good on paper.

The Light Between Oceans by M. L. Stedman – owned by both Main and the South Branch – for the CMS BDK – patron must place hold with staff at South Branch

After four harrowing years on the Western Front, Tom Sherbourne returns to Australia and takes a job as the lighthouse keeper on Janus Rock, nearly half a day's journey from the coast. To this isolated island, where the supply boat comes once a season and shore leaves are granted every other year at best, Tom brings a young, bold, and loving wife, Isabel. Years later, after two miscarriages and one stillbirth, the grieving Isabel hears a baby's cries on the wind. A boat has washed up onshore carrying a dead man and a living baby. Tom, whose records as a lighthouse keeper are meticulous and whose moral principles have withstood a horrific war, wants to report the man and infant immediately. But Isabel has taken the tiny baby to her heart. Against Tom's judgment, they claim her as their own and name her Lucy. When she is two, Tom and Isabel return to the mainland and are reminded that there are other people in the world and that their choice has devastated one of them. M. L. Stedman's mesmerizing, beautifully written novel seduces us into accommodating Isabel's decision to keep this "gift from God." We are swept into a story about extraordinarily compelling characters seeking to find their North Star in a world where there is no right answer, where justice for one person is another's tragic loss.

Clara and Mr. Tiffany by Susan Vreeland – CMS BDK – patron must place hold with staff at South Branch

Against the unforgettable backdrop of New York near the turn of the 20th century, from the Gilded Age world of formal balls and opera to the immigrant poverty of the Lower East Side, bestselling author Susan Vreeland breathes life into a work of art in this extraordinary novel. It's 1893, and at the Chicago World's Fair, Louis Comfort Tiffany makes his debut with a luminous exhibition of innovative stained-glass windows that he hopes will earn him a place on the international artistic stage. But behind the scenes in his New York studio is the freethinking Clara Driscoll, head of his women's division, who conceives of and designs nearly all of the iconic leaded-glass lamps for which Tiffany will long be remembered.

Never publicly acknowledged, Clara struggles with her desire for artistic recognition and the seemingly insurmountable challenges that she faces as a professional woman. She also yearns for love and companionship, and is devoted in different ways to five men, including Tiffany, who enforces a strict policy – he does not employ married women. Ultimately, Clara must decide what makes her happiest – the professional world of her hands or the personal world of her heart.

The Book Thief by Markus Zusak

Set during World War II in Germany, this groundbreaking novel is the story of Liesel Meminger, a foster child living outside of Munich. Liesel scratches out a meager existence for herself by stealing – she steals books and learns to read and shares her stolen books with neighbors during bombing raids as well as with the Jewish man hidden in the basement of the house in which she lives. This is an important novel about the ability of books to feed the soul. Although this is considered a young adult novel, many believe it to be best suited to ‘sophisticated older readers,’ as the narrator is Death, himself.