



# **CAMDEN COUNCIL LIBRARY SERVICE**

## **BOOK CLUB KITS**

### **BOOK PLOT SUMMARIES**

**Use this list to pick your Book Club's next book!**

#### **American Gods by Neil Gaiman**

Days before his release from prison, Shadow's wife, Laura, dies in a mysterious car crash. On the plane home, he encounters the enigmatic Mr Wednesday, who claims to be a refugee from a distant war, a former god and the king of America. Together they embark on a profoundly strange journey across the heart of the USA, whilst all around them a storm of epic proportions threatens to break.

#### **Blasphemer by Nigel Farndale**

A light aircraft ditches into the sea. As the water floods through the cabin, Daniel Kennedy faces an impossible choice – should he save himself, or Nancy, the woman he loves? In a parallel narrative, it is 1917 and Daniel's great-grandfather Andrew is preparing to go over the top at Passchendaele. He, too, will have his courage tested, and must live with the moral consequences of his actions.

#### **The Book Thief by Markus Zusak**

It is 1939, Nazi Germany. Liesel Meminger, scratches out a meagre existence by stealing books wherever there are books to be found. When Liesel's foster family hides a Jewish fist-fighter in their basement, Liesel's world is both opened up, and closed down.

#### **The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas by John Boyne**

Nine-year-old Bruno has a lot of things on his mind. Who is the 'Fury'? Why did he make them leave their nice home in Berlin to go to 'Out-With'? And who are all the sad people in striped pyjamas on the other side of the fence? The grown-ups won't explain so Bruno decides there is only one thing for it - he will have to explore this place alone. What he discovers is a boy in striped pyjamas. But why can't they ever play together?

### **Cloudstreet by Tim Winton**

Winner of the Miles Franklin in 1992, *Cloudstreet* chronicles the lives of two families who flee their rural livings to share a house in the Perth suburb of West Leederville. Though initially resistant to each other, their search and journey for meaning in life brings the families closer together.

### **A Conspiracy of Friends by Alexander McCall Smith**

The third novel in the *Corduroy Mansions* series features a cast of charming eccentrics, including perhaps the world's most clever terrier, make their home in a handsome, though slightly dilapidated, apartment block.

### **The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time by Mark Haddon**

Christopher knows all the countries of the world and their capitals and every prime number up to 7,057. He relates well to animals but has no understanding of human emotions. Although gifted with a superbly logical brain, Christopher is autistic. Christopher's carefully constructed world falls apart when he finds his neighbour's dog, Wellington, impaled on a garden fork, and he is initially blamed for the killing. Christopher decides that he will track down the real killer and turns to his favourite fictional character, Sherlock Holmes, for inspiration.

### **Daughter of Fortune by Tara Hyland**

Fifteen year old Caitlin is forced to live with the father she has never met after her mother dies. Her half-sisters react to her with hostility. Unable to fit into this world, Caitlin is sent away to boarding school. It is here that something happens which is so awful it will change Caitlin forever. Over the next fifteen years the sisters' lives will take them in very different directions, their paths will continue to cross in ways that shatter and surprise them.

### **A Death Divided by Clare Francis**

Joe, struggling to survive in a high-powered law firm, is faced with the challenge of finding his childhood friend Jenna, who has been missing for four years. But has she disappeared through choice? Or is she under the powerful influence of her husband, the restless troubled Chetwood? Helped by his prickly girlfriend Sarah, Joe manages to find the beautiful, faded Jenna, only to realise too late that he has set some terrible events in motion.

### **The Fault in Our Stars by John Green**

Despite the tumour-shrinking medical miracle that has bought her a few years, Hazel has never been anything but terminal, her final chapter inscribed upon diagnosis. But when a gorgeous plot twist named Augustus Waters suddenly appears at Cancer Kid Support Group, Hazel's story is about to be completely rewritten.

### **Four Novels by George Eliot**

*Adam Bede* tells a story of seduction, and is also a pioneering record of a long lost rural world. *Middlemarch* is a complex tale of idealism, disillusion, loyalty and frustrated love. *The Mill on the Floss* is a masterpiece of ambiguity in which moral choice is subjected to the hypocrisy of the Victorian age. *Silas Marner* tells the tender and moving story of an unjustly exiled linen weaver in the agricultural heartland of England.

### **The Guns of Navarone by Alistair Maclean**

New Zealand mountaineer-turned-commando Keith Mallory leads an Allied commando team as they seek to destroy a German fortress that threatens Allied naval ships in the Aegean Sea. At risk is the lives of over 2,000 British soldiers. The story is based on the real events surrounding the Battle of Leros in World War II.

### **HMS Ulysses by Alistair Maclean**

The story of men who rose to heroism, "H.M.S. Ulysses" takes its place alongside "The Caine Mutiny" and "The Cruel Sea" as one of the classic novels of the navy, its men and its ships, at war. It is vintage MacLean.

### **The Hunger Games by Suzanne Collins**

Sixteen-year-old Katniss Everdeen regards it as a death sentence when she steps forward to take her sister's place in the annual Hunger Games, a fight to the death on live TV. If she is to win, she will have to start making choices that will weigh survival against humanity and life against love.

### **Jasper Jones by Craig Silvey**

Late on a hot summer night in 1965, Charlie Bucktin, a bookish boy of thirteen, is startled by an urgent knock on the window of his sleep-out. His visitor is Jasper Jones, an outcast in the regional mining town of Corrigan. When Jasper begs for his help, Charlie eagerly steals into the night by his side, terribly afraid but desperate to impress. Jasper takes him to his secret glade in the bush, and it's here that Charlie bears witness to Jasper's horrible discovery.

### **The Lacuna by Barbara Kingsolver**

As a young man, Harrison Shepherd befriends the Mexican artists Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo. While living with and working for them, Shepherd becomes a novelist and also begins working as a secretary for Leon Trotsky, who has been exiled by Stalin. But later in life his youthful pursuits haunt him and, now living in the US, Shepherd is investigated by the House Un-American Activities Committee.

### **Life of Pi by Yann Martel**

This fantasy adventure follows Piscine Molitor "Pi" Patel, a Tamil boy from Pondicherry, who survives 227 days after a shipwreck while stranded on a boat in the Pacific Ocean with a Bengal tiger named Richard Parker. Recently made into a film, this novel was winner of the 2002 Man Booker Prize for Fiction.

### **May We Be Forgiven by A.M. Homes**

Harold Silver has spent a lifetime watching his younger brother, George, acquire a covetable wife, two kids, and a beautiful home. But when George loses control the result is an act of violence so shocking that both brothers are hurled into entirely new lives. Harry finds himself suddenly playing parent to his brother's two adolescent children. *May We Be Forgiven* is a tale of how one deeply fractured family might begin to put itself back together.

### **Moonlight Mile by Dennis Lehane**

Amanda McCready was four years old when she first vanished from a Boston neighbourhood twelve years ago. Now Amanda is sixteen and gone again. In their desperate fight to confront the past and find Amanda again, investigators Kenzie and Gennaro face an evil that goes beyond broken families.

### **The Mulberry Empire by Philip Hensher**

This epic historical novel relates England's tragic adventure in Afghanistan, which began with the triumphant arrival of the Army of the Indus in 1839 and ended three years later in rout and massacre. Alexander Burnes, a Scots explorer, travels to the kingdom of Afghanistan and first befriends and then reluctantly betrays its wise and impeccably courteous Amir.

### **The Mystery of a Hansom Cab by Fergus Hume**

First published in 1886 and set in Melbourne, *The Mystery of a Hansom Cab* follows Detective Gorby as he investigates a homicide where the deceased was discovered in the evening inside of a hansom cab, implicating the influential and secretive Frettlby family. Recently made into a TV series for the ABC.

### **Night Circus by Erin Morgenstern**

A duel between two young magicians, Celia and Marco, is a game in which only one can be left standing, and the circus is but the stage for a remarkable battle of imagination and will.

### **Solo by Rana Dasgupta**

Ulrich, the son of a railroad engineer, has two great passions - the violin and chemistry. Denied the first by his father, he leaves for the Berlin of Einstein and Fritz Haber to study the latter. His studies are cut short when his father's fortune evaporates, and he must return to Sofia. He never leaves Bulgaria again – except in his daydreams. This novel won the Commonwealth Writers' Prize in 2010.

### **Sons of the Rumour by David Foster**

Foster retells the tale of the legendary eighth-century King Shahrban of Persia who, furious at his wife's infidelity, has decided to marry and then behead a fresh virgin every day. But the beautiful Scheherazade manages to entertain him for 1001 nights, staving off death for both herself and her countrywomen. Intersecting this historical tale is the story of Al Morrissey, a middle-aged, Anglo-Irish everyman, on the run from a failed marriage.

### **Stardust by Joseph Kanon**

Hollywood, 1945. Ben Collier has just arrived from war torn Europe to find that his brother, Daniel, has died in mysterious circumstances. Why would a man with a beautiful wife, a successful career in the movies, and a heroic past choose to kill himself? Determined to uncover the truth, Ben enters the maze of the studio system and the uneasy world beneath the glossy shine of the movie business.

### **The Storyteller by Jodi Picoult**

When Josef Weber, an elderly man in Sage Singer's grief support group, begins stopping by her bakery, they strike up an unlikely friendship. Everything changes on the day that Josef confesses a long-buried and shameful secret and asks Sage for an extraordinary favour.

### **To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee**

Scout, her brother Jem, and their lawyer father Atticus are plunged into a conflict that indelibly marks their lives—and gives Scout some basis for thinking she knows just about as much about the world as she needs to.

### **Vanity Fair by William Makepeace-Thackeray**

In this epic tale of love and social adventure, no one is better equipped in the struggle for wealth and worldly success than the alluring and ruthless Becky Sharp, who defies her impoverished background to clamber up the social ladder. Her companion Amelia, however, longs for caddish soldier George. As the two heroines make their way through the tawdry glamour of English society in the early 1800s, battles are fought, and fortunes are made and lost.

### **XPD by Len Deighton**

In the late 1970s, a group of former SS officers aim to seize power in West Germany and plan to publish explosive wartime documents about a secret meeting between Winston Churchill and Adolf Hitler in June 1940. British intelligence agent Boyd Stuart races against the clock to prevent the documents becoming public.

### **Zero Day by David Baldacci**

When a family with military connections is brutally murdered in a remote area of West Virginia, war hero and CID investigator John Puller is called in, teaming up with local homicide detective Samantha Cole. As the body count rises, it quickly becomes apparent that there's much more to this case than they had first thought.