

RPL Book Group Selections

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These are titles that the library's book groups have read and enjoyed.

Novels are shelved in the FICTION section, alphabetically by the author's last name.

Achebe, Chinua **THINGS FALL APART**

This first novel by Achebe, published in 1958, was praised for its intelligent and realistic treatment of tribal beliefs and of psychological disintegration coincident with social unraveling.

Allende, Isabel **HOUSE OF THE SPIRITS**

A best seller and critical success, this is the magnificent epic of the Trueba family—their loves, ambitions, spiritual quests, relations with one another, and their participation in the history of their times.

Allison, Dorothy **BASTARD OUT OF CAROLINA**

This fiercely moving, unforgettable novel tells the story of Ruth Anne Boatwright—called Bone by her family—a South Carolina bastard with an annotated birth certificate to tell the tale.

Blake, Sarah **GRANGE HOUSE**

Blake has created a complex and finely wrought work that on one level satisfies with old-fashioned mystery and romance, and on another disturbs with searching questions about the nature of literature.

Coelho, Paulo **THE ALCHEMIST**

The journey of Santiago, an Andalusian shepherd boy, who travels from Sapin to the Egyptian desert in search of treasure, is a testament to the transforming power of our dreams and the importance of listening to our hearts.

Coetzee, J. M. **DISGRACE**

Set in post-apartheid Cape Town and on a remote farm in the Eastern Cape, this heartbreaking novel about a man and his daughter is a portrait of the new South Africa, and an exploration of grace and love.

Erdrich, Louise **MASTER BUTCHER'S SINGING CLUB**

Woven with intrigue, romance, death, sex and humor, this is an emotionally complex tale of European immigrants who have settled in a North Dakota town.

Debus, Andre **HOUSE OF SAND AND FOG**

In an enthralling tragedy built on a foundation of small misfortunes, Debus offers in detail the unraveling life of a woman who, in her undoing, brings devastation to the families of those in her path.

Ferber, Edna **SO BIG**

A rollicking panorama of Chicago's high and low life, this stunning novel follows the travails of gambler's daughter Selina Peake DeJong as she struggles to maintain her dignity, her family, and her sanity in the face of monumental challenges.

Follett, Ken **PILLARS OF THE EARTH**

As a new age dawns in England's twelfth century, the building of a mighty Gothic cathedral sets the stage for a story of intrigue and power, revenge and betrayal.

Forde, Jasper **EYRE AFFAIR**

An ingenious fantasy that unites intrigue and mystery with English literature in a delightfully witty mix.

Gabaldon, Diana **OUTLANDER**

A time-travel romance in which strong-willed, sensual Claire Randall leads a double life with a husband in one century, and a lover in another.

Golden, Arthur **MEMOIRS OF A GEISHA**

Golden trained as long and hard as any geisha who must master the arts of music, dance, clever conversation, crafty battle with rival beauties, and the cunning seduction of wealthy patrons. His 10 years of research, combined with degrees in Japanese art, history, and English, result in an enthralling depiction of the world of the geisha.

Hamilton, Jane **DISOBEDIENCE**

A wayward wife, and Oedipally -obsessed email snoop, a pint-sized Civil War re-enactor, and a cheerfully oblivious cuckold comprise the Shaws of Chicago, the decidedly quirky characters of this novel.

Hosseini, Khaled **THE KITE RUNNER**

This stunning debut novel starts as an eloquent Afghan version of the American immigrant experience in the late 20th century, but betrayal and redemption come to the forefront when the narrator, a writer, returns to his ravaged homeland to rescue the son of his childhood friend after the boy's parents are shot during the Taliban takeover in the mid '90s.

Hurston, Zora Neale **THEIR EYES WERE WATCHING GOD**

Fair and long-legged, independent and articulate, Janie Crawford sets out to be her own person—no mean feat for a black woman in the '30s. Janie's quest for identity takes her through three marriages and into a journey back to her roots.

Ishiguro, Kazuo **REMAINS OF THE DAY**

A profoundly compelling portrait of the perfect English butler and of his fading insular world in postwar England.

Juster, Norton **PHANTOM TOLLBOOTH**

A children's book that delighted the group with its wit, humor, and word play.

Lawson, Mary **CROW LAKE**

Four children living in northern Ontario struggle to stay together after their parents die in an auto accident. Lawson's fascinating debut is a compelling and lovely study of sibling rivalry and family dynamics in which the land literally becomes a character.

Garcia Marquez, Gabriel **ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF SOLITUDE**

This inventive, amusing, magnetic novel, alive with unforgettable men and women, tells the story of the rise and fall, birth and death of a mythical town of Macondo through the history of the Buenda family.

Le Guin, Ursula K. **LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS**

Genly Ai is an emissary from the human galaxy to Winter, a lost, stray world. His mission is to bring the planet back into the fold of an evolving galactic civilization. But, to do so, he must bridge the gulf between his own culture and prejudices and those he encounters.

Mistry, Rohinton **A FINE BALANCE**

Political events in India in 1975-76 serve as the backdrop for this intricate tale of four ordinary people struggling to survive.

Morrison, Toni **SONG OF SOLOMON**

Song of Solomon explores the quest for cultural identity through an African American folk tale about enslaved Africans who escape slavery by fleeing back to Africa.

O'Brien, Tim **GOING AFTER CACCIATO**

Winner of the 1979 National Book Award, this classic novel of the Vietnam War captures the peculiar blend of horror and hallucinatory comedy that marked this strangest of wars.

Paton, Alan **CRY THE BELOVED COUNTRY**

The beautifully told and profoundly compassionate story of the Zulu pastor Stephen Kumalo and his son Absalom, set in the troubled and changing South Africa of the 1940s.

Peck, Richard **A YEAR DOWN YONDER**

This wry, delightful book has already taken its place among the classics of children's literature.

Russell, Mary Doria **SPARROW**

In 2019, humanity finally finds proof of extraterrestrial beings; causing them to question the meaning of being "human." When the lone survivor of the expedition returns to Earth in 2059, he will try to explain what went wrong.

Russo, Richard **STRAIGHT MAN**
An academic satire that combines poignancy and laugh-out-loud humor.

Sebold, Alice **LOVELY BONES**
A moving exploration of loss and mourning that ultimately puts its faith in the living and that is made even more powerful by a cast of convincing characters.

Shaara, Michael **KILLER ANGELS**
This account of the Battle of Gettysburg features deft characterizations of all of the main actors, including Lee, Longstreet, Pickett, Buford, and Hancock. You do not have to be a Civil War buff to enjoy this novel!

Soueif, Ahdaf **MAP OF LOVE**
In parallel love stories set nearly 100 years apart, Soueif combines politics and romance in something of an eternal spiral connecting two families, and two cultures—those of Egypt and the United States.

White, E. B. **TRUMPET OF THE SWAN**
In this children's classic, a trumpeter swan named Louis learns to speak to the world with a trumpet stolen from a music store by his father. With the support of an unusual boy, who helps Louis learn how to read and write, the swan has some rather unswanlike adventures and ultimately wins the love and freedom of a beautiful female swan.

Nonfiction is shelved by the call numbers listed on the right.

Chang, Jung **951.05 C362W**
WILD SWANS: THREE DAUGHTERS OF CHINA
An exceptional tribute to three generations of courageous and articulate Chinese women that explores Chinese society from 1909 to 1978.

Bauby, Jean-Dominique **362.1681 B3223D**
THE DIVING BELL AND THE BUTTERFLY
Jean-Dominique Bauby's life was forever altered when he was paralyzed. This exquisitely painful memoir is neither a triumphant account of recovery, nor a journey into the abyss of self-pity. Instead, it is a tender testament to the power of language and love.

Hillenbrand, Laura **798.4 H557S**
SEABISCUIT: AN AMERICAN LEGEND
In 1938, a celebrity who never granted an interview generated more press than Franklin Roosevelt or Clark Gable. Who was this superstar? A horse named Seabiscuit. Thanks to Hillenbrand's passionate writing and fine research, readers who don't know a filly from a furlough will be captivated.

Nielsen, Jerri **919.89 N554I**
ICE BOUND: A DOCTOR'S INCREDIBLE BATTLE FOR SURVIVAL AT THE SOUTH POLE
Serving as doctor to the Americans "wintering over" at the South Pole, Jerri Nielsen discovered a lump in her breast that a self-administered biopsy revealed to be an aggressive, fast-growing cancer. No flights in or out of Antarctica are possible during the continent's long winter, and Nielsen's account of giving herself chemotherapy, while waiting for the weather to break, is gripping.

Schlain, Leonard **302.2244 SH69A**
ALPHABET VS THE GODDESS: CONFLICT BETWEEN WORD AND IMAGE
An exploration of the author's thesis that literacy has promoted the subjugation of women by men throughout all but the very recent history of the West, with misogyny and patriarchy rising and falling with the fortunes of the alphabetic written word.

Sedaris, David **921 SE27S**
NAKED
In the *New York Times Book Review*, Craig Seligman writes: ...not one of the 17 autobiographical essays in this new collection failed to make me crack up; frequently I was helpless.

Seife, Charles **513 SE42**
ZERO THE BIOGRAPHY OF A DANGEROUS IDEA
We take the concept of zero for granted, but it hasn't always existed. This incredible synthesis of math, history, and anthropology seduces the reader into a new fascination with the most troubling number.