

Book Discussion Sure Bets

Nonfiction

Quiet by Susan Cain

Introverts like to listen, to read, and work on their own. In this book, Cain argues that it is the quiet ones that society undervalues the most, and she provides convincing examples of the significant contributions made by successful introverts. (audio; large print)

The Woman Who Smashed Codes: A True Story of Love, Spies, and the Unlikely Heroine Who Outwitted America's Enemies by Jason Fagon

The engaging true story of Elizebeth Smith Friedman, a genius codebreaker who began her career working for Col. Fabyan at Riverbank—and went on to break codes during WWII. (audio)

Shadow Divers by Robert Kurson

The exciting true story of scuba divers' discovery, in 1991, of a sunken German submarine off the New Jersey coast, and the years they spent unraveling the unidentified U-boat's mysteries. (audio; large print)

The Soul of an Octopus by Sy Montgomery

A creature one would think has not much in common with us, the octopus species has remarkably different personalities. They are intelligent, affectionate, playful, and even sneaky (think Fido on the forbidden couch, after you leave the house). An enchanting National Book Award Finalist. (audio)

Born a Crime by Trevor Noah

The host of the Daily Show shares the story of his life in South Africa in this autobiographical comedy book. Born to a black mother and a white father, his birth violated the Immorality Act of 1927, which outlawed interracial relationships. (audio)

Yes, Chef: A Memoir by Marcus Samuelsson

World-renowned chef Marcus Samuelsson chronicles his life from early childhood in Ethiopia to his formative years in Sweden to his rousing culinary success in the United States. (audio; large print)

Just Mercy by Bryan Stevenson

This searing indictment of the American justice system covers the inspiring story of Stevenson's battle, as founder of the Equal Justice Initiative, to defend "hopeless cases," freeing people from excessive punishment or wrongful convictions. The overarching narrative focuses on an African-American man on death row for killing a white woman despite credible evidence to the contrary. (audio)

Fiction

The Particular Sadness of Lemon Cake by Aimee Bender

As a child, Rose discovers she can taste the emotions of the person who cooked the food she eats—which often discloses people's secrets. She narrates this story about her unusual family and their unexpected talents. (audio; large print)

Bliss, Remembered by Frank Deford

In this fictional memoir, 87-year-old Sydney is dying and decides to tell her son about an early part of her life, starting with her time as a swimmer, when she attended the 1936 Olympics in Berlin and fell in love with an assistant to Leni Riefenstahl. Entertaining and thought-provoking. (audio; large print)

The Sisters Brothers by Patrick DeWitt

When the Sisters brothers—professional hit men in the old West—agree to do "one last job," things go horribly awry. Funny and irreverent and shortlisted for the Booker Prize. (How often does that happen with a Western?) (audio; large print)

Middlesex by Jeffrey Eugenides

A Pulitzer Prize winning novel, this compelling book spans three generations. Told with humor and pathos, it tells the story of Cal, who grew into a man but was born a girl. (audio; large print)

Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close by Jonathan Safran Foer

After his father's death in the 9/11 attacks, precocious 9-year-old Oskar tries to unravel the mystery of a key his father left behind. By turns funny and sad, this story is told by Oskar, his grandmother, and his long-lost grandfather. (audio)

Good Omens by Neil Gaiman and Terry Pratchett

Armageddon is coming, but demon Crowley and angel Aziraphale have become friends and Baby Satan is misplaced—what now? This collaboration by Brits Gaiman and Pratchett has been called "irreverently funny and unexpectedly wise." (audio)

The Humans by Matt Haig

An extra-terrestrial comes to Earth with a mission to save humans from themselves. Thought-provoking and darkly humorous. (audio; large print)

Fiction, continued

We Have Always Lived in the Castle by Shirley Jackson

The very strange Blackwoods—18-year-old Mary Katherine (who narrates the story), her sister Constance, and their uncle Julian—live in seclusion in their family mansion, scorned by the townspeople who fear them following a horrific event. A contemporary classic. (audio)

The Leavers by Lisa Ko

In this emotionally charged story of cross-cultural adoption and complicated lives, a woman is deported from America to China, leaving behind an adolescent son who never knew what happened to his mother. (audio; large print)

The Dinner by Herman Koch

Two couples meet for dinner at a trendy restaurant in Amsterdam to discuss a tragic incident involving their teenage children. A dark and controversial international bestseller of high suspense. (audio; large print)

Interpreter of Maladies by Jhumpa Lahiri

This award-winning short story collection presents universal characters attempting to understand the cataclysmic and benevolent events that occur in their lives. The stories' locations are in India and the U.S.; their themes are global. Characters struggle to express their feelings of alienation, pain, and joy to themselves and others. Lahiri won the Pulitzer Prize and the PEN Hemingway Award for this collection. A short and superb read! (audio; large print)

Mystic River by Dennis Lehane

Three men, who were childhood friends until a terrible event ruptured their lives, live on the south side of Boston where they grew up. When one man's daughter is murdered, his old friend, now a police detective, is assigned to the case and must investigate their other childhood friend. A gripping psychological thriller by an award-winning mystery author. (audio; large print)

In the Lake of the Woods by Tim O'Brien

When the worst secret from a politician's past is revealed, he and his wife escape to the woods to recover. A master magician who had managed to make his past vanish, he is suspected of murder when his wife disappears. (audio; large print)

The Buddha in the Attic by Julie Otsuka

Unforgettable choral-like narrative recounts the experiences of six Japanese "picture brides" who struggle to adjust to a new culture, raise families, and face the prospect of wartime internment. (audio; large print)

Bel Canto by Ann Patchett

This award-winning novel features an international cast of well-drawn characters and a riveting plot. When guerrillas take hostages at an embassy party in an unnamed South American country, the following months of captivity result in some surprising relationships. (audio, large print)

True Grit by Charles Portis

In this rip-roaring adventure story, a no-nonsense teenage girl hires a tough U.S. marshal to help avenge the death of her father. Even if you don't like Westerns, this novel's sparkling, wry humor and engaging dialogue just might win you over. (audio)

Please Look After Mom by Kyong-suk Sin

An old woman comes to Seoul to visit her children. At a busy train station she is separated from her husband and lost. While the family looks for their mother, they reflect on her life and their relationship to her. The novel represents the contrast between old and new in Korea and is the author's first book to be translated to English. (audio; large print)

Olive Kitteridge by Elizabeth Strout

This Pulitzer Prize winning novel of interconnected stories follows the lives of folks in a small Maine town, including the rather blunt and opinionated school teacher of the title. Finely crafted and deeply emotional. (audio; large print)

Into the Beautiful North by Luis Alberto Urrea

Inspired by the film *The Magnificent Seven*, Nayeli and her three friends leave their tiny Mexican village to bring home seven men to protect their home. As Nayeli marches north, she finds far more than she'd been looking for. (audio)