

ADDITIONS TO 2012 BOOK DISCUSSION COLLECTION

Titles as of February 2012	author	pages	type	SYNOPSIS
Elizabeth Street	Fabiano	400	Novel	<p>In Elizabeth Street, Laurie Fabiano tells a remarkable, and previously unheard, story of the Italian immigrant experience at the start of the twentieth century. With stories culled from her own family history, Fabiano paints an entrancing portrait of Giovanna Costa, who, reeling from personal tragedies, tries to make a new life in a new world. Shot through with the smells and sights of Scilla, Italy, and New York's burgeoning Little Italy, this intoxicating story follows Giovanna as she finds companionship, celebrates the birth of a baby girl, takes pride in a growing business, and feels a sense of belonging during a family outing to Coney Island.</p> <p>However, these modest successes are rewarded with the attention of the notorious Black Hand, a gang of brutal extortionists led by Lupo the Wolf. As the stakes grow higher, Giovanna desperately struggles to remain outside the fray, so she may fight for—and finally save—what is important above all else: family.</p>
In the Garden of the Beasts	Larson	464	History	<p>The time is 1933, the place, Berlin, when William E. Dodd becomes America's first ambassador to Hitler's Germany in a year that proved to be a turning point in history. A mild-mannered professor from Chicago, Dodd brings along his wife, son, and flamboyant daughter, Martha. At first Martha is entranced by the parties and pomp, and the handsome young men of the Third Reich with their infectious enthusiasm for restoring Germany to a position of world prominence. Enamored of the "New Germany," she has one affair after another, including with the suprisingly honorable first chief of the Gestapo, Rudolf Diels. But as evidence of Jewish persecution mounts, confirmed by chilling first-person testimony, her father telegraphs his concerns to a largely indifferent State Department back home. Dodd watches with alarm as Jews are attacked, the press is censored, and drafts of frightening new laws begin to circulate. As that first year unfolds and the shadows deepen, the Dodds experience days full of excitement, intrigue, romance--and ultimately, horror, when a climactic spasm of violence and murder reveals Hitler's true character and ruthless ambition.</p>

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Language of Flowers (The)	Diffenbaugh	336	Novel	<p>The Victorian language of flowers was used to convey romantic expressions: honeysuckle for devotion, asters for patience, and red roses for love. But for Victoria Jones, it's been more useful in communicating grief, mistrust, and solitude. After a childhood spent in the foster-care system, she is unable to get close to anybody, and her only connection to the world is through flowers and their meanings. Now eighteen and emancipated from the system, Victoria has nowhere to go and sleeps in a public park, where she plants a small garden of her own. Soon a local florist discovers her talents, and Victoria realizes she has a gift for helping others through the flowers she chooses for them. But a mysterious vendor at the flower market has her questioning what's been missing in her life, and when she's forced to confront a painful secret from her past, she must decide whether it's worth risking everything for a second chance at happiness.</p>
Tiger's Wife (The)	Obreht	368	Novel	<p>Not even Obreht's place on the New Yorker's current "20 under 40" list of exceptional writers will prepare readers for the transporting richness and surprise of this gripping novel of legends and loss in a broken land. Drawing on the former Yugoslavia's fabled past and recent bloodshed, Belgrade-born Obreht portrays two besieged doctors. Natalia is on an ill-advised "good will" medical mission at an orphanage on what is suddenly the "other side," now that war has broken out, when she learns that her grandfather, a distinguished doctor forced out of his practice by ethnic divides, has died far from home. She is beset by memories, particularly of her grandfather taking her to the zoo to see the tigers. We learn the source of his fascination in mesmerizing flashbacks, meeting the village butcher, the deaf-mute Muslim woman he married, and a tiger who escaped the city zoo after it was bombed by the Germans. Of equal mythic mystery is the story of the "deathless man." Moments of breathtaking magic, wildness, and beauty are paired with chilling episodes in which superstition overrides reason; fear and hatred smother compassion; and inexplicable horror rules. Every word, every scene, every thought is blazingly alive in this many-faceted, spellbinding, and rending novel of death, succor, and remembrance.</p>

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Turn of Mind	LaPlante	320	Novel	<p>A stunning first novel, both literary and thriller, about a retired orthopedic surgeon with dementia, Turn of Mind has already received worldwide attention. With unmatched patience and a pulsating intensity, Alice LaPlante brings us deep into a brilliant woman's deteriorating mind, where the impossibility of recognizing reality can be both a blessing and a curse. As the book opens, Dr. Jennifer White's best friend, Amanda, who lived down the block, has been killed, and four fingers surgically removed from her hand. Dr. White is the prime suspect and she herself doesn't know whether she did it. Told in White's own voice, fractured and eloquent, a picture emerges of the surprisingly intimate, complex alliance between these life-long friends—two proud, forceful women who were at times each other's most formidable adversaries. As the investigation into the murder deepens and White's relationships with her live-in caretaker and two grown children intensify, a chilling question lingers: is White's shattered memory preventing her from revealing the truth or helping her to hide it?</p>
Unbroken	Hillenbrand	496	Biography	<p>On a May afternoon in 1943, an Army Air Forces bomber crashed into the Pacific Ocean and disappeared, leaving only a spray of debris and a slick of oil, gasoline, and blood. Then, on the ocean surface, a face appeared. It was that of a young lieutenant, the plane's bombardier, who was struggling to a life raft and pulling himself aboard. So began one of the most extraordinary odysseys of the Second World War. The lieutenant's name was Louis Zamperini. In boyhood, he'd been a cunning and incorrigible delinquent, breaking into houses, brawling, and fleeing his home to ride the rails. As a teenager, he had channeled his defiance into running, discovering a prodigious talent that had carried him to the Berlin Olympics and within sight of the four-minute mile. But when war had come, the athlete had become an airman, embarking on a journey that led to his doomed flight, a tiny raft, and a drift into the unknown. Ahead of Zamperini lay thousands of miles of open ocean, leaping sharks, a foundering raft, thirst and starvation, enemy aircraft, and, beyond, a trial even greater. Driven to the limits of endurance, Zamperini would answer desperation with ingenuity; suffering with hope, resolve, and humor; brutality with rebellion. His fate, whether triumph or tragedy, would be suspended on the fraying wire of his will.</p>

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Very Valentine	Trigiani	401	Novel	<p>The family-owned Angelini Shoe Company where Valentine Roncalli and her grandmother work is going under. The small business, started by her late grandfather in 1903, is best known for handcrafting beautiful wedding shoes, but is unnoticed among the big designers that dominate the storefronts in downtown New York City. Since no one in the Roncalli clan seems interested in running the business, Valentine vows to continue the family legacy and enters the shop in a design contest at a well-known department store. Amidst her struggles, Valentine meets an Italian chef and begins a serious love affair. Just when she thinks he might be “the one,” she is sent to Tuscany on a buying trip and becomes entranced by the charm and sophistication of Italy. A steamy boat ride in the Blue Grotto on the isle of Capri and a dreamy love scene beneath the glittering night sky will have readers who love romantic novels fanatics swooning. Trigiani’s closing is satisfying, even as it paves the way for the lovable heroine to reappear in a planned sequel</p>