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The Book Club *Kit*

*Everything you need to run a book club people actually
come back to.*

HOST CHECKLIST

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

READING CALENDAR

TRACKER



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The host *checklist*

Most book clubs don't die from a bad book. They die from a vague date, an unclear address, and nobody knowing whose turn it is. Work down these two columns and almost none of that can happen to you.

ONCE, AT THE START

Before the first meeting

- ☐ Decide how many people you actually want. Six to ten is the sweet spot — small enough that everyone talks, big enough to survive a few no-shows.
- ☐ Pick the day and the rhythm before you pick the book. Second Tuesday, monthly, 7pm — a fixed slot is what makes it survive month three.
- ☐ Agree on where. Rotating homes, one host's place, a coffee shop, or video call. Write it down so nobody has to ask.
- ☐ Set the meeting length out loud — 90 minutes is plenty — and say when it ends. People come back to things that end on time.
- ☐ Choose the first book together, and make it short. Under 350 pages. A hard first book kills more clubs than a boring one.
- ☐ Start a group chat or email thread. One place, not four.
- ☐ Decide the food rule now: host provides, potluck, or snacks-optional. Ambiguity here quietly makes hosting feel expensive.
- ☐ Agree on the spoiler rule: we discuss the whole book, so finish it or accept spoilers.
- ☐ Name who picks the next book and how. (Page 7 of this kit is the ballot.)
- ☐ Send the first invite with the book, the date, the address, and how many pages a week it works out to.

EVERY SINGLE TIME

Before every meeting

- ☐ Send a reminder one week out with the page target, and again the day before.
- ☐ Reread your own notes and mark three passages you want to read out loud.
- ☐ Pick your two ARGUE questions ahead of time — the discussion lives or dies on these.
- ☐ Look up one piece of outside context: an interview with the author, the year it was published, the real event behind it.
- ☐ Set out drinks and something to eat within reach of the chairs, not in another room.
- ☐ Arrange the seating so everyone can see everyone. A circle beats a row.
- ☐ Print one Meeting One-Pager (page 6) and fill in the top before people arrive.
- ☐ Have a timer in your pocket. Ten minutes of catch-up, then start.
- ☐ Bring the ballot if a new book gets picked tonight.
- ☐ Know your closing line: rating, next book, next date, done.

If you only do one thing

Send the next date before anybody leaves the room. Not "we'll find a date" — an actual date, said out loud, in the group chat before people put their coats on. A club that leaves every meeting with the next one already on the calendar survives its first bad month; a club that doesn't quietly stops existing somewhere around week six, and nobody ever announces it.

The four-part *discussion frame*

This works on any book, in any genre, whether you loved it or didn't finish it. Run the four beats in order and a ninety-minute meeting fills itself. Every question below is deliberately book-agnostic — nothing here needs a plot summary to answer.

OPEN FIRST 10–15 MINUTES · WARM-UP, NO WRONG ANSWERS

Get every voice in the room before anyone has to be clever. Go around the circle — nobody skips.

1. In one sentence, how would you describe this book to a stranger?
2. Where were you when you read most of it, and did that change how it felt?
3. What's the first image or scene that comes back to you now?
4. Did you finish it? Be honest — and if not, where did you stop and why?
5. Rate it out of ten right now, gut instinct, before we talk each other into anything.

DIG NEXT 25–30 MINUTES · CHARACTER AND CRAFT

Move from reaction to evidence. Ask people to point at the page.

1. Who changed the most, and what was the moment the change actually happened?
2. Which character did you trust, and did the book reward that trust?
3. Read out a sentence or short passage you underlined. What made you stop there?
4. How does the author let you know things — dialogue, description, silence, what's withheld?
5. If you moved this story fifty years earlier or later, what breaks?

ARGUE NEXT 20–25 MINUTES · THE ONE QUESTION PEOPLE DISAGREE ON

Pick one or two. The goal is a real split, not a fight — ask people to name what would change their mind.

1. Did the ending earn itself, or did the author take the easy way out?
2. Was the main character actually right? Would you have done the same thing?
3. Is this a book about what it says it's about, or is that a cover story?
4. Would you give this to someone you love? Who, and why — or why absolutely not?
5. Is the thing people praise about this book the thing that's actually good about it?

CLOSE LAST 10 MINUTES · RATE IT, LAND IT, SET THE NEXT ONE

End clean, on time, with the next date already agreed. This is the part that makes people come back.

1. Final rating out of ten — did yours move from the OPEN round, and what moved it?
2. One word for this book. Go around the circle.
3. Who would you hand this to, and who should never be handed it?
4. What's one thing you'll remember about this book in a year?
5. Next book, next date, next host — confirmed out loud before anyone stands up.

Questions *by genre*

Drop two or three of these into the DIG and ARGUE beats when the book has a strong genre spine. They go where the four-part frame is deliberately general.

Fantasy & Romantasy

1. What rule does this world run on, and when did you first understand it?
2. Was the magic (or the bond, or the power) a cost or a cheat code?
3. Which relationship did the plot actually need, and which one was there for us?
4. Did the world feel lived-in, or like a set built for these characters?
5. If the sequel hooked you, was that story or was that a cliffhanger?

Romance

1. What is genuinely keeping these two apart — and is it a real obstacle or a misunderstanding?
2. Which one of them changed to make the ending possible, and was that change fair to them?
3. Was the chemistry on the page, or were we told about it?
4. Did the third-act break feel inevitable or manufactured?
5. Would you want this relationship, or just want to read about it?

Mystery & Thriller

1. When did you know — and go back: what was the clue you walked past?
2. Did the book play fair with you, or did it hide something you couldn't have had?
3. Whose version of events did you believe, and what made you believe it?
4. Was the villain's reason good enough to hold up the whole book?
5. Would the story survive if you knew the ending going in?

Literary & Book-Club Fiction

1. What is this book arguing, and does it believe its own argument?
2. Whose story is this really — and who was left out of telling it?
3. Which choice by the author did you notice most: structure, voice, time, point of view?
4. Did the ambiguity feel earned, or like the author declining to answer?
5. Is this a book you admired, a book you enjoyed, or both — and which matters more to you?

The three rescue questions

When a discussion stalls — and one will — these three restart it on any book in any genre: **"What would you have cut?"** · **"Who in this book was treated unfairly by the author?"** · **"What did this book assume you already believed?"** Keep them in your back pocket; you will need exactly one of them per meeting.

The reading *calendar*

Fill this in once, photograph it, and drop it in the group chat. A club that knows its page target on a Sunday night is a club where six people show up having finished.

How to pace it

Take the total page count, divide by the number of weeks until you meet, then **round the weekly target up to the nearest chapter break** — never mid-chapter. Stopping at a chapter end is what makes a target feel finishable instead of arbitrary. Leave the last few days empty as a buffer: somebody always has a bad week, and a buffer is the difference between them catching up and them quietly dropping out.

400 pages ÷ 4 weeks = 100 a week → round to Ch. 12, Ch. 24, Ch. 35, the end

BOOK

TOTAL PAGES

WE MEET ON

WEEK	PAGES OR CHAPTERS	BY WHEN	NOTES · WHAT TO WATCH FOR
Week 1			
Week 2			
Week 3			
Week 4			
Buffer			
Meeting			

If somebody falls behind

They still come. A reader who is forty pages short and shows up is a member; a reader who skips one meeting out of embarrassment usually skips the next two and then stops answering the chat. Say this out loud at meeting one: **show up whether or not you finished** — we'll flag spoilers as we go.

Meeting *one-pager*

Print one of these per meeting. Fill in the top row before people arrive, then use the four blocks to keep the room moving and to catch the lines you'll want to remember.

BOOK & AUTHOR

DATE

HOST & PLACE

SNACK · DRINKS

WHO PICKS NEXT

NEXT MEETING

OPEN — first reactions, everyone speaks

10–15 MIN

DIG — character, craft, the passages we marked

25–30 MIN

ARGUE — tonight's one real disagreement

20–25 MIN

CLOSE — ratings, next book, next date

10 MIN

GROUP RATING

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

The book pick *ballot*

Picking the next book is where forty minutes go to die. Do it this way instead: cut out four slips, everyone nominates, then everyone gets **three votes and cannot put two on the same book**. Highest total wins; the runner-up is automatically next month's opener, so the argument only ever happens once.

NOMINATIONNO. 1

Title

Author · pages

Why this one, in one sentence

Nominated by

NOMINATIONNO. 2

Title

Author · pages

Why this one, in one sentence

Nominated by

NOMINATIONNO. 3

Title

Author · pages

Why this one, in one sentence

Nominated by

NOMINATIONNO. 4

Title

Author · pages

Why this one, in one sentence

Nominated by

#	NOMINATED TITLE	PAGES	VOTES	MONTH
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				

WINNER — WE'RE READING

RUNNER-UP — UP NEXT

VOTED ON

My reading *tracker*

A year of club books on one page. The last column is the one that matters — write the single line you'd actually say if someone asked you about this book at a party, while you still remember it.

#	TITLE	AUTHOR	FINISHED	★/10	ONE LINE I'D SAY ABOUT IT
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					
11					
12					

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