

THE BOOK-OF-THE-MONTH CLUB
AND THE LITERARY GUILD OF AMERICA, INC.:
A COMPARATIVE STUDY

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF
ENGLISH AND THE GRADUATE COUNCIL OF THE KANSAS STATE
TEACHERS COLLEGE OF EMPORIA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF SCIENCE

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Previous Studies on this Subject

As far as the writer knows, no similar study has been made with regard to the Book-of-the-Month Club and the Literary Guild of America, Incorporated.

Purpose and Method of this Study

The purpose of this thesis is to compare the Book-of-the-Month Club and the Literary Guild, from 1935 to 1938 inclusive, in the following respects: (1) genesis and nature; (2) types of literature represented in book selections; (3) critical estimate of content of book selections; (4) format of book selections.

The writer wishes to present, as nearly as possible, an objective picture of the output of the two organizations. At all times she has tried to avoid anything like personal bias.

To aid her in reaching conclusions, the writer asked the Book-of-the-Month Club and the Literary Guild for information regarding their policies. The Book-of-the-Month Club sent to the writer advertising material giving information about that club's activities; the Literary Guild cited an article in Fortune Magazine for data concerning the activities of the club. In addition to a study of this material, the

writer read all available articles in magazines regarding the two clubs and all numbers of the Book-of-the-Month Club News and Wings from 1935 to 1938 inclusive. From information furnished in the News and Wings, she compiled lists of book selections for both clubs from 1935 to 1938 inclusive and chose at random* sixteen book selections of each club, representing four different types of literature. For each of these thirty-two books, she selected impartially four reviews from the Book Review Digest, from 1935 to 1938 inclusive, and by means of these reviews made a comparison of critical estimates of book selections of the two clubs. Then she measured each book and examined each with regard to binding, paper, and print. An analysis and comparison were made, also, of book dividends, bonus books, dual selections, double selections, and alternate selections, from 1935 to 1938 inclusive.

Sources of Data

The following sources of data furnished material for this study: (1) advertising material of the Book-of-the-Month Club; (2) Fortune Magazine, February, 1936; (3) Book-of-the-Month Club News, from 1935 to 1938 inclusive; (4) Wings, from 1935 to 1938 inclusive; (5) Book Review Digest, from 1935 to 1938 inclusive; (6) articles in several periodicals; (7) sixteen book selections of the Book-of-the-Month Club, from 1935

* The method is described in the introduction to Chapter III.

to 1938 inclusive; (8) sixteen book selections of the Literary Guild, from 1935 to 1938 inclusive.

Definition of Terms

A "dual selection" is the combination of two books of the Book-of-the-Month Club given for the price of one.

A "double selection" is the combination of two books of the Literary Guild given for the price of one.

A "subscriber" and a "member" are the same. Either term refers to one who has fulfilled the necessary requirements for membership in a club.

"Miscellaneous" refers to the content of a book which cannot be included under any definite classification. Usually a "miscellaneous" book is a combination of elements of various types of literature.

CHAPTER II

GENESIS AND NATURE OF CLUBS

This chapter will deal with the genesis of the Book-of-the-Month Club and the Literary Guild of America, Inc., and will cite information regarding both clubs, from 1935 to 1958 inclusive, on the following points: (1) editorial policy, (2) size, (3) requirements for membership, (4) free magazines, (5) free books, and (6) dual or double selections. Criticisms of both clubs, also, will be given.

The Book-of-the-Month Club

The Book-of-the-Month Club was organized in 1926 by Harry Scherman, with the purpose of selling new books by mail. According to Bennett A. Cerf,¹ the Club, with a few minor exceptions, operates now in the same way that it did when it was organized. The basic advertising copy and the judges also are the same. To-day the Club has over 300,000 members.

Each month publishers submit to the Book-of-the-Month Club books considered by them to be important new books. A prospectus which the writer procured from the Book-of-the-Month Club lists names of eighty-six such publishers. The books submitted by the Club are read by a number of critics, "sometimes

¹ Bennett A. Cerf, "200,000 Customers: Harry Scherman and His Book-of-the-Month Club," Saturday Review of Literature (New York), 17:6, December 4, 1937, p. 17.

by as many as nine." Books reported on favorably by these critics are read by each member of the Editorial Board, composed of Heywood Brown, Dorothy Canfield, Christopher Morley, William Allen White, and Henry Seidel Canby, chairman. A Foreign Advisory Committee, composed of H. G. Wells, Andre Maurois, Thomas Mann, and Sigrid Undset, acting in only an advisory capacity, informs the Editorial Board concerning significant new books of their respective countries.

Once a month this Editorial Board meets, discusses proposed books, and by a majority vote selects the book for that month. (The foregoing statement was taken from A Prospectus from Book-of-the-Month Club, which is advertising material, and is the only definite statement available to the writer on this phase of the Club's policy.) Before the selected book is published, a report of it is sent to subscribers in the Book-of-the-Month Club News, a free monthly magazine. The front cover page of the News contains drawings or pictures of persons or scenes relating to the book-of-the-month and also a comment concerning the month's selection. Within the magazine is a report of the book and a biographical sketch of the author, accompanied by photographs of the authors of both the sketch and the book, and often by a drawing or picture pertaining to the selected book itself. The remainder of the News is devoted to accounts of other books recommended for the month. These reports are written by the "judges and other literary critics chosen by the club."

After a perusal of the Book-of-the-Month Club News, a subscriber may choose either the next book-of-the-month, another book recommended, or none at all. Although a member of the Book-of-the-Month Club is not required to take a book every month, he must, to retain his membership, keep at least four books during each twelve months of his membership. Subscribers pay no fixed yearly amount; they pay for books purchased, plus postage. According to advertising material furnished by the Book-of-the-Month Club, the Club never has charged its members more than three dollars for any book-of-the-month or for any dual selection.

The number of books-of-the-month from 1935 to 1938 inclusive and their respective prices, as quoted by the Book-of-the-Month Club News for those years, follow: (Dual selections were counted as one book.)

<u>Number of Books</u>		<u>Price</u>
20	for	\$2.50 each
15	for	2.75 each
13	for	3.00 each

Thus, the average price of books-of-the-month from 1935 to 1938 inclusive was \$2.71+. Since four books must be bought during a year and since the average price of books other than the book-of-the-month has not been less than the average price of the book-of-the-month, a subscriber has had to pay approximately \$10.84 a year.

The Book-of-the-Month Club News from 1935 to 1938 inclu-

sive shows that each year the Club has provided four dual selections. The number of dual selections and their respective prices, as quoted in The Book-of-the-Month Club News, from 1935 to 1938 inclusive, follow:

<u>Number of Dual Selections</u>		<u>Price</u>
4	for	\$2.50 each
5	for	2.75 each
7	for	3.00 each

Thus the average price for dual selections was \$2.92+.

Another policy of the Club is to give free books, called "book-dividends," to members upon certain conditions of purchase. Prior to June, 1938, three book-dividends a year were distributed on the following conditions: if, in the previous twelve months, a member had bought seven or more books; if in that period he had bought six books, unless he already had received two book-dividends; if he had bought four or five books, unless he already had received one book-dividend within that time; if a new subscriber, who is one who has been a subscriber six months or less, had purchased two books unless he already had received one book-dividend.

In June, 1938, the Club put into effect a new system with regard to book-dividends. By this new policy the Club obtained the right to publish the book-of-the-month in large quantities. A portion of the cost of publishing saved in this way is put into a book-dividend fund. Every two months, with this fund, the club contracts for the entire edition of some

book. This book then is distributed as a book-dividend to members who have purchased two books-of-the-month. These two books-of-the-month, which entitle one to a book-dividend, need not be bought in consecutive months. Book-dividends, however, are awarded only for purchase of books-of-the-month; consequently, from June 1, 1933, on, the Book-of-the-Month Club distributed six book-dividends in twelve months' time.

For the years 1935 to 1938 inclusive, according to the News for those years, the Book-of-the-Month Club distributed fourteen book-dividends. The number of these books and their respective retail price follow:

<u>Number of Books</u>		<u>Retail Price</u>
1	for	\$6.00 each
4	for	5.00 each
1	for	4.00 each
1	for	3.75 each
6	for	3.50 each
1	for	3.00 each

Thus the average retail price of the book-dividends of the Book-of-the-Month Club from 1935 to 1938 inclusive was \$4.12+.

Besides changing the policy with regard to book-dividends, the Club increased royalties to publishers and authors and established department store and book store clubs.

The Literary Guild of America, Inc.

The Literary Guild, which includes the Junior Literary

Guild, is a part of the Mail Order Department of Doubleday, Doran, and Company of which Nelson Doubleday is president. In answer to a request by the writer for data concerning the policy of the Literary Guild, Milo J. Sutliff, vice-president of the Literary Guild and head of the Mail Order Department of Doubleday, Doran, and Company, suggested an article in Fortune Magazine for February, 1936, as giving a record of the Guild for 1935. "That record," Milo J. Sutliff added, "has been substantially the same during the past three years." Thus, the information given in this article will be considered sufficiently authentic for the period from 1935 to 1938, inclusive.

According to the Fortune article cited by Mr. Sutliff, Nelson Doubleday, in 1929, purchased a forty-nine per cent interest in the Literary Guild and in 1934 the remaining fifty-one per cent. The price was \$380,000.00, which is being paid out of the Guild's profits. The membership of the Guild in 1935 was almost 100,000. The article states that ownership by Nelson Doubleday has meant financial salvation for the Guild. "Almost insolvent, it became the beneficiary not only of the expert Doubleday mail order technique, but also of the Doubleday accounting practice of strongly favoring new enterprises. The Guild ended 1935 with the only large profit in its history-- \$200,000 net."² The primary purpose, then, of the Literary

² "Doubleday, Doran and Co.," Fortune Magazine (Jersey City, N.J.), 13:2, February, 1936, p. 156.

Guild seems to be to sell new books. Literary Guild subscriptions always have been sold by direct mail, by advertising, by a subscription organization of from forty to two-hundred salesmen, and through book and department stores.³

In 1934 the board of judges of the Literary Guild were Carl Van Doren, Julia Peterkin, Joseph Wood Krutch, and Burton Rascoe. "But the Guild," says the Fortune article, "has long since stopped pretending to offer what the judges consider the worthiest title of the month. Judge Van Doren, the highest-priced member of the quartet, has resigned; and while the other three continue to draw a modest sum as 'editors' of the Guild, their judicial focus has narrowed from a monthly survey of world literature to a more or less perfunctory eyeing of Garden City literature, especially the three or four samples of it that Nelson (Sic) and Milo Sutliff have chosen for them."⁴ The magazine article then continues to explain that if the Doubleday books for any month do not include an adequate "candidate," one is found among the books of other publishers.

A report of the Literary Guild selection for the month is sent to members in Wings, a free monthly magazine. Wings has on its front cover a reproduction of a painting, a picture of some place or portrait of some person who figures that month in the content of the Guild's selection. The content of Wings includes

³ Milo J. Sutliff, "Literary Guild Issues Statement About Retail Store Plan," Publishers' Weekly (New York), 132:322-3, August 7, 1937, p. 323.

⁴ "Doubleday, Doran, and Co.," Fortune Magazine, 13:2, February, 1936, p. 166.

(1) a frontispiece which usually is a photographic representation of a person or place concerned in the month's selection; (2) an introduction of the Guild selection by one of the Editorial Board of the Guild; (3) a biographical account of the author of the month's selection, accompanied by a photograph of the writer of the account; (4) often an article by the author giving his or her reason for having written the book, accompanied by a photograph of the author; (5) a report of the Junior Literary Guild Selections; (6) reports of book bargains; (7) several pages of recommended books, most of which are books of other publishers which the Guild buys through the Doubleday Book Shops; (8) illustrations depicting persons or places relating to the month's selection.

The Literary Guild operates with what is called a Prepayment Plan, which works in the following manner, according to information given in Wings several times during the period of 1935 to 1938: a Guild member may pay in advance \$21.00, for which he will receive credit for \$24.00 for purchase of books; eight dollars, however, of this \$24.00 credit must be used for Guild selections; a Guild member may pay in advance \$11.00 for which he will receive credit for \$12.00, of which \$4.00 must be used for Guild books. On all books purchased under the Prepayment Plan, the Guild pays the postage. A prepayment does not have to be used within any specific number of months, according to Wings, of April, 1937, "neither does it change the privilege of purchasing as few as four books within the year. Guild selections will be charged against prepaid ac-

counts at the rate of \$2.00 each and all other books at the prices advertised by the Guild." During each year, then, between 1935 and 1938, inclusive, a Literary Guild member had to buy four books, of which \$4 worth, or two books, had to be Guild selections. Since a member had to purchase four books and since the average price of books not Guild selections was not less than \$2.00, a Guild member had to buy at least \$8.00 worth of books each year.

In July, 1935, the Literary Guild inaugurated a system of distributing free books, which system is called the "Bonus Book Plan." Each year since 1935 the Guild has given two bonus books to every Guild member who, during the year, has purchased eight books. These eight books might be Guild selections, books of the member's own choice, such as those recommended in Wings, or de luxe sets.

The number and respective retail prices of the seven bonus books distributed by the Literary Guild from 1935 to 1938, inclusive, were as follows: three books for \$3.50 each, one book for \$3.00, one book for \$2.65, one book for \$2.50, and one book for \$2.00. Or, the average retail price of bonus books of the Literary Guild from 1935 to 1938, inclusive, has been \$2.95.

From November, 1936, till July, 1937, according to Wings, the Literary Guild each month furnished an alternate selection. The second book was of the same quality as the first but of different content. This plan, according to Wings for July, 1937, was discontinued because of lack of enthusiasm of Guild members.

Each month during 1936 Wings listed a book bargain or a deluxe set, either one or both of which often were sets of a number of volumes in special binding sold at prices lower than the usual retail price. In April, 1938, and August, 1938, Wings presented "double selections" or two books at one price, \$2.00.

Both the Book-of-the-Month Club and the Literary Guild have been criticized for their methods. They are accused of subordinating literary merit to sales value and of selecting books which will be bought by the largest number of people. One critic declares that "Judging the Book-of-the-Month and the much less subtle and infinitely more blatant Literary Guild of America by their own publicity, it becomes evident" that the capacity for selling books depends on the authority of the men who recommend the books.⁵ This critic deplores the fact, also, that the discussion of books by the judges and their reasons for choosing a book are not made public. "The editorial board of the Literary Guild," he adds, "headed by Carl Van Doren is not nearly so subtle as that presided over by Dr. Canby. (The Book-of-the-Month Club) The Book-of-the-Month Club evidently sized up the present economic and critical situation in regard to American bookselling, arranged its methods so as to tread on as few toes as possible and went ahead. . . it is quite evident that the Book-of-the-Month Club was the

⁵ Anonymous, "Has America a Literary Dictatorship," Bookman (New York), 65:193, April, 1927.

mother of the Literary Guild and of all the others."⁶

In answer to the foregoing criticism concerning book selection Henry Seidel Canby replies, in defense, that sometimes a book considered best by judges of the Book-of-the-Month Club has been put on the recommended list instead of being chosen as the book-of-the-month because it would be "folly to send it out to 40,000 readers."⁷ An example of such a book would be a "subtle symbolistic story, a poem, beautiful but obscure, an historical work of great and involved erudition." The judges, declared Henry Seidel Canby, choose for the month's selection the book which they agree by vote is most likely to be read "with profit and pleasure" by a large number of people.

Another critic, Harry Salpeter, declares that the judges of the Book-of-the-Month Club no longer choose books by an inflexible standard of quality. They are governed, he says, by the problem of choosing each month a book which will be suitable to the largest number of their subscribers. "Absolute values," says Harry Salpeter, "have been absolutely ditched." He adds that "Dr. Canby in a letter to The Times said that the judges chose 'The Cradle of the Deep' not for its literary merit-- little of which quality is claimed for it--but because they thought it would be more interesting to the bulk of the Club's

⁶ Ibid., p. 198.

⁷ H. S. Canby, "In Answer to, 'Has America a Literary Dictatorship?'" Bookman, 65:445, June, 1927.

subscribers."⁸

Both clubs, according to critics, have been of service to authors, especially to authors whose reputations had not been established. Harry Salpeter cited Sylvia Townsend Warner as one proof of this fact. Her Lolly Willowes was the first choice of the Book-of-the-Month Club; her Mr. Fortune's Maggot was the second choice of the Literary Guild; her third book, The True Heart, made its own way. Better known authors, also, have achieved additional success because of selection of their books by book clubs. In this category, Harry Salpeter placed Lewis Mumford, Edwin Arlington Robinson, W. B. Seabrook, C. E. Montague, Rosamon Lehmann, and Elinor Wylie.

Information included in a recent editorial by William Allen White, a member of the editorial board of the Book-of-the-Month Club, is pertinent here. W. A. White states:⁹

One of the pleasant jobs that I had on this trip in the East was to serve on the committee that awards the Pulitzer prizes. Those prizes are awarded this way: In each division of artistic activity--say the drama, the novel, music, history, biography, the press--a sub-committee reports to the final jury on which I serve. I had the lucky joy of voting "Yes" on "The Yearling," the novel of the year, an obvious selection. A year ago, as a member of the Book-of-the-Month awarding committee, I had helped to pick out "The Yearling" from a number of contemporaneous novels of the month. It stood out heavily as the best book of the month, and week before last it stood out clearly as the best novel of the year.

⁸ Harry Salpeter, "Book Clubs and Publishers," Outlook and Independent (New York), 151:631, April 17, 1929.

⁹ W. A. White, "Second Installment," Emporia Gazette (Emporia, Kansas), May 9, 1939, p. 4.

For a dozen years now on the award committee of the Book-of-the-Month Club, it has been my luck to have my finger in the literary pie of the United States. The Book-of-the-Month readers have picked in advance more than 90 per cent of the best sellers of a dozen years' literary output. Moreover the Pulitzer awards in biography and fiction have come from the Book-of-the-Month list in seven cases out of 10.

Summary

Summarizing the information given in the foregoing pages, one finds the following facts: (1) The Book-of-the-Month Club, the larger and older of the two clubs, is an independent organization, but the Literary Guild is part of the Mail Order Department of Doubleday, Doran, and Company. (2) The declared purpose of both the Book-of-the-Month Club and the Literary Guild is to provide new books. (3) Both clubs choose their books-of-the-month on the basis of the book's appeal to a large number of people. (4) The Book-of-the-Month Club still advertises that books regarded as probable selections are read by all members of the editorial board. (The Literary Guild in 1935 discontinued that policy.) (5) Approximately \$10.84 was the lowest amount to be paid during any one year by a member of the Book-of-the-Month Club; \$11, the lowest amount to be paid as a membership fee by a Literary Guild member, must be prepaid and may cover more than a year's time, but approximately \$8 worth of books must be bought within a year. (6) Both clubs furnish free monthly magazines reporting books. (7) From 1935 to 1938 inclusive the Book-of-the-Month Club gave fourteen

book-dividends, with an average retail price of \$4.12+; from 1935 to 1938 inclusive the Literary Guild gave seven bonus books, with an average retail price of \$2.95. (8) The Book-of-the-Month Club offered four "dual selections" each year from 1935 to 1938 inclusive; the Literary Guild offered "double selections" in April, 1938, and in August, 1938, only. (9) From November, 1936, till July, 1937, the Literary Guild offered an alternate selection. (10) Critics of both clubs state that their policies are similar, but that the Book-of-the-Month Club is the more conservative in its statements and more subtle in its methods.

CHAPTER III

BOOK SELECTIONS

Content of the Books: Types of Literature Represented

Both the Book-of-the-Month Club and the Literary Guild, from 1935 to 1938 inclusive, offered a variety of content in their book selections. In making a study of the types of literature represented by books of both clubs, a tabulation and comparison were made first of only the books designated each month by each club as its book selection for that particular month. For the purpose of this tabulation, the writer chose the first-mentioned book of the two books of dual selections of the Book-of-the-Month Club, as listed in the News, from 1935 to 1938 inclusive, and the first-mentioned book of double selections and alternate selections of the Literary Guild, as listed in Wings, from 1935 to 1938 inclusive. Book-dividends, bonus books, and other recommended books were not included in this compilation. Then, separately, the writer tabulated the types of literature represented by book-dividends and dual selections of the Book-of-the-Month Club and by bonus books, double selections, and alternate selections of the Literary Guild. Information regarding the content of books of both clubs was obtained from the Book-of-the-Month Club News, Wings, and the Book Review Digest, from 1935 to 1938 inclusive.

Table I presents a summary of types of literature represented by book selections of the Book-of-the-Month Club, from 1935 to 1938 inclusive. This summary shows a decided preference for the novel, with biography next in point of preference. Out of the forty-eight book selections, twenty-three were novels and nine were biography. Next in popularity to biography was history; science and books of travel or adventure tied for fourth place. No drama was included in these monthly book selections.

Table II shows a similar summary of types of literature represented by book selections of the Literary Guild, from 1935 to 1938 inclusive. This summary, also, indicates a preference for the novel, with twenty-one novels out of the forty-eight books. Biography was next in popularity, having been chosen ten times. Books of travel or adventure ranked third. History, prose (essay or short story), and miscellaneous books ranked fourth and were equal in the number of times selected. No drama was included.

TABLE I

CONTENT OF BOOK SELECTIONS OF THE BOOK-OF-THE-MONTH CLUB
FROM 1935 TO 1938 INCLUSIVE

Book Content	1935	1936	1937	1938	Total
Novel	6	7	6	4	23
Biography	1	2	2	4	9
History	3	0	0	1	4
Drama	0	0	0	0	0
Science	1	0	1	1	3
Poetry	0	2	0	0	2
Prose: Essay, Short-Story	1	0	0	0	1
Travel or Ad- venture	0	1	1	1	3
Philosophy	0	0	1	1	2
Miscellaneous	0	0	1	0	1

Read table thus: Six novels were offered as book selections in 1935, seven in 1936, six in 1937, four in 1938. The total number of novels offered as book selections from 1935 to 1938 inclusive was twenty-three. Read in similar manner for other types of literature.

TABLE II

CONTENT OF BOOK SELECTIONS OF THE LITERARY GUILD FROM
1935 TO 1938 INCLUSIVE

Book Content	1935	1936	1937	1938	Total
Novel	4	5	7	5	21
Biography	3	5	2	0	10
History	0	0	1	2	3
Drama	0	0	0	0	0
Science	0	0	1	1	2
Poetry	1	0	0	0	1
Prose: Essay, Short Story	1	1	0	1	3
Travel or Adventure	1	1	1	1	4
Philosophy	0	0	0	1	1
Miscellaneous	2	0	0	1	3

Read table thus: Four novels were offered as book selections in 1935, five in 1936, seven in 1937, five in 1938. The total number of novels offered as book selections from 1935 to 1938 inclusive was twenty-one. Read in similar manner for other types of literature.

The following tabulation shows the types of literature represented by book-dividends of the Book-of-the-Month Club, from 1935 to 1938 inclusive, with the number of times each type was offered as a book-dividend:

<u>Type of Literature</u>	<u>Number of Times Offered</u>
Novel	2
Biography	5
Drama	2
Short Story	2
Miscellaneous	<u>3</u>
Total	14

The following tabulation shows the types of literature represented by bonus books of the Literary Guild, from 1935 to 1938 inclusive, with the number of times each type was offered as a bonus book:

<u>Types of Literature</u>	<u>Number of Times Offered</u>
Novel	2
Biography	1
Poetry	1
History	1
Short Story	1
Miscellaneous	<u>1</u>
Total	7

The combinations of book content of dual selections of the Book-of-the-Month Club, from 1935 to 1938 inclusive, with the number of times offered, were as follows:

<u>Combinations of Content</u>	<u>Number of Times Offered</u>
Novel and novel	3
Novel and history	1
Novel and science	2
Novel and essay	1
Novel and poetry	1
Novel and travel	1
Novel and Spanish Idyll	1
Biography and poetry	1
Biography and biography	1
Essay and essay	1
Philosophy and memoirs	1
History and memoirs	1
Narrative non-fiction and narrative non-fiction	<u>1</u>
Total	16

The combinations of book content of double selections of the Literary Guild, from 1935 to 1938 inclusive, with the number of times offered, were as follows:

<u>Combination of Content</u>	<u>Number of Times Offered</u>
Philosophy and biography	1
Novel and miscellaneous	<u>1</u>
Total	2

The combinations of book content of alternate selections of the Literary Guild, from 1935 to 1938 inclusive, with the number of times offered, were as follows:

<u>Combination of Content</u>	<u>Number of Times Offered</u>
Novel and history	3
Novel and biography	1
Novel and travel	1
Biography and biography	1
Biography and sketches	1
Travel and memoirs	<u>1</u>
Total	8

A comparison of the content of book-dividends of the Book-of-the-Month Club with content of bonus books of the Literary Guild, from 1935 to 1938 inclusive, shows the following facts: The Book-of-the-Month Club offered biography most often, with miscellaneous books next, and the novel, drama, and short story in third place. The Literary Guild offered the novel twice, with one book each of biography, poetry, history, short story, and miscellaneous. The Book-of-the-Month Club gave fourteen book-dividends while the Literary Guild gave seven bonus books.

Dual selections of the Book-of-the-Month Club, from 1935 to 1938 inclusive, presented a variety of book content. The novel was given seven times in combinations, once with a novel, the other six times with six different types of literature. Each one of the following was offered twice in combination with another type of literature: biography, history, essay, and poetry. Philosophy, science, a book of travel, a Spanish Idyll, memoirs, and narrative non-fiction, each appeared once.

On the other hand, double selections of the Literary Guild, from 1935 to 1938 inclusive, offered one each of the following types of literature; philosophy, biography, novel, and miscellaneous. The Book-of-the-Month Club offered sixteen dual selections while the Literary Guild furnished two double selections.

Alternate selections of the Literary Guild, from 1935 to 1938 inclusive, showed a predominance of the novel, with biography and history next in number of times offered, with books of travel next. The Book-of-the-Month Club did not give alternate selections.

Summary

Viewing as a whole, then, types of literature represented by the content of books of the Book-of-the-Month Club and the Literary Guild, from 1935 to 1938 inclusive, one finds the following facts: In their book selections for the month, the two clubs showed a similar trend, giving precedence to the novel, with biography next in number of times offered. History, travel or adventure, and science were next in favor. In book-dividends and bonus books, however, the order was reversed: the Book-of-the-Month Club offered biography most often, while the Literary Guild showed a slight preference for the novel. The book content of dual selections of the Book-of-the-Month Club furnished greater variety than did the content of double selections and alternate selections of the Literary Guild.

Critical Estimate of Book Selections

To gain a critical estimate of book selections of the Book-of-the-Month Club and the Literary Guild from 1935 to 1938 inclusive, the writer selected at random four book selections of each club for each year, choosing those types of literature which represented the largest number of book selections. The four types of literature representing the largest number of selections of the Book-of-the-Month Club, from 1935 to 1938 inclusive, were, in the order of their frequency proceeding from the greatest number down: (1) novel, (2) biography, (3) history, (4) science, or (4) travel and adventure. Thus, for 1935, the content of book selections of the Book-of-the-Month Club chosen for criticism were (1) novel, (2) biography, (3) history, and (4) science. The four types of literature of book selections of the Literary Guild chosen for 1935 and selected in the same manner were (1) novel, (2) biography, (3) travel and adventure, and (4) an anthology of prose. The first book of each type listed in the Book-of-the-Month Club News and Wings was the one chosen; as the first novel listed, the first biography, and so on. The same procedure was followed for all years from 1935 to 1938 inclusive.

After the book selections were chosen for comparison, four reviews of each book were selected at random from the Book Review Digest. These reviews gave favorable, unfavorable, and non-committal estimates. The sign, plus, preceding a re-

view in the Book Review Digest indicates a favorable comment; minus indicates an unfavorable comment; plus minus indicates a review with both favorable and unfavorable comment, with the favorable predominating; minus plus indicates a review with both favorable and unfavorable comment, with the unfavorable predominating. If the review is not preceded by any mark, its estimate is non-committal, and it usually discusses merely the nature of the content rather than its merit.

Table III gives data concerning the critical estimates of sixteen book selections of the Book-of-the-Month Club, from 1935 to 1938 inclusive.

Table IV gives data concerning the critical estimates of sixteen book selections of the Literary Guild, from 1935 to 1938 inclusive.

A comparison of these tables shows that the Book Review Digest, from 1935 to 1938 inclusive, gave 162 reviews of the sixteen Book-of-the-Month Club selections and 125 reviews of the sixteen Literary Guild selections. Approximately five-eighths of the reviews of selections of the Book-of-the-Month Club were marked plus, while approximately one-half of the reviews of the Literary Guild selections were marked plus. Approximately one-fifth of the reviews of both clubs were marked plus minus. One review of the Book-of-the-Month Club selections was marked minus, while fifteen reviews of Literary Guild selections were marked minus. These figures indicate that for these thirty-two books, reviews in the Book Review Digest show a somewhat more favorable report for the content of book selec-

TABLE III

CRITICAL ESTIMATE OF BOOK-OF-MONTH CLUB SELECTIONS
FROM 1935 TO 1939, INCLUSIVE

Name of Book	Number of Reviews	Plus	Plus-Minus	Minus-Plus	Minus	Not Marked
Road of Ages	14	10	3	1	0	0
Old Jules	11	9	1	0	0	1
Seven Pillars of Wisdom	15	10	3	0	0	2
Next Hundred Years	14	8	4	2	0	0
The Last Puritan	17	11	5	0	0	1
An American Doctor's Odyssey	12	11	1	0	0	0
Arctic Adventure	7	7	0	0	0	0
A Further Range	11	8	3	0	0	0
The Croquet Player	4	1	2	0	0	1
Beloved Friend	6	4	1	0	1	0
New Frontier of the Kind	3	2	1	0	0	0
Animal Treasure	7	6	1	0	0	0
Hell on Ice	3	6	1	0	0	1
Fanny Kemble	12	11	1	0	0	0
The Sword in the Stone	10	6	4	0	0	0
The Fight for Life	11	8	2	0	0	1
Total	162	118	33	3	1	7

Read table thus: There are fourteen reviews of "The Road of Ages." Ten of these reviews are marked plus; three are marked plus minus; one is marked minus plus; none are marked minus; none are without marks. Read in similar manner for other books.

TABLE IV

CRITICAL ESTIMATE OF LITERARY GUILD SELECTIONS
FROM 1935 TO 1938, INCLUSIVE

Name of Book	Number of Reviews	Plus	Plus-Minus	Minus-Plus	Minus	Not Marked
Pumpkin Coach	7	0	3	2	1	1
Personal History	12	7	3	0	0	2
Voodoo Fire in Haiti	5	1	0	0	4	0
Anthology of World Prose	10	9	0	0	1	0
The Sound Wagon	13	1	0	0	7	5
Lafayette: a Life	10	0	7	0	1	2
Journal of Tour to Hebrides	10	9	1	0	0	0
Golden Lady	3	2	1	0	0	0
Street of the Fishing Cat	12	5	0	6	0	1
Before I Forget	2	2	0	0	0	0
Away from It All	5	0	4	0	1	0
The Hundred Years	11	8	2	0	0	1
Tale of Ball	5	4	1	0	0	0
Danger is My Business	4	3	0	0	0	1
Conqueror of the Seas	7	4	3	0	0	0
The Summing Up	9	7	1	0	0	1
Total	125	62	26	8	15	14

Read table thus: There are seven reviews of Pumpkin Coach. None of those reviews were marked plus; three are marked plus minus; ten are marked minus plus; one is marked minus; one is not marked. Read in similar manner for other books.

tions of the Book-of-the-Month Club than for that of book selections of the Literary Guild.

Format of Book Selections

In compiling data concerning the format of the book selections of the Book-of-the-Month Club and the Literary Guild from 1935 to 1938 inclusive, the writer examined the thirty-two which had been chosen for critical estimate. She used her own judgment and terminology regarding the types of binding, the grade of paper, and the size of print. This estimate, therefore, cannot be considered scientifically correct, but it should be fairly accurate. No information by which to prove facts regarding binding, paper, and print, was available. The books examined are the property of the Emporia City Library and the Library of the Kansas State Teachers College of Emporia.

Table V gives information regarding the size, binding, paper, and type of sixteen book selections of the Book-of-the-Month Club, from 1935 to 1938 inclusive.

Table VI gives information concerning the size, binding, paper, and type of sixteen book selections of the Literary Guild, from 1935 to 1938 inclusive.

A comparison of these tables shows a marked similarity in the format of book selections of the two clubs.

TABLE V

FORMAT OF BOOK SELECTIONS OF THE BOOK OF THE MONTH CLUB FROM 1955 TO 1958 INCLUSIVE

Name of Book	Size (Inches)	No. of Pages	Binding	Paper	Type
Road of Ages	5½ by 7½	232	Brown cloth with gilt	Heavy, deep cream	Large
Old Jules	6 by 8-5/4	424	Tan cloth, black lettering	Medium grade, off-white	Medium
Seven Pillars of Wisdom	7½ by 10	672	Tan cloth, gilt lettering	Heavy, smooth	Large
Next Hundred Years	5-3/4 by 8-3/4	434	Reddish brown cloth, gilt lettering	Medium grade	Small
The Last Puritan	5½ by 9½	602	Green cloth, gilt lettering	Medium grade, off-white	Medium
An American Doctor's Odyssey	6¼ by 9¼	544	Tan cloth, with green	Medium grade, light cream	Medium
Arctic Adventure	6¼ by 9¼	467	Green Cloth	Rather heavy, off-white	Large
A. Further Range	5-3/4 by 8-3/4	102	Red cloth, gilt lettering	Rather heavy, cream	Large
The Croquet Player*					
Beloved Friend	5-3/4 by 8-3/4	483	Greenish-blue cloth, black trimming	Rather heavy, off-white	Small
New Frontiers of the Mind	5-3/4 by 8-3/8	275	Gray cloth, blue lettering	Medium grade, off-white	Rather large
Animal Treasure	6¼ by 9½	325	Cloth, sand and brown	Rather heavy, cream color	Medium
Hell on Ice	6 by 8-5/4	480	Dark blue cloth, gilt lettering	Medium grade, off-white	Rather large
Fanny Kemble	6¼ by 9½	387	Red cloth, gilt lettering	Medium grade, off-white	Rather large
The Sword in the Stone	5½ by 8	312	Blue cloth, gilt lettering	Medium grade, off-white	Medium
The Fight for Life	6 by 8-3/4	342	Black cloth, silver lettering	Medium grade, off-white	Medium

Read table thus: Road of Ages is 5½ inches in size and has 232 pages. Its binding is brown cloth with gilt lettering. Its paper is heavy and is a deep cream color. Its print is large in size. Read in like manner for other books.

* This book was not available for examination by the writer.

TABLE VI

FORMAT OF BOOK SELECTIONS OF THE LITERARY CUILD FROM 1935 TO 1938 INCLUSIVE

Name of Book	Size (Inches)	No. of Pages	Binding	Paper	Type
Pumpkin Coach	5½ by 8½	407	Dark gray cloth, gilt lettering	Medium grade, off-white	Medium
Personal History	5-3/4 by 8½	403	Red cloth, gilt trimming	Medium grade, off-white	Medium
Voodoo Fire in Haiti	6 by 9½	274	Orange cloth, black and gilt trimming	Heavy, deep cream color	Medium
Anthology of World Prose	5½ by 8½	1582	Cloth, two tones of green, gilt lettering	Thin, very smooth, white	Small
The Sound Wagon	5½ by 8½	404	Sand cloth, red and blue	Medium grade, light green	Large
Lafayette: A Life	6½ by 9½	402	Purple cloth, gilt lettering	Rather heavy, light cream	Large
Journal of Four to Hebrides	6½ by 9½	435	Tan cloth, brown lettering	Rather heavy, light green	Medium
Golden Lady	5½ by 8	498	Light green cloth	Medium grade, off-white	Medium
The Street of the Fishing Cat	5-3/4 by 8-3/4	308	Light blue cloth, gilt and black trimming	Medium grade, light cream	Rather large
Before I Forget	5-3/4 by 8-3/4	442	Green cloth, gilt lettering	Medium grade, off-white	Medium
Away From It All	5½ by 8½	411	Green cloth, gilt lettering	Medium grade, off-white	Large
The Hundred Years	6 by 9½	400	Green cloth, gilt trimming	Medium grade, off-white	Medium
Danger Is My Business	6½ by 9½	309	Red cloth, gilt lettering	Rather heavy, off-white	Large
Conqueror of the Seas	6½ by 9½	335	Green cloth, gilt lettering	Medium grade, cream	Rather large
Tale of Ball	5-3/4 by 8½	417	Orange cloth, with black	Medium grade, off-white	Medium
The Summing Up	5-3/4 by 8½	510	Brown cloth, gilt trimming	Medium grade, off-white	Rather large

Read table thus: Pumpkin Coach is 5½ inches by 8½ inches in size and has 407 pages. Its binding is dark gray cloth, with gilt lettering. Its paper is of medium grade and is on off white color. Its print is of medium size. Read in similar manner for other books.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

From a summary of information presented in this study, the writer offers the following conclusions:

1. It seems evident that the Book-of-the-Month Club and the Literary Guild of America, Incorporated, have a similar purpose: to sell as many new books as possible. Both clubs have conceded that at times literary merit has been sacrificed for sales-value. Such an objective, in the writer's opinion, is not altogether valid. Inasmuch as both clubs exist to provide the public with literature, that literature, even though new, should be of uniformly high standard.
2. Although the plans of operation of the two clubs are somewhat unlike, their requirements for membership do not show any marked difference.
3. From 1955 to 1958 inclusive the same types of literature were represented in book selections of both clubs. The Book-of-the-Month Club, however, surpassed the Literary Guild in number of book-dividends and in number of and content-variety of dual selections. The retail price of books given as book-dividends by the Book-of-the-Month Club was higher than was the retail price of books given as bonus books by the

Literary Guild. The Book-of-the-Month Club also presented a more uniformly consistent policy with regard to "dual selections" than did the Literary Guild with regard to "double selections" and "alternate selections." The Book-of-the-Month Club offered four "dual selections" each year from 1935 to 1938 inclusive. On the other hand the Literary Guild offered "double selections" in April, 1938, and in August, 1938, only. The plan of presenting "alternate selections" was tried by the Literary Guild from November, 1936, till July, 1937, and then abandoned.

4. Book reviews, in the Book Review Digest, from 1935 to 1938 inclusive, of book-content of sixteen random selections from the offerings of each club show a somewhat more favorable report of book-selections of the Book-of-the-Month Club than of book selections of the Literary Guild.
5. The format of book selections of both clubs seems to be of much the same grade. Both appear to the writer to be of medium quality.
6. Considering, then, all of the foregoing information concerning the Book-of-the-Month Club and the Literary Guild of America, Incorporated, the writer believes that the balance is somewhat in favor of the Book-of-the-Month Club. Perhaps another person, subjecting

the same material to scrutiny, might conceivably reach a different conclusion. The writer, however, has tried to make, as nearly as possible, an objective presentation of the output of the two clubs and to avoid any personal bias.

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