

## Choice Reads: A Book-of-the-Month Club

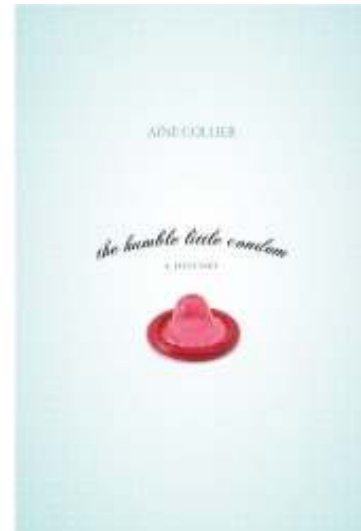
### OCTOBER 2008:

#### *The Humble Little Condom: A History*

By Aine Collier

#### Description:

One of the most basic – and ancient – forms of birth control is the condom. Utilized by all cultures for millennia, and referred to by many colorful euphemisms, it has featured in the lives, loves, and letters of some of the most famous men in history. Shakespeare, Casanova, George Bernard Shaw, to mention only a few, all appreciated and wrote about the importance of using "preventatives." Aine Collier provides a unique glimpse into human sexual habits, customs, beliefs, and attitudes in this first history of the prophylactic device that goes back to at least the ancient Egyptians. As she amply demonstrates, the story of this humble piece of paraphernalia is full of intriguing insights into human character with all its flaws and foibles as well as many fascinating historical details.



#### Reader's Guide:

1. Collier mentions a preference for smaller families in some ancient cultures; how do you think this preference evolved and changed?
2. There seems to be a cycle of condoms coming into vogue, and then becoming demonized. Do you think that cycle has changed in our times?
3. How do rates of condom use relate to economic distress and armed conflict?
4. What do you think of Collier's assertion that the condom industry was in fact dominated by women in the early 20th century?
5. How have governments promoted or inhibited condom use over time? Is there a consistent direction, or is it a more cyclical relationship? How have the benefits and disadvantages of a midwife-assisted birth changed from the early 20th century to today in the United States?

**If you would like to recommend a book, receive book suggestions directly, or meet to discuss books, please contact Pem at [pem@prochoicemass.org](mailto:pem@prochoicemass.org) or 617-556-8800 x14.**

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