Rosenberg Library’s Museum Book Club provides a forum for discovery and discussion, linking literary selections with art from our permanent collection.

For additional web resources, please visit:

www.johnsingersargent.org
Website with a complete catalog and images of all of Sargent’s works

www.sargentmurals.bpl.org
A history and images of Sargent’s murals at the Boston Public Library

http://www.metmuseum.org/collections/search-the-collections?ft=charles+worth
Couture gowns designed by Charles Worth in the Met Collection

www.ameliegmag.com
New Orleans-based arts and fashion magazine inspired by Amélie Gautreau

BOOKS BY DEBORAH DAVIS

Strapless:  John Singer Sargent and the Fall of Madame X
Party of the Century:  The Fabulous Story of Truman Capote and His Black-and-White Ball
Gilded:  How Newport Became America’s Richest Resort
Guest of Honor:  Booker T. Washington, Theodore Roosevelt, and the White House Dinner that Shocked a Nation
The Oprah Winfrey Show:  Reflections on an American Legacy
The Secret Lives of Frames:  100 Years of Art and Artistry

OTHER INTERESTING TIDBITS...
The Avegno House in the French Quarter where Amélie Gautreau was born and raised was recently sold in a bankruptcy auction for $1.9 million (less than half of what the owners paid for it in 2007). A 2-bedroom apartment on its third floor is currently listed for lease on Craigslist for $4,000 / month.
http://gilmoreauction.com/madame-x-mansion-sells-at-bankruptcy-auction-for-1980000/
Books on beauty were extremely popular when Amélie was coming of age.

“There is no falsehood in it... What is life, what is love, without illusion.” ~pg. 49

Discussion...Beauty

Davis spends much time discussing the time in which Amélie was coming of age, describing the pursuit of beauty as a French national pastime.

How do you think this shaped Amélie’s view of the world and of herself? How did it influence writers and artists? Consider the beauty objects on display from the museum collection. Has beauty always been an issue for women in general and women in art in particular?

Discussion...Marriage

Compare the lives of married women and single women in the late nineteenth century.

How was marriage different for women in Europe than for women in the United States?

Discussion...1884 Salon

Discuss the fallout of the 1884 Salon. Why was John Singer Sargent able to bounce back after the infamous flop while Amélie Gautreau never quite recovered her social status?

How did their lives / personalities / social standing change afterward?

Discussion...Knowing the Artist

Was John Singer Sargent a starving artist or a shrewd businessman? Davis spends much of the book discussing him, but do you walk away from the book knowing who he was?

To appreciate a piece of artwork, what do you want to know about the artist? The model?