

BOOK GROUP CATALOGUE

2024

Plus helpful information
for running your group

bd BOOK
DISCUSSION
SCHEME
A member of the FWEA
Open Books Open Minds

Our Mission

To promote the personal and societal benefits of group reading for a fairer, kinder, stronger New Zealand.

Why Join BDS?

There's never been a better time to pair the pleasure of reading with meaningful discussion. BDS ensures you have a regular supply of books and discussion questions so you can focus on enjoying your book group.

Benefits

- Hundreds of hand-picked fiction and non-fiction titles to choose from
- Professionally produced book notes provided to aid your discussions
- NZ-wide delivery included in your membership fee
- Affordable pricing with discounts for club coordinators/convenors
- Establish an enjoyable reading and socialising routine
- Expand your thinking and learn more by reading titles you might not otherwise have come across or chosen
- Open your mind through hearing the differing perspectives of your group members

“ The discussion brings out amazing anecdotes from members' lives which we would not otherwise hear ”



About Us

50 years and counting

Book Discussion Scheme is a non-profit and registered charitable trust serving New Zealand book clubs since 1973.

Unique in NZ

We are New Zealand's only book club specialists with over 1,300 member groups across Aotearoa.

FWEA

BDS was started by the Canterbury WEA and remains a member of the Federation of WEAs which promotes accessible learning opportunities for all people at all stages of life.

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How it Works

Rally

Form a group with people you know or join an existing group:

Go to www.bds.org.nz/join to view the nationwide map of book groups looking for members.

Register

Submit a new group registration form:
Available at www.bds.org.nz/register

Read

Once you're registered and your membership fees have been paid, the book parcels start arriving and the discussion begins!

“ We all love reading but not necessarily the same type of books, so it is good to read and enjoy a book that you wouldn't have chosen yourself ”

Your First Year with BDS

An Overview



Helpful Hints

Online resources

We recommend reading the following hints in conjunction with information online at www.bds.org.nz. Books continue to be added to our catalogue throughout the year, so we recommend using the online catalogue at www.bds.org.nz/books to manage and update your book list.

Once registered, the group convenor/co-ordinator (your group's primary contact for BDS) will also have access to a dedicated area of the website, where you can:

- manage your book list
- request changes to meeting dates
- update contact details and group information
- track courier parcels
- re-enrol easily for next year...and more.

When to start

You can start a BDS book group at any time during the year with the exception of the summer holidays during Dec/early Jan. Please allow ten working days between submitting your registration and holding your first meeting.

Holiday read

You have the option of receiving an 11th book during the summer holidays. For most Christchurch groups who pick up their books this is free. For groups in other parts of the country this is \$35 per group and includes a return courier bag. Contact bds@bds.org.nz about adding a holiday read to your membership.

Choosing books

For most groups on a full-year programme, you need to select 25 books from the BDS catalogue, of which you will receive ten throughout the year.

Spend some time creating a quality list with a balance of styles, themes and genres. If you need help, start with the 'staff pick' and 'group favourites' filters on our online catalogue, or contact the team at bds@bds.org.nz — we're happy to review your selections to ensure you've picked a diverse mix.

You can implement an individual voting system or choose your books together as a group, but always review your final list as a whole to ensure you are happy with it.

Tips for 'healthy' book list

- Try to include a mix of fiction and non-fiction.
- Avoid choosing multiple books about the same place, time period, historical event or subject matter.
- Pick at least a few lighter reads to balance the more challenging or worthy books on your list.
- Make use of the convenor section of the website where you can login and re-order, add, and remove books from your list at any time throughout the year.

Managing your book list

Prioritising your book list

You can choose to place the titles on your book list in priority order to indicate which titles your group is most keen to read. Prioritised books are dispatched in order of preference, subject to availability of sufficient copies. Alternatively, you can leave some or all of your list un-prioritised and our system will choose randomly.

Changing your book list

You have the option of changing your list at any time throughout the year via the convenor section of the website. Include a title recently added to the scheme, remove a title that is too similar to books you've recently read, or change your order of priority.

Reviewing books

Your feedback helps other book groups choose titles for their book lists and also assists BDS in maintaining a diverse and appealing range of titles in the catalogue.

You can submit your book ratings and reviews either:

- online via the convenor section of the website, or
- write on and return the bottom of the consignment note you receive with each book set.

All about discussion notes

Discussion notes (a.k.a book notes) accompany each book set you receive. These professionally prepared notes are intended to increase your understanding and appreciation of the book, and to help generate discussion. They are the copyright of BDS or the book publisher.

Booknotes provide a variety of information such as background, an analysis of aspects of the text, questions you can use for discussion, and additional resources. You can choose when to read the booknotes — before, during, or after reading the book. Some groups follow the questions religiously; others use them as a guide; some prefer to discuss the book more generally. It's up to you!

If booknotes contain spoilers, this is indicated on the booknote cover.

Opting for generic notes

If a book has been very recently added to the online catalogue, its discussion notes may not be ready by the time it hits our shelves. If your group is keen to receive the newest titles sooner, you must say 'yes' to generic notes on enrolment/re-enrolment or by updating your group's details online. If you haven't opted in to generic notes, recently added titles on your list may not be sent to you until their discussion notes are ready.

Loan period and returns

Books arrive/are available for pick up approximately seven days before the meeting at which you will distribute them. Any books from the previous month are due back within seven days following the meeting at which they were discussed.

Overdue books can hold up your next book set and prevent other groups from receiving that title; remember, sharing is caring.

Keeping track of books

We highly recommend you write members' names next to the barcode of the book they are issued at each meeting (listed on the consignment note you receive with your book parcel).

This makes each individual responsible for the proper care and return of their book.

Taking care of books

Book groups are responsible for the care and security of books and discussion notes while on loan from the BDS. To ensure longevity of our books so others can enjoy them, please keep books clean, dry and out of harm's way.

Tell us straight away if you receive a damaged book, never wrap books in newspaper to return them (it stains!) and, if returning by courier, pack firmly, spine-inward, to prevent damage to the pages.

More information about how to care for books or what happens if a book gets damaged can be found on the FAQs section of our website: bds.org.nz/faqs

Finding more members

Need more people before you can form a book group?

Go to bds.org.nz/join. The interactive map automatically registers your location and allows you to:

- contact the convenors/co-ordinators of groups looking for additional members,
- get in touch with individuals looking to form or join a group, or
- place your own message so others can contact you.

Already registered and have spaces to fill? Update your group's profile in the convenor section of the website. This adds a message to the interactive map for prospective members to contact your group.

Staying in touch with BDS

Don't miss out!

- Be the first to know when a new title hits our shelves.
- Receive offers from our literary partners around the country, including free event tickets and prizes.
- Connect with readers around Aotearoa New Zealand as we share stories of how books and book clubs are challenging perspectives, opening minds and enriching lives.



www.bds.org.nz



[@bookdiscussionscheme](https://www.facebook.com/bookdiscussionscheme)



bds.org.nz/signup (quarterly newsletter)



[bookdiscussionschemenz](https://www.instagram.com/bookdiscussionschemenz)

425 Colombo Street, Sydenham, Christchurch 8023 | 9AM-5PM Mon-Fri | 03 365 6210 | bds@bds.org.nz
Closed Christmas/New Year period and statutory holidays. After-hours return slot available.

Programme Variations & Fees

About the BDS social agenda

BDS has made a commitment to promoting social justice. We value:

- Diversity — Encouraging participation of all peoples and individuals in book groups
- Community — Encouraging people to reduce their social isolation and feel part of their community

These values have led us to develop the following variations of our programme (most of them subsidised) in order to promote literacy, social cohesion, and a love of books within particular groups.

- Prison groups
- Library groups
- School groups
- Men-only and mixed groups
- Rural groups
- Māori and other ethnic groups (ESOL)

Visit bds.org.nz/social-agenda for more information and current fees for social agenda groups.

Blind Low Vision NZ

If you have trouble with your vision, we have an arrangement with Blind Low Vision NZ (BLVNZ) that makes about 33% of our titles available as audio books through the BLVNZ library. It is free for BLVNZ members to join a BDS book group.

Book titles held in common are indicated in this catalogue by an ear symbol alongside the book title. If you are using the online version of the BDS catalogue, select the search filter 'Blind Low Vision Library'.

Contact library@blindlowvision.org.nz to find out if you meet their criteria for membership.

Fees

[Please view our current membership fees at bds.org.nz/fees](https://bds.org.nz/fees)

We are a non-profit and charitable trust funded almost exclusively from membership fees. We want all Kiwis to experience the benefits of book group so we keep our fees as low as possible and also offer:

- A generous discount for group coordinators
- Free NZ-wide delivery, including rural addresses
- Subsidised return courier bags (no weight limit)
- Subsidies for social agenda groups

Making payments

WEA Book Discussion Scheme Trust

02 0800 0726088 000

Ref: Group name* (e.g. AUCK 007)

For more information about methods of payment, return postage options, and what to expect during your membership, refer to bds.org.nz/faqs

*This will be given to you once you register your group. Prior to registration, you can use your coordinator's name

Book Catalogue & Key

Groups receive one complimentary copy of this catalogue. Extra copies are available to buy from BDS or can be viewed as a pdf file on our website. You can also search the online catalogue at www.bds.org.nz/books

If you are on a Full programme:

Select 25 titles for your booklist.

If you are on a Student or Half programme:

Select 15 titles for your booklist.

Reference key for book symbols

 = Larger Font

 = NZ Interest

 = Explicit Content

 = Blind Low Vision NZ Book

10 MINUTES, 38 SECONDS IN THIS STRANGE WORLD

Shafak, Elif 306pp 2020

10 minutes and 38 seconds, the time it takes for the brain to shut down after death, and the time now allotted to Tequila Leila to share the story of her life. From Leila's childhood in a rural Turkish town to life as a prostitute, from her cherished outcast friends to the events bringing her to her final resting place, this structurally original novel lays bare the life of a lively and complex woman. Compassionate and powerful, this is an insightful story combining lyrical prose with an unflinching portrait of modern Istanbul. [SMALL FONT]



10 PM QUESTION, THE

De Goldi, Kate 251pp 2008

Frankie Parsons is 12, going on an old man: an apparently sensible, talented Year 8 with a drumbeat of worrying questions steadily gaining volume in his head. Only Ma takes seriously his catalogue of persistent anxieties; only Ma listens patiently to his 10 pm queries. But of course it is Ma who is the cause of the most worrying question of all, the one that Frankie can never bring himself to ask. Winner Montana NZ Book Awards' Reader's Choice; NZ Post Children's and Young Adult's Book Award.



26A

Evans, Diana 230pp 2005

Georgia and Bessie Hunter are identical twins, daughters of an English father and a Nigerian mother, growing up in a London suburb punctuated by a sojourn in Nigeria for their father's work. It is there that the seeds of calamity are sown, the impact to reverberate for the rest of their lives. Replete with eloquently drawn characters, this is a warm and moving story that considers not only twinship and the twists and turns of family life, but what one must do to survive the challenges and trauma of reaching adulthood. Winner of the Orange Prize for New Writers.

419

Ferguson, Will 399pp 2012

When Henry Curtis' involvement with an Internet scam leads to his death, his daughter Laura is bent on revenge. Her journey to uncover the deception takes her from Canada to Nigeria and back again, from a world of relative privilege to poverty ... and back again. Both riveting and thought-provoking, this is a story of greed, corruption and justice, of the international oil industry, and what it takes to survive in a hostile world.

ABSOLUTION

Flanery, Patrick 385pp 2012

When Sam Leroux is commissioned to write Clare Wald's biography, Clare is placing not only her life under the microscope but that of the apartheid era in South Africa. But there is a price to be paid for confronting one's past: revealing truths. When no-one (including Sam) is who they seem, truth is an elusive prospect. Beautifully crafted, this is an intriguing and unsettling story examining the personal and societal concepts of guilt, truth and reconciliation.

ABSOLUTIST, THE

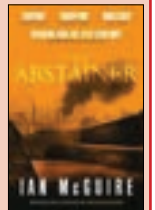
Boyne, John 309pp 2011

Subject to the horrors of the Great War, Will Bancroft declares himself an 'absolutist', a conscientious objector who will do nothing for the war effort, a declaration with an inevitable outcome. Narrated by his gay friend Tristan Sadler, this is a gruelling story of the battlefield, two young men on the cusp of adulthood and the condemnation they face in a society requiring conformity from its young soldiers. A tragic and tense story of courage, friendship and loyalty played out in the trenches of Northern France.

ABSTAINER, THE

McGuire, Ian 369pp 2021

In the underground war for Irish independence from British rule, Stephen Doyle and James O'Connor are on opposite sides of the fence. Doyle, an Irish American veteran of the Civil War has arrived in Manchester to join the Fenians, while O'Connor, a Head Constable and newly sober transfer from Dublin, is intent on curbing the Fenian uprising. With an unrelenting pace, this gritty thriller pits these two flawed and complex men against one another in an atmospheric and troubled Manchester, following the real-life 1867 hanging of three Irishmen.



"Grim, gritty and gripping read."

"Gripping yarn. It had me guessing how it would turn out."

"The characters are convincing and it is possible to sympathise with both sides of the conflict."

"The book gives an extraordinary glimpse into a dark world 150 years ago."

BDS Reviewers

ACCESS ROAD



Gee, Maurice 204pp 2009

Gee's familiar fictional West Auckland town of Loomis is the setting for this story about elderly siblings forced to confront secrets from the past. Supported by their sister Rowan and her husband Dickie Pinker, bachelor brothers Lionel and Rory Beach live in the old family home in Access Road. When a malevolent character from their childhood, Clyde Buckley, reappears, the past and the present collide moving relentlessly towards a shocking conclusion.

ACCUSATION, THE

James, Wendy 340pp 2019

Eighteen-year-old Ellie Canning's account of her abduction and escape, garners her instant attention and sympathy. She becomes a media darling, and in the furore that follows her accusing Susannah Wells, a middle-aged teacher and newcomer to the area, of her incarceration, the media can't get enough of the story. But is it possible that the truth could end up being a casualty as much as Ellie was? Loosely based on the 18th century English Canning affair, this clever Australian thriller with its convincing characters and astute depiction of small-town dynamics, calls attention to the manipulation of public opinion in the age of the social media 'influencer'.

ACTRESS, THE

Enright, Anne 263pp 2020

Who better to recall the rise and fall of Irish theatre legend Katherine O'Dell, than her daughter Norah. After all, she has been present in the wings for much of this dark and dazzling life. From Hollywood and Dublin to London's West End, Norah bears witness to many of her mother's on and off stage performances. Lyrical and emotionally insightful, this is a tender portrait of a fictional mother and daughter's intertwined lives, anchored with an enduring love and shaped by cultural expectation and exploitation.

ADVENTURES OF HUCKLEBERRY FINN, THE

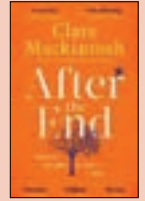
Twain, Mark 370pp 1884

One of the great American novels and more than a children's book. Huckleberry Finn was brought up by a drunkard father, but things are looking better. That is, until his ne'er-do-well father kidnaps him. Huck escapes down the Mississippi river along with a runaway slave Jim who fears being 'sold down the river'. The book covers loyalty, individuality and values.

AFTER THE END

Mackintosh, Clare 370pp 2019

A mother and father both wanting what is best for their critically ill child but coming to different conclusions about the path ahead... Max and Pip Adams love each other and their young son but when they cannot agree on the way forward, it is up to a London court to rule on Dylan's treatment. With alternating chapters presenting both possible outcomes of this decision, this is a clever and moving story with emotional heft that explores the consequences of an impossible choice.



"I have never read a book like this before. I had to take time to read it and not be overwhelmed by the content. It's a 10/10 for me."

"There is a huge amount to discuss and explore in this book and I think it would make an excellent BDS book."

"It is very well written and explores the topic well. I was not surprised to read that the author has faced this impossible decision herself."

BDS Reviewers

AFTER SUCH KINDNESS

Arnold, Gaylor 827pp 2012

The introduction to the eleven year old daughter of his friend and fellow clergyman Daniel Baxter sets John Jameson on the path to obsession. Years later Daisy ponders what transpired when she became his muse and their unusual friendship blossomed. Narrated by the different characters and with its dark undertones and carefully controlled tension, this is a psychologically fascinating and thought-provoking story. Inspired by the much vaunted relationship between Lewis Carroll and Alice Liddell, this novel will especially appeal to Alice in Wonderland fans.

AFTER THE CRASH

Bussi, Michael 347pp 2013

Is she Lyse-Rose, granddaughter of the wealthy de Carvilles or Emilie, granddaughter of the humbler Vital family? The identity of the 3 month old baby, the sole survivor of a plane crash on the Franco-Swiss border, is in dispute. Even with the courts making the call on custody, the de Carvilles are prepared to employ a private detective for as long as it takes, to irrevocably determine her parentage. Eighteen years on as Cr dence Grand-Duc is about to release his findings, murder is added to the mix. Just who is this young woman? With a full complement of deception and intrigue, this is an engrossing and unusual psychological thriller that will not let you rest easy until the mystery is solved.

AKIN

Donoghue, Emma 352pp 2019

The retired New York professor and the street wise eleven-year-old make for an odd pair. Foisted on him at the eleventh hour by an insistent social worker, Noah Salvaggio reluctantly accepts his great-nephew Michael as a travelling companion on a much-anticipated trip to Nice. For it is here on the Côte d'Azur that Noah's mother had weathered the storms of Nazi occupation, but some disconcerting photos now cast confusion on her experiences. Both a mystery and a family drama, this is an intriguing story of intergenerational reckoning and a glimpse of the French Riviera's wartime past.



"A funny and heart-warming story. Most enjoyable."

Christchurch 011

"We all loved this book. Great relationships portrayed in the story between all characters."

Oamaru 005

"We loved the plot, characters, setting and themes. It was a lovely, light story. We were able to ignore the implausibility of some of it (eg, an old man being able to take a troubled boy overseas)."

Christchurch 099

AGE OF INNOCENCE, THE

Wharton, Edith 229pp 1920

Set in New York in the 1870s in a society where the constricting social code puts individual lives under great pressure. The socially popular Newland Archer is preparing to marry a conventional young woman, but then meets an exciting and mysterious Countess who has returned to New York after an unhappy marriage. One is conventional and safe, the other dares to be different. Newland must choose where his destiny lies. Pulitzer Prize for Literature, 1921. [SMALL FONT]

ALBERT WENDT'S SHORT STORIES, THE BEST OF

Wendt, Albert 390pp 1999

"For Wendt, the past is a pulsating present" (NZ Listener, 1999). Twenty-nine selected short stories from one of the Pacific's major writers with themes of Samoan family and social histories.

ALICE'S ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND AND THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS

Carroll, Lewis 253pp 1865

The English children's classic. A fantasy tale of the child, Alice, who meets famous characters, such as the White Rabbit, the Mad Hatter, and many others. [SMALL FONT]

ALICE NETWORK, THE

Quinn, Kate 494pp 2017

Unconventional American socialite Charlie St Clair is determined to find out the fate of her cousin Rose who disappeared in Nazi-occupied France. Her only clue is a London address that offers up Eve Gardiner, an embittered WWI spy, drinking herself into an early grave, but someone prepared to help her in her search. For Eve has her own mystery to solve: what really happened to the (real-life) Alice Network, a web of female espionage agents that she had been part of. Moving between 1915 and 1947, this is an exciting, historically accurate story of nail-biting intensity and vividly drawn characters.

ALL-GIRL FILLING STATION'S LAST REUNION, THE

Flagg, Fannie 347pp 2013

With her children having left the nest, Sookie Poole is ready for some 'downtime'. However, the arrival of some unexpected personal documents turns her world upside down. Instead of relaxing with her husband Earle, Sookie has a mystery to solve. A mystery that will take her back to the 1940s, the Jurdabralinski girls, their family filling station and their involvement with the Women Airforce Service Pilots. This is a refreshing and accessible story of the rarely told exploits of the female pilots in the US homefront war effort.

ALL QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT

Remarque, Eric Maria 192pp 1919

Paul Bäumer and his friends enlist in the German army of World War I. They join with idealistic fervour, but as the war draws on they learn the agonies and futility of war. The author lost his German citizenship as a result of this work. [SMALL FONT]

ALL THAT I AM

Funder, Anna 384pp 2011

The cost for those who opposed Hitler's rise to power in Germany was high: death, imprisonment or exile. This is the story of a group of dissidents facing these possibilities but continuing to resist Nazism and attempting to tell the world what was happening. Alternating between narrators, Ruth in 21st Century Australia and Ernst from 1939 New York, this compelling fictionalised account of actual events brings to our attention the disturbing history of a country pursuing nationalism at all costs and the price individuals paid as the world looked the other way.

ALL THE BROKEN PLACES

Boyne, John 367pp 2022

Gretel Fernsby was a young girl when her brother died in WWII, but now she is 91, a lifetime has passed, although the guilt and recriminations around Bruno's death remain. When a new family move into her London apartment building and their child is at risk, Gretel is forced to confront her distressing past if she is to prevent another tragedy from occurring. Written with sensitivity and insight, this is a stand-alone adult sequel to *The Boy in Striped Pyjamas*, the complex story of Gretel's life, its terrible secrets and her last chance for atonement.



"I was captivated from the first page."

"John Boyne at his best. No fancy embellishments."

"There are some unexpected twists and turns. Clever!"

"Boyne has an incredible ability to make characters real. You can feel their pain, their confusion, the complexities of the issues."

BDS Reviewers

ALL THE UGLY AND WONDERFUL THINGS

Greenwood, Bryn 406pp 2016

All the ugly and wonderful things indeed... young Wavy and her brother Donal are at the mercy of their meth-addicted parents but for the care and support of an unlikely knight in shining armour. Kellen, one of their father's drug runners is a damaged man who does his best for the children. But the bond that develops over time between he and Wavy is complicated by their significant age difference and the boundaries they breach. This is a graphic coming-of-age story as compelling as it is disturbing in its visceral portrayal of love and resilience in the gritty reality of rural America.

ALL THE WATER IN THE WORLD

Raney, Karen 368pp 2019

Meet sixteen-year-old Maddy and her mother Eve. Life is challenging for this mother/daughter duo as Maddy suffers from leukaemia. It's all here – the highs and lows, the hope and despair as well as the usual angst and joie de vivre of a teenager's life. But Maddy is not covering in her bed – there's climate change to be sorted, a first love to be relished and the quest to find the father she has never met. Narrated by both Maddy and Eve, and moving between rural Pennsylvania, Washington D.C. and London, this is a tender and uplifting story embracing the entanglements of love, loss and parenthood, and delivering an emotionally satisfying read.

ALLEGRA IN THREE PARTS

Daniel, Suzanne 320pp 2019

Eleven-year-old Allegra has her work cut out for her keeping the adults in her life happy. There are her two grandmothers; flamboyant and free-spirited Joy and the stern and practical Matilde. And then there's Rick, her surfer dad. For as much as they all love Allegra, they can't abide each other, and she is forced to navigate the tricky dynamics stemming from a family history she is yet to discover. Set in a 1970s Australia that thoughtfully reflects the feminism of the era, this is an engaging coming-of-age story narrated by the endearing Allegra.

AMAZING ADVENTURES OF KAVALIER & CLAY, THE

Chabon, Michael 639pp 2000

Following his escape from 1939 Prague, a young Jewish artist, Joe Kavalier, joins forces with his New York cousin, Sammy Clay. They become the creative forces behind a Nazi-busting, comic book superhero who promotes good over evil. A witty look at how art can offer a gesture of defiance and hope. [BIG READ, SMALL FONT]

AMERICAN DIRT

Cummins, Jeanine 378pp 2020

One minute it is a happy family barbecue, the next, courtesy of *Los Jardineros*, the local cartel, a massacre. There are only two survivors: Lydia Pérez and her eight-year-old son Luca. To escape the same fate as the rest of the family they must leave Acapulco and flee north to the US. Thrust into a harrowing journey, they join forces with two young sisters, Soledad and Rebeca from Honduras, and together they will face all the terror and hope visited upon migrants seeking refuge from their homelands. Poignant and deeply moving, this is a momentous and never to be forgotten story.



AMERICANAH

Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi 477pp 2013

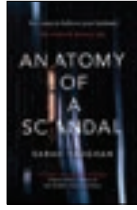
Escaping the military dictatorship of Nigeria, Ifemelu and Obinze aspire, as many of their generation did, to a life in the West. For Obinze it is an illegal existence in London while for Ifemelu, Princeton beckons. But neither place is the promised land and each must grapple with the challenges of race and status before they return home. Set in Nigeria, Britain and America, this is a thought-provoking novel boasting well-rounded characters, authentic settings, and an unashamed focus on the experience of being black. [SMALL FONT]

ANATOMY OF A SCANDAL

Vaughan, Sarah 397pp 2018



When cabinet minister James Whitehouse, with a seemingly perfect life, goes on trial for rape, there is a lot at stake: not only his marriage to Sophie and his successful career (in tandem with his old friend Tom the PM), but also his exposure to Kate Woodcroft, the experienced prosecuting barrister hell-bent on revealing the truth. Moving between the hallowed halls of contemporary Westminster and Oxford University decades earlier, this suspenseful psychological thriller and intelligent dissection of male privilege and behaviour, offers a fascinating and timely reflection on consent, intent and the misuse of power.



"One of the more gripping books we've read. A very robust discussion. Highly recommended."

Christchurch 529

"Enjoyed by everyone. Great discussion comparing the TV drama to the novel."

Whangarei 001

"The group wholeheartedly gave the book the thumbs-up. Compelling page-turner, well-written and intriguing."

Queenstown 017

AND THE MOUNTAINS ECHOED

Hosseini, Khaled 402pp 2013



A walk across the desert to Kabul will be the last steps siblings Abdullah and Pari take in their life together. Beyond Afghanistan looms France and USA but there is little choice in their fate beyond that dictated by poverty and circumstance. From the 1950s to the present day, this is a complex saga from a consummate storyteller, with Afghanistan at its centre, of bonds that stretch but do not break, and the sacrifices that we are called upon to make, with or without our consent.

ANGLE OF REPOSE

Stegner, Wallace 632pp 1971

Historian Lyman Ward finds the perfect project for his early retirement: writing the biography of his grandparents Susan and Oliver Ward, pioneers of the American West. As Lyman carefully excavates their relationship and challenges, his own life and marriage in California are also laid bare. Beautiful natural imagery, complex characters and the rich detail of American history come together in this literary treasure, a Pulitzer prize winning novel as deeply satisfying today as it was when it was first published in 1971. [BIG READ]

ANIL'S GHOST

Ondaatje, Michael 311pp 2000

Forensic anthropologist, Anil Tissera, returns to Sri Lanka as a representative of an international human rights organisation to assist in an investigation into suspected mass political murders throughout the 1980s and 1990s. With almost hallucinatory imagery and the gradual interweaving of characters' pasts, Ondaatje leads his readers into a riveting mystery.

ANIMAL FARM

Orwell, George 118pp 1945



Farmer Jones has neglected his livestock for too long. In a burst of insurgent fervour he is deposed, and the pigs take charge of Animal Farm. Everything runs smoothly, productivity soars, and all the animals are well-fed and happy. But as memory of the revolution fades, its ideals become more distant - and when Boxer the workhorse is betrayed, the horrifying extent of the pigs' corruption is revealed.

ANNA KARENINA

Tolstoy, Leo 853pp 1877



A novel offering insight into the lives of upper-class Russians before the Revolution. This is the story of the tragic fate of Anna who is locked in a dull marriage and falls in love with a young officer. [BIG READ, SMALL FONT - this book is read over two months - groups on a full programme would receive only nine books for the year.]

ANTIPODEANS, THE

McGee, Greg 448pp 2015



It all started with Kiwis Harry Spence and Joe Lamont, escaped POWs from the Italian campaign joining the partisans in 1942. Decades later it's Harry's son Bruce's turn in these northern climes, coaching and playing rugby. And finally, even later still it's Clare, Bruce's adult daughter accompanying her father back to Italy, who will come to understand the family legacy first fashioned in the cauldron of WWII. Moving between Italy and New Zealand, this is a rich and complex story of intergenerational intrigue, the risk of relationships not disclosed and the inexorable experience of war.

ART OF HEARING HEARTBEATS, THE

Sendker, Jan-Philipp 325pp 2002



In search of her father who disappeared four years earlier, American lawyer Julia Win travels to Burma. There in a remote village the mystery of her father's life is slowly unravelled. From upscale New York to rural Burma, this is a poignant tale of tender romance, personal sacrifice and the stark contrast between East and West. Poetic in style, mystical in nature. Translated from the German.



ARCTIC FURY, THE 

Macallister, Greer 393pp 2021

When expedition after expedition fails to locate explorer Sir John Franklin and his crew who are searching for a Northwest passage, Lady Jane Franklin makes a bold move: she commissions experienced wilderness guide Virginia Reeves to lead an all-women expedition to confirm the fate of her missing husband. A year later this team of diverse women has unravelled and Virginia is on trial for murder. Inspired by real events, this mesmerising 1850s story moves between the frozen north and a Boston courtroom, using multiple narrative strands to reveal the truth of their journey to the Arctic and the impossible choices faced by these intrepid women.



"It's got it all: intrigue, history, dramatic court case and strong women!"

"Captivating. Incredibly well-researched and written."

"A fascinating story, based in part on history."

"Brilliant descriptions of snowy wastes and churning seas."

"You're kept in suspense trying to understand the intrigues."

BDS Reviewers

ARTHUR & GEORGE

Barnes, Julian 505pp 2005

In 1906, Arthur Conan Doyle took on the case of George Edalji, a reserved young lawyer, half Scottish and half Indian, who was wrongly accused of mutilating animals. These two men, from very different backgrounds, are brought together by a sequence of events that made sensational headlines at the time as "The Great Wyrley Outrages". It is a novel about low crime and high spirituality, guilt and innocence, identity, nationality, and race.

AS I LAY DYING 

Faulkner, William 242pp 1930

The death and burial of Addie Bundren is told by members of her family, as they cart the coffin to Jefferson, Mississippi, to bury her among her people. And as the intense desires, fears and rivalries of the family are revealed in the vernacular of the Deep South, Faulkner presents a portrait of extraordinary power. US classic.

AS THE EARTH TURNS SILVER   

Wong, Alison 278pp 2009

From the late nineteenth century to the 1920s, from Kwantung, China to Wellington and Dunedin and the battlefields of the Western Front – a story of two families. Yung faces a new land that does not welcome the Chinese. Alone, Katherine struggles to raise her children and find her place in the world. In a climate of hostility towards the foreign newcomers, Katherine and Yung embark on a poignant and far-reaching love affair.

ASK THE POSTS OF THE HOUSE 

Ihimaera, Witi 307pp 2007

Five novella-length stories are included in this collection. The stories cover a wide range of intriguing narratives — myth, historical fiction, contemporary comedy, drama, and science fiction. Passionate, humorous and sometimes provocative writing.

ATONEMENT 

McEwan, Ian 372pp 2001

Briony Tallis, a precocious 13 year-old, witnesses a quarrel between her older sister and Robbie, the son of her family's cleaning woman. She then believes the shadowy figure who assaults her cousin Lola late that night is Robbie. Her assumption brings disaster, not simply to the two young people discovering themselves to be lovers, but to everyone else in the well-intentioned, prosperous family.

AUË    

Manawatu, Becky 323pp 2019

When Tauk drops his younger brother Ari off at Auntie Kat and Uncle Stu's in Kaikoura, he's free to head off with his surfboard and guitar to ... well, anywhere really. Ari will have the friendship of Beth and her dog Lupo from the farm next door, and Tauk will be able to get away from everything that has happened that left them orphaned. Interwoven with their diverging lives, is the story of their mother Jade and the gang world she was born into. Raw and moving, this is a story of the graphic realities of gang life, of intergenerational trauma and the unexpected glimmer of hope on Tauk and Ari's horizons.

AUSTERLITZ 

Sebald, WG 415pp 2001

Over a period of 30 years, architectural historian Jacques Austerlitz, tells the story of his life to an anonymous narrator. Transported out of Czechoslovakia via Kindertransport on the eve of World War II, he was adopted by Welsh Calvinists who destroyed all traces of his identity. Sebald combines fiction, memoir, travelogue and philosophy to create a very visual insight into the role of memory and remembering.

AVIATOR'S WIFE, THE

Benjamin, Melanie 448pp 2013

When his 1927 solo flight across the Atlantic catapults Charles Lindbergh into the public arena, his name becomes synonymous with fame and high drama. Following marriage to Anne Morrow, she too is thrust into the limelight. This is her story: from their fairytale marriage and the kidnapping and loss of their son through to the inevitable hardships of living their lives in the glare of public scrutiny. Always in the background are Anne's trailblazing achievements in the aviation world, and the truth behind their complicated marriage. Anchored in actual events and real people, this is a credibly imagined story of the celebrated American couple.

AXEMAN'S JAZZ, THE

Celestin, Ray 426pp 2014

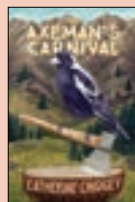
In the sultry Big Easy, with the music soaring, and the body count rising, Detective Lieutenant Michael Talbot is struggling to identify a killer, the jazz-loving 'axeman'. But he is not alone in his pursuit of the suspect - disgraced former detective Luca d'Andrea and an ambitious secretary from the Pinkerton Detective Agency, Ida Davis, are also hot on the trail. Based on true events from 1919, this is a riveting story of pre-prohibition New Orleans, complete with the Mafia, a trumpet toting Louis Armstrong and more.

AXEMAN'S CARNIVAL, THE

Chidgey, Catherine 350pp 2022



The rescue of a fledgling magpie comes just at the right time for Marnie, a perfect distraction from the struggles she and her husband Rob face on their Otago sheep farm. Tama is not just any magpie; his remarkable mimicry sets him apart and on to an inevitable path to social media fame, guided by Marnie's nurturing, and tempered by Rob's resentment. Engaging, wholly original and with its unique perspective of human behaviour, this is a gripping domestic drama with dark undertones, that cleverly merges animal and human worlds.



"I loved this book — so original and well-written."

"A wonderfully well-paced novel, accelerating to its dramatic crescendo."

"Easy to read and while it is a dark story, the use of Tama's narrative is very amusing."

"It is far 'bigger' than a story about a magpie — it's almost like a Greek tragedy."

BDS Reviewers

BACK WHEN WE WERE GROWN UPS

Tyler, Anne 274pp 2001



A disastrous family picnic is the catalyst for Rebecca Davitch, 53-year-old widow and matriarch of an extended family, to question her life and who she has become. She embarks on a quixotic interior journey with both funny and moving results.

BALLROOM, THE

Hope, Anna 345pp 2016



The Edwardian era is coming to a close, but at Sharston Asylum on the Yorkshire moors, it is business as usual. Their progressive approach to using music to help rehabilitation allows Friday night dances in the ballroom, the only time the men and women come together, and it is here that John Mulligan and Ella Fay meet. But the greatest barrier to their growing attraction is not the segregation but Dr Charles Fuller and his fascination with the practice of eugenics, misusing his authority, and with John in his sights. From its historically accurate backdrop to its beautiful descriptions of the countryside, this is a poignant and absorbing story that examines our notions of madness and sanity through its sensitively drawn characters and their compelling back stories.

BE FRANK WITH ME

Johnson, Julia C 287pp 2016

'Girl Friday' Alice Whitley's mission is to keep LA writer M.M. 'Mimi' Banning on track with her new novel. However, Alice's literary skills prove not to be in demand but her skills as a companion to Mimi's young son most certainly are. A member of an unusual household, Frank is not your average nine-year-old; he is an outright eccentric, ridiculously obsessed with Old Hollywood, far too clever for his own good and a total mystery to other children. Both entertaining and poignant, this is a thought-provoking story of irresistible characters that delightfully demonstrates that conformity is overrated.

BEARTOWN

Backman, Fredrik 489pp 2017



It looks like it could finally happen... Beartown's junior ice hockey team might just make the bigtime, and that would make all the difference to the fortunes of this isolated Scandinavian forest town. But on the cusp of this optimistic future, the celebrations get out of hand and a single act of violence and entitlement calls it all into question. Engrossing and suspenseful, this is the story of a community obsessed with sport, compassionately played out through its credible and well-drawn characters.



BEAUTY OF HUMANITY MOVEMENT, THE

Gibb, Camilla 294pp 2010

Taken to the USA as a child, Maggie Ly is returning to her Vietnamese roots, both in her capacity as a curator and as a daughter seeking to discover what happened to her father, a dissident artist who disappeared at the time of the fall of Saigon. Back in Hanoi, Maggie is aided in her quest by Old Man Hu'ng a pho (soup) maker and Tu, a young tourist guide. Gently paced and with an intriguing plot, this is a vividly exotic story that thoughtfully captures both past and contemporary Vietnam.

BEFORE I GO TO SLEEP

Watson, SJ 366pp 2011

Every morning Christine Lucas wakes without memories. Her past, her present, the people she loves – all are erased every night when she goes to sleep. Each day she must try to piece her life together. Each day the questions come. Who can she trust when she can't remember yesterday? How can she love without memory? And why is she so frightened?

BEFORE YOU KNEW MY NAME

Bublitz, Jacqueline 326pp 2021



With the Big Apple beckoning, eighteen-year-old Alice Lee sees no future in small-town Wisconsin, especially with the recent loss of her mother. With very little to her name, Alice sets forth, only to meet her demise. When Ruby Jones, recently arrived from Melbourne and ready to embrace a new start stateside, finds Alice's body by the Hudson River, she feels compelled to find out who the victim is and what happened to her. Not only does this story tick all the boxes for a gripping crime novel, but Alice's clever posthumous narration and an emphasis on the humanity of the victim offers a thoughtful feminist exploration of how the world views young women.



"All but one really enjoyed this book. Although an easy read, it had depth."

Tauranga 016

"We enjoyed the book, a very easy read. The characters were believable and beautifully written."

Christchurch 537

"Unexpectedly enjoyable, given the subject/theme. Very well written."

Auckland 353

"A thrilling whodunit but so much more. It gave women a voice when normally other people speak for the dead."

Christchurch 145

BEFORE THE FALL

Hawley, Noah 376pp 2017



It's a life-changing decision when Scott Burroughs accepts a flight home on a private jet instead of taking the ferry like everyone else. When the plane crashes into the ocean between Martha's Vineyard and New York, he and JJ, a four-year-old boy, are the only survivors of the eleven people on board. In the ensuing media maelstrom, the euphoria of their miraculous survival is eroded and the official investigation into the crash takes a backseat to increasing media misinformation. With its intriguing revelation of the passenger and crews' backstories, and its flirtation with the world of art, this is a page-turning mystery and a novel of our time, rife with 'fake news' and the high cost of 24-hour news cycles.

BEGINNER'S GOODBYE, THE

Tyler, Anne 198pp 2012



Aaron Woolcott spends his days writing 'Beginners Guides' for his family's publishing business. But when his wife Dorothy is killed in an accident, he discovers there is no such guide to handle his loss, especially when Dorothy begins to reappear. Gentle humour, beautifully drawn characters and the familiar Anne Tyler landscape of the ordinary transformed, combine to create a whimsical story that considers our capacity to weather the journey through grief.

BEHAVIOUR OF MOTHS, THE

Adams, Poppy 305pp 2008

Dorset, a sprawling Victorian folly, and a family peppered with eccentric characters; this is the story of sisters Ginny and Vivian reunited after more than 40 years. Against the backdrop of the family obsession with lepidopterology (the study of moths and butterflies), their past and present behaviour is under the microscope. Revealed in this gripping story are the tangled truths and distortions of a dysfunctional and unconventional family.

BEHOLD THE DREAMERS

Mbue, Imbolo 382pp 2016

When Jende Jonga is appointed as a chauffeur, it seems as if all his Christmases have come at once. Driving his Wall Street employer Clarke Edwards around New York, is a far cry from life in his native Cameroon and Jende and his ambitious wife Neni will do whatever it takes to be able to stay and pursue the American dream. But it is 2007 and Clarke works for Lehman Brothers... From power and privilege through to the challenges and struggles of migrants, this thoughtful story lays bare the lives of the Edwards and Jonga families, exposing the American Dream to the light of day.

BEHIND THE SCENES AT THE MUSEUM

Atkinson, Kate 382pp 1995

Ruby Lennox was conceived grudgingly by Bunty and born while her father, George, was in Doncaster, telling a woman in an emerald dress and a D-cup that he wasn't married. A witty account of Ruby's family, and the memorable events of her own life.

BEL CANTO

Patchett, Ann 318pp 2001

Built around the tension of a political hostage situation in an unnamed South American country, the story focuses on an eclectic mix of characters thrown together in unusual circumstances, and how time is suspended for them. One of the captives, an opera singer, enraptures them all with her daily singing practice. [SMALL FONT]

BELIEVE ME

Killham, Nina 291pp 2009

The world seen through the eyes of teenager Nic Delano, is full of questions, especially the biggest one of all – what is the meaning of life? Nic's search for something to believe in, brings him into conflict with his astrophysicist and atheist mother Lucy. As Nic is drawn to a group of devout Christians, tragedy strikes, causing Nic and Lucy to embark on a journey confronting and exploring faith and love. A powerful and moving read, whatever your age.

BELL IN THE LAKE, THE

Mytting, Lars 306pp 2020

Astrid Hekne is a woman ahead of her time. The twenty-year-old yearns for more than the life destined for her in the isolated Norwegian village of Butangen. Potential deliverance arrives in the form of an ambitious young pastor Kai Schweigaard as well as Gerhard Schönauer, the German architecture student Kai engages to assist with his plans for replacing the local stave church. But in 1880s Norway, superstition and old beliefs are not easily dismissed and the church's mystical Sister Bells must be given credence. Based on real people and local legends, this is a lyrical and atmospheric story pitting the old ways against the new.



"The language is lyrical and the story is a delightful blend of folklore, the mores of the time and it's a cracking good story."

"This novel is beautifully written and feels like a fable."

"Another very good read by the author of *The Sixteen Trees of the Somme*."

BDS Reviewers

BELL JAR, THE

Plath, Sylvia 250pp 1963

The Bell Jar is Plath's only novel. The world in which the events of the novel takes place, is a world bounded by the Cold War on one side and the sexual war on the other. The book is not political or historical in any narrow sense, but in looking at the madness of the world and the world of madness, it forces us to consider the great question posed by all truly realistic fiction: what is reality and how can it be confronted?

BELOVED

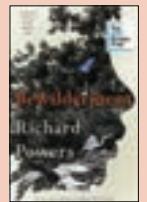
Morrison, Toni 275pp 1987

Exuberant, but painful writing of an African-American writer about ex-slaves. The effects of slavery continue even to this day.

BEWILDERMENT

Powers, Richard 278pp 2021

Astrobiologist Theo Byrne has a demanding day job simulating possible life on other planets, but the biggest challenge he faces is raising his young neurodiverse son alone, after his wife dies. Robin, aged nine, is a troubled youngster intensely focused on the state of the environment and is unable to understand why no one is doing anything about it. From the joy and wonder of the natural world and society's failure to protect it, to the experimental neurological therapy Robin undergoes, this is a wholly original and thought-provoking story distinguished by its beautiful relationship between a father and his son, and the more urgent question of the future of the planet.



"This book is gripping. Robbie especially is a very compelling character."

"This is a heartfelt and heart-breaking story. A 10 out of 10."

"I thought it was a very original vehicle for discussing many themes, especially climate change, the consequences of human intervention and violation of the natural environment."

BDS Reviewers

BIG BROTHER

Shriver, Lionel 373pp 2013



Somewhere along the way Pandora has lost sight of her brother Edison. And now here he is – very much her bigger brother weighing in at over 180kgs. At that weight it's not only the seams of his clothing that are stretched to the limit. However, the pressing question is, can Pandora save Edison before it's too late? The combination of intelligent and thoughtful characters with an exploration of the West's complex relationship with food produces both challenging and satisfying fare.

BILLY BIRD

Neale, Emma 326pp 2016



Billy and his parents Liam and Iris are living through trying times. Everyone copes differently: Iris becomes an anxious micromanager, Liam focuses on everything but the family, and Billy, well Billy becomes a bird. But it is avian overload that is the catalyst that forces the issue and heads the family down the path to a better place. Poignant yet playful, tragic and insightful, this is a New Zealand story characterised by lyrical language, its realistic portrayal of contemporary parenthood and its sensitive exploration of the complexities of grief.

BIRNAM WOOD

Catton, Eleanor 423pp 2023



When Mina Bunting, leader of Birnam Wood, a guerrilla gardening cooperative, is caught red-handed by American billionaire Robert Lemoine, reconnoitering a property he is about to purchase, it is a collision of ideologies. But grand ideals don't necessarily pay the bills and with an offer of funding, an unlikely alliance comes into being with Birnam Wood doing what they always do (albeit now with cash in their pockets) and Lemoine doing what he always does – obscuring his real intentions, in this case with the nearby Korowai National Park. With its complex plot and its superbly-drawn characters let loose in the South Island high country, this is a rollicking thriller, gripping to its very last page and successful in its ambitious examination of the challenges facing 21st century society.



"What a page-turner. The plot is satisfyingly complex, full of turns, and very cleverly woven together."

"This book has it all. I cannot fault it."

"The author handles all characters with consummate ease."

"Mixed feelings. It really was very slow to get going, but once it did, it was really good."

BDS Reviewers

BIRTH HOUSE, THE

McKay, Ami 368pp 2006

For the women of Scots Bay, Nova Scotia, the village midwife was a fellow traveller and companion in their unrelentingly hard lives. Apprenticed to the midwife, Dora Rare enters her vocation in the tumultuous World War 1 era as the medical profession turns its sights on revolutionising childbirth. Caught between traditional practices and medical science, Dora champions the rights of the women in her care. A fascinating and passionate portrayal of the lives of women struggling for control of their circumstances.

BLACK RAIN

Ibuse, Masui 300pp 1969

It's just after the Hiroshima bombing. Yusuko isn't married yet and her chances of finding a suitable husband are dealt a blow when people begin to believe that she is suffering from radiation sickness after being struck by the poisonous black rain of the bombing. Her uncle decides to make his diary public so people know what the family went through. Black Rain alternates between diary excerpts and the novel. [SMALL FONT]

BLACK GIRL WHITE GIRL

Oates, Joyce Carol 272pp 2006



Narrator, Genna Meade, meditates on the long-ago, terrible death of nineteen-year-old Minette Swift. On entering college in the mid-1970s, liberal and well-meaning Genna looks forward to rooming with devoutly religious African-American scholarship student, Minette. But the girls have little in common. As Genna reconstructs the months, weeks, and hours leading up to Minette's tragic death, she is also forced to confront her own identity within the social framework of that time. [SMALL FONT]

BLACK RIVER

Hulse, S.M. 232pp 2015

No longer able to find solace in his beloved music, Wes Carver is a man who silently endures. He's returning home to Black River, Montana, angry and resentful with plenty to wrestle with: the loss of his wife Claire, his difficult relationship with his stepson Dennis, and the long-standing trauma he suffered as a corrections officer caught up in a prison riot. Mired in his past, Wes must decide if redemption is possible through forgiveness or through punishment. A haunting, powerful story laced with hope and the possibility of grace.

BLACK SWAN GREEN

Mitchell, David 371pp 2006

A series of stories provides a monthly snapshot of Jason Taylor's life in small-town England. The parallel universe inhabited by a 13 year-old English boy in 1982 is a world of superstition, misinformation, obsession with social status, the mystery of girls, popular songs, school, his family's increasing dysfunction, and dimly understood political upheaval. Mostly though, Jason struggles with his stammer and school bullies.

BLACKWATER LIGHTSHIP, THE

Tóibín, Colm 273pp 1999

Ireland in the early 1990s. Helen's adored, younger brother is dying and the family find themselves gathered in the grandmother's house, together with two of Declan's friends. A story of an estranged family, painfully starting to communicate again. Told in a quiet and non-judgemental way.

BLACK WATER

Doughty, Louise 344pp 2016

Risk analyst John Harper is twiddling his thumbs in some compulsory 'time-out' in the hills of Bali; his Amsterdam-based intelligence organisation is not happy with his recent 'errors of judgement' around the current unrest. It's 1998 and as he reflects on his past, especially his earlier role in Indonesia's coup and counter coup of 1965, he glimpses the tantalising possibility of a different future with the arrival of Rita, a teacher with her own troubled past. Moving between time periods, this is a story of personal and national turmoil, steeped in bribery and corruption and the legacies of colonialism and the Cold War, but compassionate in its portrayal of a man wrestling with the moral anguish of personal responsibility.

BLIND ASSASSIN, THE

Atwood, Margaret 637pp 2001

"Ten days after the war," says Iris Chase, "my sister, Laura, drove a car off a bridge." Iris pens a letter of the Chase family saga, but Laura's posthumously published novel, *The Blind Assassin*, interrupts as a parable on reality. Atwood deftly moves the reader through several narratives. [BIG READ]

BLINDSIGHT

Gee, Maurice 192pp 2005

Narrated by Alice as an old woman looking back over the mistakes and tragedy of her family history. At the heart of the story, lies the relationship between Alice and her brother, Gordon, and the mystery behind their estrangement. For more than thirty years, they do not meet. Then, a young man appears at Alice's door, claiming a relationship she never knew she had.

BLOOD OF FLOWERS, THE

Amirrezvani, Anita 457pp 2007

A young teenage girl narrates this story of life in 17th-century Iran and the difficulties she faces after her father's death. With no means of support, she and her mother become servants in their relatives' home. There, despite her gender, the young woman learns the art of carpet design but dowryless, she is pressured into a *sigheh*, or temporary marriage, in which a woman offers sexual favours in return for money. A haunting story of a young woman making a place for herself in a society indifferent to her plight.

BLUE ASYLUM

Hepinstall, Kathy 271pp 2012

Taking exception to her husband's cruel and inhumane treatment of his slaves results in Iris Dunleavy's banishment to a Florida island following a judge's verdict that she is insane. For all of the lush beauty that surrounds Sanibel Asylum it is most definitely not paradise and Iris intends to escape, taking with her Ambrose Weller, a confederate soldier haunted by his experience of the American Civil War. From its sublime setting to its beguiling characters, this is a fascinating story encompassing a wide breadth of human experience.

BLUE BETWEEN SKY AND WATER, THE

Abulhawa, Susan 292pp 2015

In 1947, life for the Palestinian Baraka family is irrevocably changed when they are forcibly removed from their village by a fledgling Israel, destined for life in a refugee camp. Centred around a cast of strong women - from Nazmiyeh the matriarch through to Nur her American granddaughter - this story of dispossession is leavened with mysticism and anchored in the strength of family. Bringing into vivid relief the hardship and suffering of Gaza, this is a lyrical and haunting novel of Palestinian/Israeli conflict.

BONE PEOPLE, THE

Hulme, Keri 445pp 1984

A provocative and poetic novel set in a remote South Island beach community. Hulme casts her magic on three fiercely unique characters who remind us that we, like them, are "nothing more than people". Bound in Maori mythology and Christian symbolism. Booker Prize Winner, 1985. [SMALL FONT]



BONESETTER'S DAUGHTER, THE 

Tan, Amy 339pp 2001

Ruth Young knows very little of her mother's past, until some papers written in Chinese calligraphy, fall into her hands. We are taken back to LuLing's birthplace: the remote, mountainous region in China where Peking Man was discovered in the 1920s. Tan uses the conflicts of mothers, daughters and sisters to explore the dynamic that exists between first-generation Americans and their immigrant elders.

BOOK BOOK 

Farrell, Fiona 367pp 2004

Kate filters the world through her reading and sets off from her Otago home on a challenging OE. Books have always shaped her life and made sense of her world. Through a mix of memoir and fiction, Farrell writes of life from *The Little Red Hen* to *Owls Do Cry*, from TS Eliot to Aphra Behn.

BOOK OF POLLY, THE

Hepinstall, Kathy 322pp 2015

The embarrassment that children suffer at the hands of their parents is exemplified by Willow Havens who unexpectedly 'arrives' when her mother Polly is in her late 50s. But it's not all downhill from there; more a case of growing up and growing old together, unconventionally in their conventional Texan town. That is until Polly's health challenges and Willow's fierce determination to uncover the mystery of her mother's early life are set on a collision course. Narrated by Willow, this is a delightfully entertaining Southern comedy of witty dialogue and quirky characters wrestling with the vagaries of life and testimony to the power of love and family, whatever form it takes.

BOOK THIEF, THE

Zusak, Markus 584pp 2005

Death serves as the narrator for this unusual novel about the power of words to both destroy and comfort. Set in Munich during World War II, ten-year-old Liesel Meminger learns to read and is transformed into the "book thief". While people in her neighbourhood starve, Liesel hungers after books. When her family decides to hide a Jewish man, she shares her stolen books with her neighbours during bombing raids, as well as with the man hidden in her basement. [BIG READ]

BORDER CROSSING 

Barker, Pat 281pp 2001

While trying to cope with marital difficulties, child psychologist, Tom Seymour, is dramatically confronted with a patient from the past: Danny Miller, convicted of murder at age ten. Barker sets up a tantalising series of questions, as personal and professional boundaries become blurred. Atmospheric thriller set in Newcastle.

BOOKWOMAN OF TROUBLESOME CREEK, THE 

Richardson, Kim Michele 286pp 2019

Cussy Mary Carter considers herself lucky to be one of the 'book women' dispensing books and hope to her poverty-stricken corner of 1930s Appalachia, even with the challenges she faces herself. Unfortunately a rare genetic condition that results in blue skin, gives people licence to treat her as badly as they do dark-skinned people. Rich with intriguing detail, and enhanced by photographs of the real-life pack horse librarians, this fascinating story with its delightful heroine is testimony to the power of books and the courage and commitment of those who go beyond the call of duty to place them in the hands of readers.

BORDER STREET

Leal, Suzanne 314pp 2006

When Kate and Cameron rent a house on Border Street, Kate forges a bond with Frank, their elderly Czech-Australian landlord who lives with his wife, Vera, next door. The more time Kate spends with Frank, the more she wants to find out about his earlier life. As Frank gradually opens up to Kate, she is compelled to understand a dark European history that she'd never known or cared about — and is forever changed by the encounter.

BREAKFAST AT TIFFANY'S 

Capote, Truman 157pp 1958

In this collection of four short stories, Capote explores the themes of loneliness, social alienation and friendship through the marriage of a prostitute, the incarceration of a long serving prisoner and an innocent friendship that is diminished by time. In *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, the longest of the stories, a writer reminisces about the life and times of the dazzling Holly Golightly, a liberal playgirl in 1940s New York.

BREAKING CONNECTIONS 

Wendt, Albert 337pp 2015

They come together as five-year-olds at Freeman's Bay School in Auckland: Mere and Laura, Keith and Paul, Aaron and Daniel. They are the 'tribe', Maori, Samoan and Palagi, and through thick and thin, fortune and misfortune, they will remain connected by fierce loyalty and friendship. Down the track when Aaron is killed and Daniel called to execute his will, the tribe come together again, forced to face up to and examine the course of their lives and the choices they have and haven't made. With its familiar multicultural setting and cogent characters, this is a complex story distinguished by its skilful dissection of the waft and weft of connections.

BREAKING OF EGGS, THE

Powell, Jim 342pp 2010

Feliks Zhukovski, born in Poland, resident of Paris, is a man of order and routine and leftist sympathies. His life has centred around publishing a travel guide to the eastern bloc. When the Iron Curtain is swept aside, so too are the assumptions and convictions underpinning his life. This is a story of Europe, wartime and aftermath, and what happens when you are forced to question what you have always believed. Thoughtful in content, light-hearted in style.

BRIDGE OF CLAY

Zusak, Markus 579pp 2018

At first glance you could be forgiven for thinking the five Dunbar brothers of Archer Street, Sydney, were merely larrikins. Abandoned by their father Michael after the death of their mother Penny, they are surviving in feral but loving chaos. But when their father reappears, wanting their help to build a bridge, it is Clay, brother number four, who rises to the challenge of reconnecting the struggling family. Rich with its allusions to Homer's epics, and strengthened by Michael and Penny's backstories, this is an absorbing and complex family saga layered with love, loss and atonement. And, as with the construction of any successful bridge, persistence is rewarded while the foundations of the story are laid.

BRIGHT SIDE OF MY CONDITION, THE

Randall, Charlotte 244pp 2014

Given a choice of joining the crew of the ship they have stowed away on, or being left on an island with meagre supplies, convicts Bloodsworth, Slangam, Tooper and Gargantua opt for the latter. But this is not just any island, it is one of the Snares Islands and a more inhospitable spot hard to find. Swapping one prison (Norfolk Island penal colony) for another, they are to spend almost a decade in their struggle to survive on this sub Antarctic outpost. Time enough for relationships to be developed ... and destroyed, and for sense to be made of their lives and their place in the world. Based on a true story, this is compelling reading with vividly portrayed 19th Century characters pondering the human condition in adversity.

BULIBASHA

Ihimaera, Witi 291pp 1994

The story of two Maori families who clash constantly — in sport, in cultural contests, and finally in the Golden Fleece Shearing Contest. A comedy of family dislocation and cultural adaptation.

BURIAL RITES

Kent, Hannah 335pp 2013

In the harsh and unforgiving landscape of Iceland, Agnes Magnúsdóttir faces a harsh and unforgiving future: In 1829 she is condemned to death for murder. Awaiting her execution day in the care of the District Officer and his family and with the spiritual counsel of a young assistant priest, Agnes' story of love and betrayal is revealed. Based on actual events, this is a gripping suspenseful novel capturing the way of life in an unfamiliar society, well supported by material from the trial itself and delivered in a beautifully crafted story.

CAGE, THE

Jones, Lloyd 262pp 2018

Once upon a time two strangers seeking refuge arrive in a small town where they are made welcome and are cared for by the townsfolk... or so you would hope. Displaced by circumstances that they cannot describe to the satisfaction of their hosts, 'Doc' and 'Mole' find themselves, after an initial flurry of compassion, at the mercy of a committee established to find answers. A fable for our time, this is a thought-provoking and disquieting story that cleverly confronts us with our treatment of others when we have the upper hand.

CAL

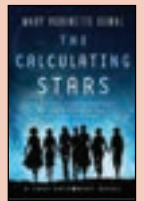
MacLaverty, Bernard 153pp 1983

A tender and realistic novel about a young man from a Catholic family in a Protestant area in Northern Ireland. [SMALL FONT]

CALCULATING STARS, THE

Kowal, Mary Robinette 421pp 2018

In 1952, a meteorite destroys the East Coast of USA. With the likelihood that earth will become uninhabitable, drastic action on a global scale is called for. The plan – colonise the moon and then Mars. When the International Aerospace Coalition is formed, WWII pilot and mathematician Elma York is determined that nothing and no one will stop her from being an astronaut. Engaging characters, credible science and a gentle exploration of contemporary issues within its historical setting ensure this alternate history of the space race is as exciting as it is thought-provoking.



"A most enjoyable read and not one I would normally read."

"My daughter also loved this book and was so impressed she has reserved the second in the series."

"Excellent vehicle for considering the various themes in a different light."

BDS Reviewers

CALL YOUR DAUGHTER HOME 

Spera, Deb 366pp 2019

Branchville, South Carolina is still reeling from the ravages of the boll weevil and with the glimmer of the Great Depression on the horizon, more hard times are to come. But for three of the town's citizens, the challenges they face are far more personal. From different walks of life but connected through their individual circumstances, Retta Bootles, a first-generation freed slave, Annie Cole, her employer and matriarch of an influential family, and Gertrude Pardee, a mother of four daughters, each experience the prejudices of class and race that are a harsh reality of the era. With its alternating narration, the distinctive voices of its strong characters, and its passionate depiction of motherhood, this is a gritty and unforgettable story of the Deep South.



"Really good read. A page turner. Highly recommended."

New Plymouth 018

"Pacy novel with great characters. Very much enjoyed by all. Highly recommended."

Wellington 153

"We loved this book. It was well-written and we couldn't put it down. A brilliant first novel."

Palmerston North 010

CALEB'S CROSSING  

Brooks, Geraldine 318pp 2011

Bethia and Caleb's friendship bridges a cultural divide: Bethia is the daughter of a Puritan minister and Caleb is the son of a Wampanoag chieftain. Set in the 1660s in Martha's Vineyard, this is the story of their friendship that pushes the boundaries and expectations of their respective cultures resulting in Caleb becoming the first native American to graduate from Harvard College. Inspired by real events, this remarkable story of Caleb's achievement casts light on the beliefs, aspirations and prejudices of an evolving society.

CANNERY ROW

Steinbeck, John 148pp 1945

Cannery Row is in many senses a forgotten Steinbeck novel due to its less than ambitious credentials; it is, however, one of his finest. The novel is based in the eponymous Cannery Row, and the story is essentially a light-hearted comedy about a community of social drop-outs who, through their cunning and scant regard for the law, live a simple and contented life. [SMALL FONT]

CAPTAIN CORELLI'S MANDOLIN 

De Bernières, Louis 436pp 1994

Humorous novel about a young officer in command of the Italian garrison who is posted to a Greek island during World War II. Winner of the 1995 Commonwealth Writers' Prize. [SMALL FONT]

CAPTIVE WIFE, THE  

Kidman, Fiona 367pp 2005

This fictionalised account is based on the true story of Betty Guard and her two children who, returning from Sydney to the whaling station on Arapawa Island in the early 1830s, were captured by Ngati Ruanui and held for ransom. After her violent rescue, and reunification with her husband, Betty's life among the tribe is held under scrutiny. Reflects the social and sexual politics of early New Zealand.

CARE AND HANDLING OF ROSES WITH THORNS, THE

Dilloway, Margaret 404pp 2012

As prickly as the roses she breeds, Galilee 'Gal' Garner lives a very disciplined existence. When she is not teaching high school biology, she is with her beloved roses, attempting to bring a new breed to commercial success, or at hospital undergoing dialysis. School, roses, hospital, ad infinitum, that is until her teenage niece Riley turns up on her doorstep, promising upheaval. This uplifting story navigates the thorny challenge of chronic disease and family dynamics, beautifully balanced with the intricacies of rose gardening.

CARELESS 

Robertson, Deborah 293pp 2006

A story of grief and the slow healing of four people whose lives become interwoven. Eight year old Pearl is the only survivor of a playground shooting where one of the seven victims is her young brother. Lily is Pearl's mother and they both struggle to come to terms with the tragedy. Sonia is a grieving widow of a furniture designer; she wants to assemble a retrospective collection of her husband's work. Adam is an avant-garde sculptor who rents out Sonia's now vacant studio — he experiences some notoriety when he displays a cast of a young girl who died of a heroin overdose. All their lives become entangled in ways that could not have been foreseen.

CARNIVAL SKY 

Marshall, Owen 292pp 2014

It's time for old school journalist Sheff Davies to stop harping on about giving readers hard news instead of tabloid titillation, and move on. Alexandra beckons and it's in Central, a long way from the hustle of the big smoke that he must face up to the irrevocable changes that life has, and is, foisting on him. His father is dying

and in the rallying of family, Sheff contemplates his place in the world. A satisfying and sensitive meditation on the experience of middle-age, presented in evocative Central Otago landscapes and revealed through well-realised characters.

CARRYING ALBERT HOME

Hickam, Homer 398pp 2015

Albert is an alligator and the improbable wedding present to Elsie and Homer Hickam, residents of the West Virginian coalfields. With Homer's ultimatum of 'him or me' becoming the catalyst to return Albert home, time is up on his occupation of their only bathroom. Their 1000-mile road trip to Florida will garner them more than enough adventures to last a lifetime: from bootleggers and bank robbers to meeting Ernest Hemingway and John Steinbeck. Quirky and endearing, this is the legendary tale of the author's parents rendered in a delightful blend of fact and fiction.

CASE HISTORIES

Atkinson, Kate 410pp 2004

Private detective Jackson Brodie, ex-cop, ex-husband and weekend dad, takes on three seemingly unrelated cases: a toddler missing for 34 years; a young woman brutally killed while temping at her father's law firm, and an over-wrought mother driven to commit murder. Jackson's reluctant persistence heats up these cold cases, leading him to reassess his own painful history, and offer him a chance at happiness and some measure of reconciliation with the past.

CASE OF THE DEADLY BUTTER CHICKEN, THE

Hall, Tarquin 360pp 2012

Meet Vish Puri, the generously proportioned Indian private detective who is on the case again, locating a moustache thief, investigating cricket match fixing with its deadly butter chicken connection, and more somberly, shedding light on the tense events that occurred at the time of Partition. Involving a cheerful cast of characters, this light-hearted whodunnit is perfectly balanced by its exploration of historical and contemporary issues faced by the Indian sub-continent. Good food and high jinks abound.

CATCHER IN THE RYE, THE

Salinger, JD 220pp 1951

This is the story of Holden Caulfield, a 16 year old dropout who has been expelled from his fourth school. The book is synonymous with rebellion, teenage confusion, sexuality and feelings of alienation. In 1961-1982 this book was the most censored book in USA schools.

[SMALL FONT]

CELLIST OF SARAJEVO, THE

Galloway, Steven 227pp 2009

Sarajevo 1992 - a bomb goes off in the street, interrupting a cellist who is practising Albinoni's Adagio. To honour the 22 people who die, he returns to the street each day for the next 22 days to play the Adagio. This event is the backdrop to the experience of the three narrators struggling to survive daily life in the besieged city. A sombre and powerful novel depicting the horror and futility of war tempered by the unquenchable human spirit.

CHAPPY

Grace, Patricia 352pp 2015

Daniel, a young man needing to find his place in the world, travels to New Zealand to reconnect with his whanau. He becomes immersed in the story of his Maori grandmother Oriwia and his Japanese grandfather Chappy. Played out against the changing backdrop of the 20th century, theirs is a love story fraught with cross-cultural misunderstandings and peppered with the challenges of racial discrimination. Set in Japan, rural New Zealand and Hawaii, this is an absorbing novel of the Pacific steeped in the mystery and nature of family.

CHINA ROOM

Sahota, Sunjeev 243pp 2021

In 1929 when Mehar Kaur and two other young women marry three Sikh brothers in rural Punjab, their mother-in-law ensures that their sequestration is such that they do not know whose husband is whose, as they only meet alone at night. When the inevitable confusion comes to pass, the consequences will be heart-breaking. Mehar's fate is revealed by her great-grandson decades later, visiting from England, fighting his own demons and contemplating his family's circumstances. Inspired by the author's family history, this is an emotionally powerful story of connection and estrangement and of characters at the mercy of cultural expectations.



"This was a one-sit read for me. Immensely moving story."

"A very clever storyline with many twists and turns."

"Great characters and descriptions, it can be sad at times."

"Different time frames work very well. You learn of Mehar's fate through her grandson's discovery 70 years later."

BDS Reviewers

CHILDREN'S POND, THE

Shaw, Tina 275pp 2014



Jessica Pollard is used to starting over. This time round it's Turangi so she can be close to her son who is at Rangipo Prison. A new job, new relationships and a new community to get to grips with, and no better place for it. But amidst the beauty and splendour of the river and its associated trout fishing is a face from the past ... Jessica's troubled past ... and it's time to lay those demons to rest. A gritty and atmospheric mystery, in an iconic New Zealand setting.

CHOSEN, THE

Potok, Chaim 280pp 1967

An insight into a Jewish world. This novel focuses on the friendship between two 15 year-old boys in America between 1944-1950. It is set against the backdrop of World War II, the death of President Roosevelt and the creation of the state of Israel. [SMALL FONT]

CITY OF THE MIND

Lively, Penelope 220pp 1991



Matthew Holland shares in the upbringing of his eight-year-old daughter. As an architect, his work takes him over the ever-changing cityscape of London with all the diversity and evidence of past history — the city's and his own. But Matthew is also busy forging new beginnings: for London's Docklands, and for himself.

CITY OF TRANQUIL LIGHT, THE

Caldwell, Bo 287pp 2010

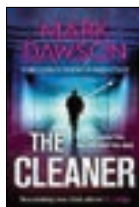
Kuang P'ing Ch'ing, City of Tranquil Light, becomes the adopted home of Mennonite missionaries Will and Katherine Kieh. Set in the early 20th Century, this is the story of their mission to Northern China; their love and commitment to one another and the people they serve, and the faith that sustains them. Told in alternating voices, this is a captivating read where hardships and challenges abound, played out against the backdrop of a country at war with itself. Based on the lives of the author's grandparents.

CLEANER, THE

Cleave, Paul 427pp 2006



Joe is in control of everything in his simple life, including both his day job at the police department and his "night work". He is not bothered by news reports of the Christchurch Carver, who, they say, has murdered seven women; for Joe knows the Carver only killed six. Joe knows that for a fact, and he is going to find the copy-cat killer. He is going to punish him for the one murder, then frame him for the other six.



CLOCKWORK ORANGE, A

Burgess, Anthony 144pp 1962



Fifteen-year-old Alex doesn't just like ultra-violence - he also enjoys rape, drugs and Beethoven's Ninth. He and his gang rampage through a dystopian future, hunting for terrible thrills. But when Alex finds himself at the mercy of the state and subject to the ministrations of Dr Brodsky, the government psychologist, he discovers that fun is no longer the order of the day ... [SMALL FONT]

CLOUDSTREET

Winton, Tim 559pp 2002



The Pickle and Lamb families are like chalk and cheese but for the separate tragedies that bring them together in an old house on the outskirts of Perth. But just as chalk and cheese, disparate as they are, share some elements, over time so too do these dysfunctional families. Set in post-World War II, this Australian classic examines, through its delightfully eccentric and likeable characters, tough times in the 'Lucky Country'.

COLOR OF LIGHTNING

Jiles, Paulette 349pp 2009

Britt Johnson, a freed negro slave, and his family, travel west to settle in the plains of post-Civil War Northern Texas. It is Indian territory: a place of violent confrontation between settlers and Indians. Based on oral histories, this extensively researched story offers compelling insights into the Native American culture and the experiences of the settlers, illuminating a tragic episode in American history.

COLOR PURPLE, THE

Walker, Alice 294pp 1982



Set in the deep American South between the wars, it is the tale of Celie, a young black girl born into poverty and segregation. Raped repeatedly by the man she calls 'father', she has two children taken away from her, is separated from her beloved sister Nettie and is trapped into an ugly marriage. But then she meets the glamorous Shug Avery, singer and magic-maker - a woman who has taken charge of her own destiny. Gradually, Celie discovers the power and joy of her own spirit, freeing her from her past and reuniting her with those she loves. [Taken from book cover - Orion Books]

COLOUR, THE

Tremain, Rose 366pp 2003



Set against the background of the mid-19th century gold rush, English immigrants and newlyweds, Joseph and Harriet Blackstone, seek a more prosperous life in New Zealand. Together with Joseph's widowed mother, they attempt to build a farm. When Joseph discovers gold in the local creek, he heads to the gold fields, escaping his failing farm and eroding marriage.

COAST, THE

Limprecht, Eleanor 311pp 2022

With its picturesque beaches and cliffs, Little Bay in Sydney should have been idyllic, but not so for the patients admitted to its Coast Hospital who do not have the option to leave. When Alice is nine she arrives at the enclave to be reunited with her mother and to begin her life in perpetual quarantine, courtesy of the Leprosy Act of 1890. This is the story of the leper colony, focusing on Alice and her mother Clea, Guy, a returned WWI soldier, one of the stolen generation, and Will, a doctor assigned to the lazaret. Comprehensively researched and told with compassion, this is a compelling story of love and endurance amidst the stigma and discrimination of early 20th century Australia.



"Great storytelling. I enjoyed it very much."

"It's part of Australian history I knew nothing about, so I found it extremely interesting."

"Well-written and very well researched. It was interesting to learn how leprosy arrived in Australia."

BDS Reviewers

COMING RAIN

Daisley, Stephen 404pp 2012



On the lookout for work, shearers Lewis McCleod and Painter Hayes arrive at Drysdale Downs, the West Australian station belonging to John Drysdale. Lewis has been under Painter's wing since he was just a lad, but when he meets John's daughter Clara, everything is going to change. Unflinching in its examination of the 1950s repressive male culture of rural Australia, this simple story with its strong and convincing characters, is enhanced by its reverent observation of the outback.

CONDITION, THE

Haigh, Jennifer 382pp 2008

When Gwen McKotch is 13 she is identified as having Turner's Syndrome, a condition that will prevent her from maturing normally. Her diagnosis is a catalyst for the unravelling of her family; parents Frank and Paulette, and brothers Billy and Scott. Set in contemporary America and told over a 20 year period, this is an exploration of the human condition: the story of a family tested but ultimately finding peace.

CONDITIONS OF FAITH

Miller, Alex 406pp 2001

Inspired by his mother's journal writings, this prize-winning author created the story of Emily Stanton, a young Australian woman who leaves academic life in 1920s Melbourne to become the wife of a Scottish Paris-based engineer. But conventional marriage awakens her desire to look beyond the roles seen as appropriate for women of her time. [SMALL FONT]

CONDUCTOR, THE

Quigley, Sarah 300pp 2011



Featuring Shostakovich's Seventh Symphony at its heart, this story sets the reader firmly in the World War Two siege of Leningrad. Battling against the severe conditions, the newly composed symphony is performed by an ailing and desperate orchestra. Bringing to life composer Dimitri Shostakovich and conductor Karl Eliasberg, this fictional version of historical events is a triumphant testimony to the power and importance of creativity when all else is lost. [One CD of Shostakovich's Leningrad Symphony will accompany each book-set.]

CONFESSION WITH BLUE HORSES

Hardach, Sophie 339pp 2019



If the Valentin family had known the Berlin Wall would eventually fall, they may have been able to endure the communist yoke for a little bit longer. Instead, with their attempted escape, tragedy ensues. It is not until years later that remaining siblings Ella and Tobi agree that Ella will return to Germany and the Stasi archives for answers, especially as to the fate of their younger brother Heiko, and above all else, the truth of what really happened. Moving between their East Berlin childhood and the present-day quest, this is an engrossing and atmospheric story of a family suffering the cost of political dissent, even as the demise of East Germany is nigh.

CONRAD AND ELEANOR

Rogers, Jane 314pp 2016

On the surface, it appears that Conrad and Eleanor Evanson's long marriage has been a most successful juggling act. Together they have raised four children while pursuing their respective careers - Con's in transplant research and El's in gene manipulation. However, when Con doesn't return home from a conference, then the jury is out as to the enduring nature of their marriage. Spanning from the 1970s to the present day, this perceptive story cleverly combines the dissection of a marriage with a backdrop of medical research complete with its own compromises and ethical challenges.



CONSTANT GARDENER, THE 

Le Carré, John 570pp 2001

Justin Quayle is a British diplomat and amateur gardener, based in Nairobi, who undertakes a personal odyssey in pursuit of his wife's murderers. The investigation leads him into a murky web of exploitation involving Kenyan greed, and a major international pharmaceutical company eager to promote a 'wonder cure'.

CONSTELLATION OF VITAL PHENOMENA, A

Marra, Anthony 403pp 2013

When Havaa's father is arrested by Russian soldiers, Akhmed, a neighbour and friend, unexpectedly determines that the little girl will be safest in the care of a locally based Russian doctor. In return, he will assist Sonja Rabina in her attempts to keep an abandoned Chechen hospital functioning. Set over a five day period in 2004 and with flashbacks to preceding events, this complex story is a microcosm of the recent history of Chechnya in all its tragedy and violence. For all that it graphically explores the themes of trust and betrayal and the fine line between victim and perpetrator, it is surprisingly a novel of hope.

COUSINS  

Grace, Patricia 256pp 1992

The story of three girls once thrown together, and as women grown apart. Moving from the country to the protests of the cities. A novel of tradition and change.

COVE, THE

Rash, Ron 255pp 2012

Eking out a living on their patch of land, siblings Laurel and Hank Skelton keep to themselves until the arrival of an injured man breaches their physical and emotional isolation. Initially a source of happiness, his presence ultimately leads the trio into tragic conflict with their local community. Set in North Carolina towards the end of World War One, this is a powerful story with hidden depths, perfectly matched to its setting and incorporating surprising true events that occurred in the area.

CRIME IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD, A

Berne, Suzanne 248pp 1998

Ten-year-old Marsha narrates this story set in 1970s suburban Washington. The horrifying murder of a young boy is the most visible crime in Marsha's neighbourhood, but it is by no means the only one.

CORONER'S LUNCH, THE 

Cotterill, Colin 287pp 2004

Confronted by the poisoning of an important official's wife and the sudden appearance of three bodies that may create an international incident between Laos and Vietnam, the crafty and charming 72-year-old state coroner, Dr Siri Paiboun, stays dead calm. Set in Laos a year after the 1975 Communist takeover, Dr Paiboun gleans clues from minute examinations of the bodies, while circumnavigating bureaucratic red tape. At his age, he reasons, what can they do to him? He unravels three complicated murder plots his superiors want to sweep under the carpet..



"Enjoyable. It was funny and interesting to learn more about Laotian culture."

Auckland 353

"A delightful yet whimsical book which produced a lot of twists and turns as Dr Siri went about his work. Historically very interesting too."

Waikanae 013

"Great read. We all enjoyed it. Loved the characters of Siri and his assistants. Good insight into Laos when it became communist."

Coromandel 003

"Almost everyone thoroughly enjoyed this book, especially its dry humour and style of writing. Some read it twice!"

Ngarimu Bay

CRIME STORY    

Gee, Maurice 272pp 1994

Worlds separate Brent Rosser, a petty thief, from Ulla Peet, wife of Athco Properties' Athol Peet. A burglary gone wrong brings them into confrontation. A chilling novel of 1990s New Zealand that asks questions about the perpetrators of crime and the victims, the price of greed, and personal isolation. Some graphic passages.

CRIMSON ROOMS, THE

McMahon, Katharine 457pp 2009

In a society recovering from World War I, Evelyn Gifford trains as one of England's first female solicitors. In contrast to her trailblazing employment, her home life is repressed following the death of her younger brother in the trenches. Against this backdrop of a nation grappling with change, Evelyn too is challenged to move beyond her grief and seek justice for those around her. An easy-to-read style and a fascinating examination of the social issues of the time make this an engaging story.

CROSSING TO SAFETY

Stegner, Wallace 327pp 1987

This book is one of the greatest and most cherished American novels of the 20th century. Tracing the lives, loves, and aspirations of two couples who move between Vermont and Wisconsin, it is a work of quiet majesty, deep compassion and powerful insight into the alchemy of friendship and marriage.

CROOKED LETTER, CROOKED LETTER

Franklin, Tom 274pp 2010

Set in Mississippi, this is a novel deeply rooted in its rural landscape. Larry Ott, white and middle class and Silas Jones, poor and black, were once childhood friends, their paths converging again years later when a young girl disappears in similar circumstances to events in their youth. With its superbly developed characters, its challenges to Southern stereotypes, and a storyline alternating between the 1970s and the present, this is a murder mystery with a difference.

CROW LAKE

Lawson, Mary 295pp 2002

Kate Morrison relives events that left seven-year-old Kate, her toddler sister, and two teenage brothers to fend for themselves after their parents are killed in a car accident. Planning a return trip to her childhood home in rural northern Ontario, she recalls her upbringing, the tragedy, and her brothers' sacrifices to hold the family together.

CURIOUS CHARMS OF ARTHUR PEPPER, THE

Patrick, Phaedra 352pp 2016

When widower Arthur Pepper, a creature of entrenched routine, plucks up the courage to sort out his beloved wife's belongings, he comes across an expensive gold bracelet that he doesn't recognise. Just what did Miriam get up to before their forty years of marriage? Tracing the provenance of each of the charms takes Arthur on an odyssey that reveals as much about him as it does about Miriam. A delightfully eccentric and amusing story of self-discovery and the unexpected rewards of throwing off the shackles.

CURIOUS INCIDENT OF THE DOG IN THE NIGHT-TIME, THE

Haddon, Mark 272pp 2003

A murder mystery like no other. Christopher Boone is a fifteen-year-old who suffers from Asperger's Syndrome. He understands maths and science, but he cannot understand other human beings. When the dog next door is killed by a garden fork, Christopher sets off in the manner of Sherlock Holmes to find the killer.

CUTTING FOR STONE

Verghese, Abraham 541pp 2009

Marion and Shiva Stone are twin brothers born of a secret union between a beautiful Indian nun and a brash Orthopaedic surgeon. Orphaned by their mother's death and their father's disappearance, bound together by a preternatural connection and a shared fascination with medicine, the twins come of age as Ethiopia hovers on the brink of revolution. Moving from Addis Ababa to New York City and back again, Cutting for Stone is an unforgettable story of love and betrayal, medicine and ordinary miracles – and two brothers whose fates are forever intertwined. [BIG READ]

DARK CIRCLE, THE

Grant, Linda 310pp 2016

The war is over and the times they are a-changing... and nothing could demonstrate this more than Lenny and Miriam Lynskey's arrival at the newly commissioned NHS sanatorium in Kent, in 1949. The 19-year-old twins join a melting pot of fellow tuberculosis sufferers: aristocrats, car dealers, war heroes, merchant sea men and more. Sentenced to the harsh and primitive procedures and treatments of the time, the only glimmer of hope on the horizon is a new wonder drug, but who will be lucky enough to receive it? With its unique setting, to its engagement with the institutionalisation and medical ethics of the time, this is both a warm and engaging novel and a fascinating slice of medical and social history.

DAUGHTER OF FORTUNE

Allende, Isabel 399pp 1999

With the help of a Chinese physician friend, a young Chilean woman is smuggled onto a sailing ship in 1849, bound for the Californian goldfields. Both characters are searching; she for her lost lover, he for some purpose in a foreign world. Inspired by California's short, but extravagant history. [SMALL FONT]

DAUGHTERS-IN-LAW

Trollope, Joanna 329pp 2010

Rachel Brinkley's life irrevocably changes when her youngest son marries. No longer is she the most important woman in her sons' lives; that mantle now belongs to her daughters-in-law. The resulting shift in the power structure of the family and the changing allegiances are as painful as they are inevitable. Keenly observed family dynamics and recognisable characters and situations, make this an enjoyable and insightful story of a family grappling with change.

DAVITA'S HARP

Potok, Chaim 371pp 1985

New York is home to Davita who grows up in the 1930s before the war and the depression. Her non-believing Jewish mother and Gentile father are strong supporters of Communism and fill her with a hope of a bright new world. Davita however comes to see things differently with the advent of the depression and the second world war. She turns to her mother's Jewish faith to give her solace and a renewed sense of purpose.

DAYS ARE LIKE GRASS

Younger, Sue 237pp 2016



There can be no running away from her past for paediatric surgeon Claire Bowerman. Reluctantly returning to Auckland from London, Claire throws herself into her work at Starship Children's Hospital, but her Israeli partner Yossi and her teenage daughter Roimata are determined she face her demons. What does she have to hide? This is a satisfying and challenging story of contemporary New Zealand, of the grim reality of family dysfunction and the power our families have to shape us.

DAYS WITHOUT END

Barry, Sebastian 301pp 2016



Forced from his native Ireland by the deprivations of the potato famine, young Thomas McNulty throws his lot in with the American Army. With brother-in-arms John Cole in tow, these young men witness and participate in the painful birth of a nation. First it is the Indian Wars — rescuing and adopting an Indian girl as they go — and then the Civil War. Distinguished by the beauty of its language and Thomas' narration, this novel, where brutality and compassion exist side-by-side, delivers a unique perspective of nineteenth century America.

DEAR MRS BIRD

Pearce, A J 303pp 2018



Emmeline Lake's first foray into journalism does not go as planned. Instead of being appointed as a war correspondent, she finds herself typing up letters for an agony aunt – Henrietta Bird – that is, when the letters are deemed worthy of a response. When the naïve and relentlessly cheerful Emmy takes it upon herself to reply to the discarded letters, there are ... consequences. And that's just her day job. At night, Emmy and her best friend Bunty are working hard, shoulder-to-shoulder with their London neighbours, rebuffing the Luftwaffe and exemplifying the spirit of the Blitz. With its pitch-perfect 'jolly hockey sticks' writing style and its stiff upper lip depiction of everyday life on the home front, this is a gently amusing and uplifting story of courage and friendship amidst adversity.

DEAR VINCENT

Hager, Mandy 288pp 2013



Between school, part-time work and caring for her paralysed father, seventeen year old Tara McCluskey barely has time to draw breath. She misses her sister Van who died five years earlier and all in all, life is pretty bleak. As an aspiring artist and passionate Vincent van Gogh aficionado, Tara is on the cusp of an exciting future, if she can only negotiate the way forward. Powerful and uplifting, this is a contemporary New Zealand coming-of-age story that sensitively and insightfully examines issues around suicide.

DEARLY BELOVED, THE

Wall, Sara 338pp 2019

When Charles Barrett and James MacNally are appointed as co-pastors for the Third Presbyterian Church in Greenwich Village, New York, in 1963, it could quite possibly be a match made in heaven. However, that is, until their wives Lily and Nan are added to the mix and like it or not, over the decades that follow their lives will inevitably be intertwined. With nary an ounce of piety to be seen, this is a balanced and thought-provoking exploration of faith, giving equal voice to its well-defined quartet of characters, and the congregation they serve, as they wrestle with the vicissitudes of life.

DEATH OF BEES

O'Donnell, Lisa 294pp 2012

Marnie Doyle is candid about the fact that the safest place she has ever been was the neonatal intensive care unit following her premature birth. Fifteen years later, she and her younger sister Nelly are facing challenging circumstances: abuse and neglect have been their constant companions and now they've just finished burying their parents in their back garden in a Glasgow housing estate. Fortunately their elderly neighbour Lennie is about to offer some avuncular support. Recounted by three different characters, this is a compelling adventure in suburban dysfunction and survival, reverberating with black humour.

DEFENDING JACOB

Landay, William 488pp 2012



Assistant District Attorney Andy Barber is tasked with finding the killer of a boy who attends the same school as his teenage son Jacob. What starts off as a standard, albeit distressing investigation, becomes every parent's worst nightmare when Jacob is accused of the murder. This clever and riveting story not only grapples with the intricacies of the legal system but confidently enters the nature versus nurture and child rearing debates.

DEGREES OF SEPARATION

Fearnley, Laurence 233pp 2006



On board an aircraft, as it makes its way from the Antarctic to New Zealand, three people sit quietly, reflecting on their past summer on the ice. Sally, a composer who has been searching for inspiration; William, a bird scientist who has been visiting Antarctica since the 1960s, and Marilyn, a young communications operator, tell their stories in alternating chapters. Contrasting the beauty and vastness of the Antarctic with the banality and discomfort of life on the ice, Degrees of Separation focuses on themes of love and memory.

DELPHINE'S RUN

Fearnley, Laurence 223pp 2003



Delphine works as a food-trolley girl on the Brest-Paris train. Her relationships are complicated and her work predictable, until a bomb explosion on the train disturbs the only uncomplicated aspect of her life.

DENNISTON ROSE, THE

Patrick, Jenny 367pp 2003



Set in the 1880s in the bleak coal-mining village of Denniston, New Zealand. Isolated high on a plateau above the West Coast, is a place that makes or breaks those who live there. Into this chaotic community come five-year-old Rose and her mother.

DICTIONARY OF LOST WORDS, THE

Williams, Pip 422pp 2020

Given the large tracts of her childhood spent happily hidden under the sorting table adjacent to the lexicographers, it seemed inevitable that Esme Nicoll's life would be bound up with the publication of the first Oxford English Dictionary. Initiated in 1879 and completed in 1928, it is at the centre of this story with Esme's life playing out around its development, the rise of the suffrage movement and the horrors of WWI. But Esme has something special to contribute to the herculean task of defining the English language – an abiding passion for the words discarded by the dictionary men, especially those relating to women. Thought-provoking and original, this story immerses the fictional Esme into the world of the OED and the men and women in its sphere.



"A fascinating story with fine writing, good pace and gentle sympathy."

"An innovative and compelling story."

"This book would suit those who like a lighter read about a really interesting topic."

BDS Reviewers

DEVIL'S MUSIC, THE

Rusbridge, Jane 306pp 2009



Helen and Michael are under pressure. The birth in 1958 of their third child should be a happy event but instead is an ominous portent: Elaine is severely disabled. No-one is immune from the fallout, particularly Andrew, the eldest child who copes by retreating into a fantasy world. Moving between the past and the present, Andrew narrates this engaging saga of an English family wrestling with all that life has thrown at them. The inclusion of detailed information about knots which have significance in Andrew's life and that of his rope-maker grandfather, adds charm to an already gripping story.

DICTIONARY OF MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING, A

Copleton, Jackie 290pp 2015



A knock on the door of her Philadelphia home takes widow Amaterasu Takahashi back to Japan forty years earlier, to Nagasaki and the fateful day 'pikadon' (the great flash) destroyed her family. Believing her daughter and grandson were killed by the atomic blast, she is now faced with a scarred stranger claiming to be her grandson Hideo. But before Ama can accept and embrace the possible existence of family, she is forced to confront the shame and regret of her earlier life, and the horror of August 9th, 1945. Enhanced by dictionary entries of Japanese culture that head each chapter, this mesmerising and moving story delves into the forces, both personal and societal, that shaped the destiny of this family, opening the door to healing.



DIFFERENT CLASS

Harris, Joanne 507pp 2016



With 30 years' experience under his belt, Roy Straitley, Latin Master at St Oswald's Grammar, can spot trouble a mile off. What he is not expecting, however, is the return, 20 years later, of a student he'd deemed to be troublesome; Johnny Harrington, the new headmaster. This 'new broom', this Superhead with his crisis deputies, has arrived to save St Oswald's from itself, a disturbing prospect given his involvement in a scandal that saw a teacher imprisoned. Narrated by the irascible Roy and an anonymous diarist, Harris's return to this North Yorkshire school delivers a gripping psychological thriller, clever with misdirection and black humour, and its acute observations of school life.



DIGGING TO AMERICA 

Tyler, Anne 277pp 2006

Two families meet by chance at the Baltimore airport when their adopted Korean daughters arrive on the same flight from Asia. The Donaldsons personify American middle-class suburbia, while the younger Yazdans are part of a large and lively Iranian immigrant community. Bitsy Donaldson impulsively invites the Yazdans to an "arrival party", and the annual multicultural party for the girls becomes a shared tradition. The families and their sometimes eccentric relatives become ever more closely linked. But, when Bitsy's widowed father begins to show romantic interest in the Yazdan grandmother, cultural differences are brought to a head.

DINNER, THE 

Koch, Herman 309pp 2009

An upscale Amsterdam restaurant and an opportunity for an evening of conviviality. But brothers Serge and Paul are there with their wives, not to enjoy themselves, but to resolve a dilemma they never imagined they would face: Their teenage sons have been in involved in a distressing crime that although caught on CCTV, leaves the boys unidentifiable except to their parents. In their efforts to decide on a course of action, old sibling rivalries are laid bare, juxtaposed with their instinctive desire to protect their own. This riveting story offers up the conflicted morality of modern life while serving as a disturbing reminder of how thin the veneer of civilised behaviour truly is.

DISAPPEARING EARTH

Phillips, Julia 256pp 2019

Open your atlas, spin your globe or power up Google maps, a search for the Kamchatka peninsula will take you far from home. In this remote Russian setting, two young girls, Sophia and Alyona Golosovskaya go missing from an afternoon playing on a beach. Ebbing and flowing around this pivotal event and moving through each month of the year that follows their disappearance, the lives of the residents of this isolated community play out, revealing the complexities of navigating post-Soviet Russia as well as the fate of the girls. From its clever use of interwoven storylines and its beautiful descriptions of the environment to its nuanced examination of the sociocultural landscape, this is a thought-provoking and suspenseful story. [SMALL FONT]

DISGRACE 

Coetzee, JM 220pp 1999

The two worlds of a father and daughter living in South Africa are linked by their experiences of the state of "disgrace". David Lurie, a university professor, has an affair with a student and, once discovered, refuses to publicly repent. He takes refuge on Lucy's (his daughter) remote property, but cannot avoid the repercussions of his country's inherited disgrace to which Lucy falls victim after a violent home invasion.

DISTANT SHORE, A 

Phillips, Caryl 312pp 2003

Two lonely lives intertwine in this novel set in contemporary England. Dorothy has recently moved to a new subdivision in a small village after a forced retirement. Solomon, an illegal immigrant escaping a violent past in Africa, is the night watchman at the subdivision. They form a cautious friendship. A poignant and quietly powerful portrait of contemporary alienation.

DOGSIDE STORY 

Grace, Patricia 301pp 2001

The rivalry of two sisters, Ngarua and Maraenohono, leads to the division of their community. The communities then become "Godside" (known for its piety and properness) and "Dogside" (forever wayward). For Grace, this is a shift in writing, focusing more on the internal struggles of Maoridom.

DOOR, THE

Szabó, Magda 261pp 1987

Acting on a recommendation from a friend, a young Hungarian writer employs an elderly housekeeper, Emerence Szeredás. Emerence, it transpires, is stoic, fanatically private, and exhibits peculiar behaviour, fortunately outweighed by her strong work ethic. Over the decades as her tragic past is revealed, a deep bond develops between the two women. Partly autobiographical, this unpredictable and understated story resonates with a haunting Eastern European flavour. Translated from Hungarian. [SMALL FONT]

DRY, THE

Harper, Jane 342pp 2016

Melbourne-based Federal Police Investigator Aaron Falk reluctantly returns to his hometown of Kiewarra to attend the funeral of his childhood friend Luke, and Luke's wife and child, supposed victims of a murder-suicide. Forced to confront his own past with Luke, Aaron is drawn into the investigation, probing the secrets of a small town fuelled by drought and despair. Set in the blistering heat and dust of rural Australia, this is a thriller that races along as fast as the wildfire that threatens the harsh and unforgiving landscape.

DOUBLE HELIX

Merriman, Eileen 362pp 2021



Make no mistake about it, life is a messy business and Jake and Emily, childhood friends and neighbours, have plenty of mess to contend with. Rekindling their relationship when they are medical students, they set forth into adult life with Jake's genetic heritage hanging over their heads, thrown into stark relief by his mother's death from Huntington's disease. To know or not to know, that is the question... and through career advancement, marriage and parenthood, Jake and Emily will have to wrestle with the choices they must make. With Dunedin starring in a cameo role, this is a compelling medical drama, a rollercoaster ride through the world of genetic inheritance, as well as the life and death dilemmas we all may face.



"I found this to be an easy and compelling read."

"Interesting and believable characters with a gripping twist."

"So true to NZ scenery and character. I was almost transported back to the Dunedin surf and lecture halls."

"Very real, contemporary feel — the chapter titles are from recent songs."

BDS Reviewers

EARTH CRIES OUT, THE

Etherington, Bonnie 280pp 2017



In need of atonement for a tragic accident, a Nelson family are thrust into the 1990s political turmoil of the Indonesian-annexed Irian Jaya when they arrive in a remote village ready to assist with 'community development'. Narrated by Ruth recalling events observed as an eight-year-old, this is the evocative and uplifting story of a New Zealand family in need of healing. Played out against its backdrop of civil unrest in the fledgling West Papua and enriched by the author's own childhood experience of the region, the lyrical observations of its young narrator are skilfully juxtaposed with beautiful descriptions of the local flora and fauna.

ECHO CHAMBER, THE

Boyne, John 420pp 2021



The Cleverleys are the perfect family you love to hate. At first glance, successful and influential and at second glance, well... not quite. George is an obnoxious BBC radio host and Beverley, a romance writer, is a snob of the highest order. And then there are their three adult children, Nelson, Elizabeth and Achilles. When Elizabeth's latest desperate attempt to be a social media influencer goes awry there is chaos, and as the family's lives unravel, readers have a front row seat to a world controlled by social media. A thought-provoking and satirical delight.



"Boyne is very funny as he makes a point in his sarcasm."

"The characters, while all are caricatures, are also frighteningly believable."

"The book is very funny but frightening with how the world of social media has taken over."

"I enjoyed the author name-dropping, mainly British celebrities."

BDS Reviewers

DUBLINERS, THE

Joyce, James 207pp 1914



A collection of 15 short stories about Irish middle-class men and women in Dublin at the beginning of the 20th century. Joyce's first masterpiece. [SMALL FONT]

DYNAMITE ROOM, THE

Hewitt, Jason 378pp 2014



The girl just wanting to find her mother and the Nazi Officer a long way from home; it is hard to say who is the more surprised when they both seek refuge in the same boarded-up house on the Suffolk coast. It is July 1940 and eleven year old Lydia has found her way home, not expecting to find the enemy on her doorstep. This taut psychological drama reduces a far-reaching war to the interactions of captor and hostage, confined to their claustrophobic setting and dependent on one another for their survival. Powerfully conveyed by its strong characters, it is a compelling and unsettling story that broaches the possibility of redemption.

ELEANOR OLIPHANT IS COMPLETELY FINE

Honeyman, Gail 290pp 2015

Eleanor Oliphant is completely fine, or so she tells everyone, but it's dependent on her strict adherence to her routines, and a careful shuffle past the elephant in the room. But as it is with life, change is inevitable, and when her colleague Raymond befriends her, the walls around Eleanor are under threat, and the elephant wants out. This quirky and poignant story celebrates surviving what life throws at us and delivers it via the endearing Eleanor, a courageous and unconsciously witty narrator grappling with early tragedy, the absurdities of human behaviour and the rewards of social connection.

EDDY, EDDY

De Goldi, Kate 288pp 2022



Welcome to a year in the life of Eddy Smallbone, orphan, checkout operator, nanny and pet minder. Navigating the earthquake-disturbed streets of Christchurch, Eddy, on the cusp of adulthood, has plenty to keep him busy while he wrestles with the big questions of life. With a nod to Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol, this moving coming-of-age story is written with empathy and warmth, and is populated with quirky characters, both human and animal.



"Well written and engaging."

"I gobbled the book up in the first reading, I so wanted to find out what happened, but the second time around I savoured every word."

"The broken city of Christchurch is a metaphor for Eddy's broken mind — very clever."

"Everything gets covered : sex, drugs, abortion, tattooing, music, religious beliefs, relations with adults, etc, all with a gentle touch."

BDS Reviewers

EDWIN AND MATILDA

Fearnley, Laurence 240pp 2007



Set in the southern South Island, Edwin and Matilda describes the unusual and unlikely friendship formed between a 62-year-old photographer, Edwin and 22-year-old Matilda, whom he meets when shooting photographs of her as a bride-to-be. Together, Edwin and Matilda embark on a search for Edwin's mother, a woman he has long believed dead.

ELEGANCE OF THE HEDGEHOG, THE

Barbery, Muriel 271pp 2010



Appearances can be deceptive, something the privileged residents of number seven Rue de Grenelle would soon discover if they were to look beyond the seemingly stereotypical character of their concierge, Renee. Belied by her simple and humble persona, she is a closet intellectual and cultural enthusiast, which is fortuitously apparent to kindred spirits and fellow tenants, Kakuro Oza, a Japanese gentleman, and Paloma Fosse, a disenchanted twelve year old. Rich with philosophical ponderings and 'Profound Thoughts', this is a clever and quirky story worthy of its Parisian setting.

ELEGIES FOR THE BROKENHEARTED

Hodgen, Christie 271pp 2010



Mary Murphy, this is your life. Here to tell your story are a classmate, a college roommate, a failed piano prodigy, your ne'er do well uncle and your oft married mother. Narrated through odes to those who have shaped her being, this is Mary's life as a daughter, sister and friend; a life of adversity and despair but ultimately triumph. With its clever format and rich characterisation, this is a fresh examination of who and what make us the way we are.

ELIGIBLE

Sittenfeld, Curtis 514pp 2016



Darcy a neurosurgeon? Liz Bennet a journalist? Anything is possible in this contemporary retelling of 'Pride and Prejudice'. Set in Cincinnati, the Bennet family still have five daughters to launch, money is tight and there are societal obligations to fulfil. Jane Austen fans and newcomers alike will relish this captivating and witty satire of 21st century life.

ELIZABETH IS MISSING

Healey, Emma 275pp 2014



Nowadays Maud can't rely on her memory. That doesn't mean her friend Elizabeth isn't missing, but it does make searching for her a challenge. Surfacing through Maud's concern and confusion is another mystery – what happened to her sister Sukey all those years ago. Although an unconventional thriller with unrelenting tension and mystery at its heart, it is also rendered a poignant examination of aging and dementia by its emotional depth and unreliable narrator.

ELUSIVE LANGUAGE OF DUCKS, THE

White, Judith 384pp 2014



It could be said that looking after a Muscovy duckling was just what Hannah needed after her mother's death. Nothing could compensate her for the loss she has just suffered, but having to care for the orphaned little creature would be a distraction from her grief. Who would have thought that her initial reluctance to do so would develop into such an obsession? Not her husband Simon for starters, or 'Ducko' would never have been introduced into the household. Quirky and thoughtful, this story is at the same time both a gentle contemplation of grief and a wry exploration of human relationships.

ENGLEBY

Faulks, Sebastian 342pp 2007



Meet Mike Engleby, a second-year university student. Despite the fact that Mike is obviously intelligent and involved in many clubs, it is clear that something about Mike is not quite right. When he becomes fixated on a classmate named Jennifer and she goes missing, we are left with the looming question: Is Mike Engleby involved?

EMMA

Austen, Jane 432pp 1816

Classical novel on “the frequent disconnections between an individual’s inner life and the smooth world of manners”. Emma is a study of self-deceit and self-discovery. [SMALL FONT]

ENGLISH PASSENGERS

Neale, Matthew 462pp 2000

An epic tale based on real events in Tasmanian history. It tells two parallel stories: one of three eccentric Englishmen who set sail for Tasmania in 1857 to find the Garden of Eden; the other of a young Tasmanian Aborigine and his tribe, struggling against the invading British. [SMALL FONT]

EVERY LAST ONE

Quindlen, Anna 299pp 2011

The Lathams are the quintessential successful family: Mary Beth with her landscaping business, husband Glen an ophthalmologist, and their three enviable teenagers. It’s hard to imagine anything upsetting the smooth trajectories of their lives, but when it does, it is in the aftermath of tragedy that the survivors’ true mettle becomes apparent. Insightful and easy to read, this is a story about living through the unthinkable.

EVERY NOTE PLAYED

Genova, Lisa 320pp 2018

A diagnosis of motor neurone disease is never welcome, but for concert pianist Richard Evans it is particularly devastating, as his hands are affected first. A life not being able to play music is hard to accept but as his illness progresses, there are other important emotional contemplations ahead to occupy his time, namely Karina his ex-wife and now reluctant caregiver, and his estranged daughter Grace. From its appreciation of the significance of music to its realistic portrayal of an incurable disease, this is a riveting and compassionate story of finding peace in the midst of the tumult.

EVERYONE BRAVE IS FORGIVEN

Cleave, Chris 438pp 2016

When war is declared, Mary North is sure she will be snapped up for something far more exciting than the role that she is assigned: that of a school teacher. The silver lining, however, comes in the form of Tom Shaw from the Education Authority, and more importantly, his friend Alistair Heath. Played out against the backdrop of the Blitz and at the front lines of Malta, this is a vividly drawn World War II story of privileged young Londoners proving their mettle. Illuminating the racism and class structures of the time, this novel was inspired by the experiences of the author’s grandparents.

EXIT WEST

Hamid, Mohsin 229pp 2017

Exit West begins as many ‘boy meets girl’ stories do but, coming from a Middle Eastern country where civil war is starting to bite, Nadia and Saeed face challenging times. As their besieged city starts to disintegrate, they join thousands of others, fleeing through mysterious doorways to unknown destinations and uncertain futures. In this powerful and thought-provoking story of a world on the move, Nadia and Saeed’s journey exemplifies the experience of refugees, of loss and dislocation and the haunting, hopeful possibility of finding one’s place in the world.

EXPATRIATES, THE

Lee, Janice Y K 417pp 2016

However exotic the setting, no one is immune from life’s curveballs. Such is the experience of three American women living in Hong Kong. At different life stages and circumstances, Mercy, Hilary and Margaret must each wrestle with loss and change, their lives intertwined in the insular expat community. Invigorated by the cultural divide and the trials of expatriate living and anchored by the universal experience of family and motherhood, this is a keenly observed story of contemporary Hong Kong.

EXQUISITE SENSE OF WHAT IS BEAUTIFUL, AN

Simons, J David 373pp 2012

Japan and all things Japanese have always held Briton Edward Strathairn in thrall, so much so that he writes his best-selling novel while living there. Although launching his stellar career, ‘The Watershed’, the novel in question, proves to be a divisive issue in his life as it challenges the treatment meted out by America to the Japanese citizenry during World War II, in the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Now in his twilight years, Edward returns to Japanese shores, reflecting on his life and work. Moving between past and present, this is a gently provocative story of changing perspectives and world events rendered accessible through the lives of individuals. [SMALL FONT]

EXTRAORDINARY LIFE OF SAM HELL, THE

Dugoni, Robert 428pp 2018

Sam Hill’s devout mother is convinced he is going to have an extraordinary life. ‘Devil boy’ to his Catholic school classmates, Sam has a genetic abnormality and is set apart by his unusual eyes. It may be ‘God’s will’, but there are obstacles aplenty for anyone who is different. Poignant and heart-warming, Sam’s examination of his life decades later, is a compelling journey of self-discovery, of faith, friends and foe, and accepting one’s true self.

EXTREMELY LOUD & INCREDIBLY CLOSE 

Foer, Jonathan Safran 326pp 2006

Following his father's death in 9/11, Oskar Schell, a precocious nine year old, sets out to find the matching lock for a key he believes belonged to his father. His search, taking him across New York, becomes a journey through his grief. Entwined with this quest is the unlocking of the story of Oskar's grandparents, survivors of the Dresden firebombing in WW II. A poignant examination of loss, grief and adjustment. [SMALL FONT]

FAMILY ALBUM 

Lively, Penelope 260pp 2009

Allersmead, a large and sprawling Edwardian home for the Harpers, a large and sprawling family. When the adult children, all six of them, visit their aging parents and Ingrid, the au pair who never left, dust is blown off childhood memories, snapshots of earlier times are re-examined and family secrets exposed to the light of day. With its vivid characters, their mishmash of memories and Allersmead at its heart, this is an acute and enjoyable observation of family life.

FAR FROM THE MADDING CROWD 

Hardy, Thomas 491pp 1875

Classical novel. Hardy's first love story. About the attitudes and habits of rural men and women. [SMALL FONT]

FAMILY MATTERS 

Mistry, Rohinton 500pp 2002

In 1990s Bombay, Nariman Vakeel is a 79-year-old Parsi widower, suffering from Parkinson's Disease and living with his two resentful stepchildren. Becoming bedridden with a broken ankle, he is forced to recuperate at his daughter's house, which tests relationships and family ties. [BIG READ]

FAR FIELD, THE

Vijay, Madhuri 432pp 2019

Bangalore resident and privileged young woman, Shalini finds herself in an unfamiliar world when she arrives in the disputed northern territory of Kashmir. On a quest to understand her late mercurial mother, she is seeking Kashmiri Bashir Ahmed, a familiar figure from her childhood. What she does find is a crucible of Muslim and Hindu conflict and the long shadow of the police and army. Set amidst the Kashmiri 'troubles', and moving between past and present, this is a story of contemporary India and the personal awakening of a naïve outsider to the dark realities of class and prejudice.

FAREWELL TO ARMS, A 

Hemingway, Ernest 286pp 1926

Novel from the Italian front, 1918, about the love affair between an American ambulance driver and an English nurse.

FINDING DOROTHY

Letts, Elizabeth 346pp 2019

We're off to see the Wizard, the wonderful Wizard of Oz ... courtesy of Maud Gage Baum, wife of the author of the iconic book. This two-stranded story follows the young Maud, daughter of a suffragette, her life in the mid-west prairies with the optimistic Frank as well as the intrepid Maud of her later life. When Hollywood takes up the challenge of creating a movie of the book, Maud is determined to protect the authenticity of the story and its troubled teenage star, Judy Garland. Follow the yellow brick road in this heart-warming and meticulously researched novel based on real events, including those that inspired the original classic story.

FINE BALANCE, A

Mistry, Rohinton 752pp 1996

Set in mid-1970s India, after the declaration of a "State of Internal Emergency" by Indira Gandhi. Four characters are brought together by circumstance, eventually to overcome social and political barriers. A compelling narrative that balances simple humanity, humour and hope with the inevitable forces of fate. [BIG READ, SMALL FONT]

FIRST LOVE

Turgenev, Ivan 106pp 1880s

A novella translated from the Russian. Turgenev describes a young boy's growth as he is awakened to the complicated nature of adult love. Penguin Classics edition.

FLIGHT BEHAVIOUR  

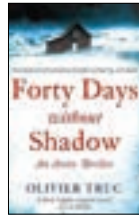
Kingsolver, Barbara 597pp 2012

Change is in the air for young mother Dellarobia Turnbow and her friends and family in the small Appalachian community where they eke out a living. Their impoverished settlement becomes the centre of world attention with the appearance of a seemingly miraculous natural phenomenon. Both dazzling and alarming, this marvel is the catalyst for Dellarobia to question everything she has always known, as well as presenting an opportunity for the author's background as a scientist to come to the fore in a thought-provoking exploration of the complexities of climate change and the fragility of the natural world. [BIG READ]

FORTY DAYS WITHOUT SHADOW

Truc, Olivier 444pp 2014

With a UN conference on indigenous peoples about to start on their doorstep, detectives Klemet Nango and Nina Nansen of the Reindeer patrol need to urgently locate a stolen Sami artefact. Solving the crime becomes imperative when a local reindeer herder is found brutally murdered and it's possible the cases are related. Set in the snowy expanses of Lapland, this uniquely Arctic Circle whodunit also presents a fascinating snapshot of a minority group struggling to retain their traditional way of life in the face of 21st century challenges.



"Everybody loved this book. None of us had known much about the Sami people or the politics of this region. Informative and unbiased. Excellent and evocative description of the environment."

Auckland 153

"Took a while to 'get into' the book but what a different setting for a story! It gave us all a new insight into Lapland. A gripping last few chapters."

Christchurch 393

"A little slow to begin with. Good insight into how they live 'up there'. Thoroughly enjoyed it."

Auckland 234

FORRESTS, THE

Perkins, Emily 340pp 2012



Meet the Forrests: Americans Frank and Lee and their children, Michael, Dorothy, Evelyn and Ruth who settle in Auckland in the 1970s. Like any family they have their endearing qualities and their idiosyncrasies. Their story is told in a series of snapshots through Dorothy's eyes as she experiences the universal life events of marriage and family and the inevitable loss and grief along the way. Evocative detail and a realistic but sensitive portrayal of family life make this distinctly New Zealand novel a pleasure to read.

FREEING GRACE

Norman, Charity 355pp 2010



What's best for Grace? This question is at the heart of this story that considers the fate of a mixed race baby. Following the sudden death of her young mother, the scene is set with plenty of scope to explore the complex issues and dilemmas of adoption. On one side are an infertile couple, and on the other, the dysfunctional family of Grace's teenage father. With its realistic characters and easy to read style, this is an engrossing and compassionate novel about making difficult choices.

FOUNTAINS OF SILENCE, THE

Sepetys, Ruta 512pp 2019

Daniel Matheson, the son of a Texan oil tycoon, and Ana Moreno come from very different worlds. When Daniel visits Madrid with his father who is drumming up business with the fascist regime, Ana is their hotel attendant, a young woman whose family have been devastated by the Civil War and its fallout. Daniel's passion is photography and it is through the images he captures that he comes face to face with the realities of General Franco's reign. Both a love story and a mystery involving orphaned children, this is a compelling story of the havoc wreaked by the fear and oppression of 1950s' Spain, well supported by cited primary sources. [BIG READ, SMALL FONT]



"A really good read with a mix of chilling and some lighter moments."

"The elements of suspense throughout when danger threatens are well-handled."

"I liked the way the author inserted historical comments, reports etc from authoritative figures to 'ground' the events."

BDS Reviewers

FRENCH BRAID

Tyler, Anne 352pp 2022



Mercy and Robin Garrett have three children – Alice, David and Lily. In the decades from the 1950s to the present day, life with all of its vicissitudes and the individual foibles of the Garretts create the engaging record of a middle-class family from Baltimore. With its multigenerational range and its rich portraits of relatable and flawed characters, this is a beautifully crafted story that both weaves together and unravels the threads of family life.



"Once again Anne Tyler has created a wonderfully crafted story of family life."

"Beautiful writing from Anne Tyler who is wise in her observations of peoples, families and the passing of time."

"Recommended as a great if undemanding read."

BDS Reviewers



FRENCH LIEUTENANT'S WOMAN, THE 

Fowles, John 399pp 1969

In this contemporary Victorian-style novel Charles Smithson, a nineteenth-century gentleman with glimmerings of twentieth-century perceptions, falls in love with enigmatic Sarah Woodruff, who has been jilted by a French lover.

GAP OF TIME, THE

Winterson, Jeanette 289pp 2015

In this re-imagining of Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*, King Leontes is transformed into Leo, a hedge fund manager, his wife Hermione becomes Mimi, a French singer, and King Polixenes morphs into Xeno, a computer game-designer. With the kingdoms of Sicilia and Bohemia becoming London and the American Deep South, the stage is set for Leo's irrational jealousy and its tragic consequences: sexual obsession, friendships destroyed, hearts broken, exile and a child abandoned. This is a timeless story of redemption and forgiveness, with the power and mystery of the original play cleverly captured by these contemporary characters and settings.

GARDEN OF EVENING MISTS, THE

Tan, Twan Eng 348pp 2012

In the Cameron Highlands of Malaya following World War 2, Chinese Malay Yun Ling becomes apprenticed to Nakamura Aritomo (a man who had once been the gardener to Emperor Hirohito) in order to create a garden to honour her sister who died in a Japanese POW camp. Years later Yun Ling returns to the area to make sense of all that has happened. Spanning a changing Malaysia from colonial times to the present day, this is a beautifully wrought tale of exotic landscapes, political upheaval and intriguing mystery. With its exquisite imagery and deep connection to the natural world, it is a book to be savoured.

GARDEN PARTY, THE  

Mansfield, Katherine 255pp 1932

Short stories. Sensitive revelations of human behaviour in quite ordinary situations. [SMALL FONT]

GATHERING, THE 

Enright, Anne 260pp 2007

Blending past and present, childhood and struggling maturity, death and earthy life, *The Gathering* traces Veronica Hegarty's journey back to her family home for the funeral of her brother Liam, an alcoholic who suicided in the sea at Brighton. His mother and eight of the nine surviving Hegarty children gather in Dublin for his wake. Veronica, the novel's narrator looks through her family's troubled history to try to make sense of his death and uncovers uncomfortable truths about her family.

GATE OF ANGELS, THE

Fitzgerald, Penelope 218pp 1990

Fred Fairly, scientist and junior fellow at St Angelicus College and Daisy Saunders, a working-class nurse from London, first meet in the most unlikely of circumstances: a cycling accident has them rescued by a good Samaritan and placed in the same bed to recover. A shock for the signed-up celibate Fred, but less so for the pragmatic Daisy. And so begins a romance that simmers away in the microcosm of pre-WWI Cambridge. On the cusp of a changing world, this gentle Edwardian period piece, brimming with ideas, delivers an entertaining and satisfying read with its witty and clever writing.

GATHERING OF WATERS  

McFadden, Bernice L 252pp 2012

A town with the name of Money is sure to attract attention. But the fact that the town itself narrates this mystical story guarantees your absolute attention. At its core are three generations of Hilson women, Doll, Hemingway and Tass, their lives woven into historical events of the area: the Mississippi floods of 1927, the murder of young black man Emmett Till in 1955 and Hurricane Katrina in 2005. This is the Deep South with racism and the spiritual realm coexisting in an enticing mixture of truth and fantasy. An easy, lively read.

GENTLEMAN IN MOSCOW, A

Towles, Amor 462pp 2016

If indefinite house arrest was to be your fate then Moscow's luxurious Hotel Metropol was an ideal venue. However, instead of his usual suite, Count Alexander Rostov is reduced to living in an attic room, courtesy of the Bolsheviks as punishment for being an aristocrat. In the decades that follow his 1922 sentence, he strives to rise above his circumstances and master them. Along for the journey are a collection of colourful characters, fellow wayfarers cast on the safe shores of the Hotel Metropol, a welcome refuge from the upheaval of the Russian Revolution unfolding outside its doors. Entertaining and stylish, this is a story shaped by the indomitable spirit of an unrepentant aristocrat, rich with philosophical insights and carefully woven with modern Russian history. [SMALL FONT]

GERMAN HOUSE, THE

Hess, Annette 327pp 2019

It is 1963 and life is on the up and up for twenty-four-year-old Eva Bruhns. But when she is appointed as a translator at the Frankfurt Auschwitz Trials, she is abruptly exposed to Germany's war history, calling into question everything she thinks she knows about her country, her family and herself. Unique in its perspective, this is a compelling coming-of-age story with a courageous and memorable heroine intent on confronting the truth.

GET ON THE WAKA

Ihimaera, Witi (editor) 184pp 2007



A collection of fiction writing by Maori since 2000, selected and with an introduction by Witi Ihimaera. It showcases 17 stories and extracts from established writers, most of whom have won awards and recognition in New Zealand and overseas. Contributors include: Patricia Grace; Alan Duff; Paula Morris; Kelly Ana Morey; Witi Ihimaera; and others. [SMALL FONT]

GIFTED SCHOOL, THE

Holsinger, Bruce 450pp 2019

With the announcement of the opening of a school for exceptional learners, the affluent community of Crystal, Colorado, moves in to high gear. The knives are out – figuratively speaking of course – but it is child pitted against child, adult against adult, to secure one of the limited places. Narrated through the experiences of four families who had until now enjoyed well established friendships, this is an astute and entertaining story of ambition and competition and answers the question: Just how far would you go in the pursuit of advantage for your child? [SMALL FONT]

GILEAD

Robinson, Marilynne 282pp 2004



In 1956, towards the end of Reverend John Ames's life, he begins a letter to his young son about the tension between his father — an ardent pacifist — and his grandfather. Ames is the son of an lowan preacher and the grandson of a minister who went to Kansas to fight for abolition. Reverend Ames tells a story of the bonds between fathers and sons. At the same time, his tender and strained relationship with his namesake, John Ames Boughton — his best friend's wayward son — is severely tested.

GIRL HE USED TO KNOW, THE

Graves, Tracey Garvis 291pp 2019

It might sound like the name of a song but to Jonathan Hoffman, the girl he used to know was his college sweetheart, Annika Rose. Here they are, ten years down the track, fate bringing them back together in the aisle of a Chicago supermarket! Moving between 1991 and 2001, this is the story of a relationship forced apart by tragedy, but offered a second chance. Featuring appealing characters and unique insights into the autistic world, this is a rewarding and emotionally satisfying love story with a difference. [SMALL FONT]

GIRL ON THE TRAIN, THE

Hawkins, Paula 316pp 2015



Another day, another train journey along the same stretch of track looking into the same old London backyards. But one morning, something is different and for Rachel Watson and her overactive imagination, there's no going back. And for the couples she observes in those houses in Blenheim Rd, including her ex-husband Tom, there's no going back for them either. Unreliable narrators, clever plot and frequent reminders that appearances can be misleading, create an engrossing and compelling thriller.

GIRL IN TRANSLATION

Kwok, Jean 304pp 2010

Arriving on American shores from Hong Kong, eleven year old Kimberley Chang and her mother are destined for the hardship, struggle and cultural dissonance that characterises the live of migrants. From the sweatshops and poverty of New York slums to the possibility of a better life, this is a story of determination, hope and battling against the odds. Insightful and inspirational.

GIRL, WOMAN, OTHER

Evaristo, Bernardine 452pp 2019



Spanning a century and starting and finishing with Amma, a feminist playwright, this unique story seamlessly brings together the loosely linked lives of twelve black women in Britain. Their experiences are many and varied; from school teacher to banker, from social influencer to farmer and to cleaner, their challenges and triumphs are universal and personal. Offering new perspectives on gender, race and privilege, this engrossing and entertaining story perfectly matches a convention defying style with its vibrant and original characters.



"One of the best, if not the best, we have read for a long time. We'd highly recommend it."

Palmerston North 016

"Unanimous — all thoroughly enjoyed this book despite some reservations at the start because of lack of punctuation and the subject."

Whakatane 011

"Mixed response. Most of us loved it. A great read. Highly recommended. The range of characters threw us initially."

Christchurch 396



GIRL WHO FELL FROM THE SKY, THE

Durrow, Heidi W 264pp 2010

The daughter of a Danish mother and a black G.I., Rachel Morse was eventually going to have to confront her biracial parentage. But as the sole survivor of a family tragedy, she has her work cut out for her. Not only must she embrace a new life with her African American grandmother, but establish her identity in a world that requires her to be black or white. Told from multiple perspectives, this is a story of broken dreams, race and class, and the universal quest for identity.

GIRL WHO PLAYED GO, THE

Sa, Shan 280pp 2003

Set in Japanese-occupied Manchuria in the 1930s. In the “Square of a Thousand Winds”, a sixteen-year-old Chinese girl beats all-comers at the ancient game of Go. One of her opponents is a Japanese officer of the occupying power. Their encounters are like the game itself — subtle, but surprisingly fierce.

GIRL WITH A PEARL EARRING

Chevalier, Tracy 248pp 1999

Set in 17th-century Delft, this historical novel, inspired by Dutch painter Johannes Vermeer’s masterpiece, intertwines the art of Vermeer with his life and that of a servant. Sixteen-year-old Griet goes to work in the home of the painter and becomes his subject. Through her eyes, we experience the complicated family life, the small town society and life with an obsessive genius.

GIRL WITH THE DRAGON TATTOO, THE

Larsson, Stieg 533pp 2008

A Swedish novel featuring crusading journalist Mikael Blomkvist investigating a decades old disappearance of a child. He is helped by researcher Lisbeth Salander, a genius computer hacker, non-conformist, socially challenged individual and the girl with the dragon tattoo. The investigation and Mikael’s simultaneous attempts to expose a corrupt industrialist become interwoven. This examination of individual and corporate corruption and disturbing family dysfunction combines the classic components of carefully crafted ‘whodunnit’ with the fast paced action of a page-turning thriller. Its imperfect but intriguing characters will have you thinking about them well after you have finished the last page. [BIG READ]

GIRL WITH THE LOUDING VOICE

Darè, Abi 312pp 2020

Daughter... wife... servant... 14-year-old Adunni has little say in how her life is playing out, but one thing is certain: come what may, she is determined to break free from the expectations Nigerian society has set down for her. Narrated in Adunni’s distinctive colloquial voice,

this is an engaging coming-of-age story of an irrepressible young woman resisting a life of exploitation and holding fast to her dream of being educated.

GIRLS IN THE PICTURE, THE

Benjamin, Melanie 415pp 2018

First it was the ‘flickers’ and then the ‘talkies’. Screenwriter Frances Marion and America’s Sweetheart actress Mary Pickford are there to not only see it all, but play their part in making it happen. Being Hollywood, there’s no escaping the drama, the passion, a healthy dose of ambition, sacrifice and of course power and the imbalance of power. Spanning from the early 1900s to the 1970s, this is an enthralling novel based on real life events, recalling the powerful professional collaboration and competitive friendship of two memorable trailblazers of the fledgling movie industry.

GLASS PALACE, THE

Ghosh, Amitav 552pp 2000

Spanning most of the 20th century and starting with the British arrival in Burma, this story carries Dolly and Rajkumar, and other characters, through the growing opposition to British rule in India, the Japanese invasion of Burma and Malaya, and back to the military state of Burma/Myanmar in 1996. [BIG READ]

GLASS HOTEL, THE

Mandel, Emily St John 301pp 2020

Brother and sister Paul and Vincent Smith’s presence at the remote luxury Hotel Caiette on Vancouver Island is one of employment not recreation. However, when Vincent, a social chameleon of the highest order meets hotel owner and financier Jonathan Alkailitis, she enters a world centred on wealth. But this ‘kingdom of money’ with its luxurious complacency is doomed to go the way of all Ponzi schemes, ensuring financial collapse for all concerned. With its many and varied settings moving between British Columbia, New York, a prison in South Carolina and a container ship in international waters, this intriguing fast-paced story exposes its interconnected and often haunted characters to a precarious world of greed and moral compromise.



“A fast-paced story of intrigue and mystery which keeps you hooked until the end.”

“The book is easy to read and moves along at a quick speed in the manner of a thriller.”

“The effects of the Ponzi Scheme have stayed with me — the greed and how fortunes change.”

BDS Reviewers

GO, WENT, GONE

Erpenbeck, Jenny 283pp 2017

With more time on his hands than he knows what to do with, Richard, a newly retired Berlin classics professor, stumbles upon a new purpose in his life: getting to know the African asylum seekers congregating in his city. Initially curious but ultimately engaged and committed, Richard befriends these displaced men desperate for the opportunity to work and find a place to call home. Thought-provoking and profound, this story, strengthened with its references to the classics, gives voice to the personal experiences of refugees caught up in Europe's humanitarian crisis and ponders the humanity we all share. [SMALL FONT]

GOD BOY, THE

Cross, Ian 181pp 1957



A small boy narrates events of the past, which changed his life as he was caught up in an adult drama.

GOD HELP THE CHILD

Morrison, Toni 178pp 2015

Discrimination comes in all shapes and sizes and in Bride's case the fact that she is ebony black puts her at the bottom of the colour pecking order. Even her light-skinned mother, Sweetness, finds her darkness an affront. However, Bride survives and prospers but just how successfully can you distance yourself from a troubled childhood? Told from multiple viewpoints, this provocative and punchy story exposes discrimination within discrimination and considers the legacy of childhood experience.

GOLDEN BOYS

Hartnett, Sonya 256pp 2014



The envy of the neighbourhood kids, newly arrived Colt and Bastian Jenson seem to have it all – a swimming pool, the latest of everything and friendly and welcoming parents, especially their dad Rex. Surely the portrait of the perfect family? So it seems to the Kileys – just down the road, six kids and not enough money. Played out in 1970s Melbourne and with its young narrators, this is a gripping and disquieting story of suburban life and a mesmerising examination of family dysfunction.

GOLDEN CHILD

Adam, Claire 252pp 2019

The question is, how would you choose? Clyde Deyalsingh has an impossible decision to make: use the family's limited resources to launch Peter, the favoured twin, or rescue Paul, his challenging brother? Set in rural Trinidad, this thought-provoking story of ambition and betrayal is distinguished by its sensitive depiction of family life and its page-turning urgency.

GOLDEN HILL

Spufford, Francis 344pp 2016

When Richard Smith sets foot on Manhattan Island in 1746, it's not long before New York tongues are wagging. The enigmatic Mr. Smith has a promissory note for 1000 pounds, but is not to be drawn on who he is, and what he plans to do with his fortune. If he is to prosper, this likeable but playing-his-cards-close-to-his-chest Englishman must successfully navigate a naturally mistrustful Manhattan society. With its period appropriate style and historically accurate details, this is an intriguing and fast-paced adventure of colonial New York.

GOLDEN STATE

Kegan, Stephanie 288pp 2016

It's not going to be happy-ever-after for Natalie Askendahl and her kin. A teacher and wife of an attorney, Natalie's suspicion that her beloved older brother Bobby is connected to a series of bombings on Californian college campuses, unleashes a torrent of guilt and blame on her previously politically influential family. Riveting and provocative, this is the story of a family grappling with issues of loyalty and moral ambiguity and the challenges of trying to protect those that you love.

GOLDFINCH, THE

Tartt, Donna 784pp 2013



A bomb in an art gallery alters the course of thirteen year old Theo Decker's life. Not only does he lose his mother on that fateful day but he is captivated by a painting and a girl caught up in the tragedy, whose stories become entwined with his own. He becomes a young man adrift, susceptible to substance abuse, a survivor doing his best with the hand he has been dealt. As meticulously executed as Carel Fabritius' eponymous painting, this is an epic story of America, of love and loss, right and wrong, of art and beauty and making one's way in the world, recounted by Theo himself. [BIG READ- **this book is read over two months** - groups on a full programme would receive only nine books for the year.]

GOLDILOCKS

Lam, Laura 333pp 2020



Fuelled by the rising tides of climate change and misogyny, an all-female crew of astronauts board the world's first starship. Their destination: Cavendish, a planet in the Goldilocks zone, suitable for human habitation. At the helm is visionary Valerie Black and among her crew of five, her surrogate daughter and mission botanist, Naomi Lovelace. Naomi is committed to a better future for everyone, even if it means questioning her loyalty to Valerie. Engaging and thought-provoking, this suspenseful story astutely highlights the political realities of our current world and the possible future of the planet, all the while weaving through a lifeline of hope.



GONE GIRL

Flynn, Gillian 466pp 2012



At the five year mark, Nick and Amy Dunne’s marriage has run into a spot of trouble – Amy has disappeared and Nick is, understandably, in the spotlight. In this clever psychological thriller, twists and turns abound and Nick is not the only one under close scrutiny. 21st century USA is under the microscope too, particularly the court of public opinion and trial by media.

GOOD EARTH, THE

Buck, Pearl S 357pp 1931



The classic story of Wang Lung and his wife O-Lan. This remarkable novel depicts the suffering and hardship of poverty and the struggle to achieve prosperity, as well as the strictures of tradition that shaped and controlled daily life in rural pre-revolutionary China.

GOOD ENOUGH MOTHER, A

Thomas, Bev 324pp 2019

Dr Ruth Hartland of a London Trauma Unit is well aware of the need to keep her private and professional lives separate. However, things start to get messy when a new patient to the unit bears an uncanny resemblance to her missing teenage son, Tom. Dan is a difficult and unstable client and the events that follow serve to reinforce why some boundaries should not be crossed. Intense and gripping, this is an emotionally charged story that reflects the author’s own considerable clinical experience as a psychologist and invites the reader to ponder among other things: was Ruth a good enough mother?

GOOD TO A FAULT

Endicott, Marina 437pp 2008



An innocuous drive to the bank becomes a life-changing event for Clara Purdy when she causes a car accident that involves the Gage family. In the fallout, with the young mother remaining in hospital, Clara’s orderly existence is thrown into chaos when she offers to help and the family moves in with her. The resulting domestic tableau of mess and unpredictability provides the setting for the gentle examination of the perennial themes at the heart of our relationships with others while addressing the question: is it possible to be good to a fault?

GOSPEL OF JUDAS, THE

Mawer, Simon 345pp 2000

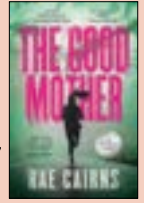
Roman Catholic priest and renown biblical-era scholar, Leo Newman, is summoned to Jerusalem to decipher a recently discovered scroll. Leo senses that the scroll, if authentic, could open Christianity to a complete reinterpretation. He finds his faith challenged further by his attraction to Madeline, the wife of a British diplomat. All narrative strands seamlessly produce a tightly crafted literary thriller, and a tale of love and betrayal.

GOOD MOTHER, THE

Cairns, Rae 353pp 2020



Sarah Calhoun’s teenage son, Riley, hits the football jackpot when he is offered the opportunity to represent Australia at a FIFA youth development camp in Dublin in 2014. It’s a dream come true for Riley, but for Sarah, the beginning of a nightmare, forcing her to revisit her past when she was a youth worker in Northern Ireland during The Troubles. Now she will be forced to testify in a historical murder trial in Belfast, putting herself, Riley and her family at great risk. Facing danger at every turn, Sarah will do anything and everything it takes to keep her family safe, making this a gripping, action-packed thriller.



“Very fast-paced novel, it would be a great holiday read.”

“Both my husband and I thoroughly enjoyed this thriller.”

“Gripping plot, hard to put down.”

“There are some descriptions of violence that could upset some readers.”

BDS Reviewers

GRAPES OF WRATH, THE

Steinbeck, John 416pp 1939



An American mid-west family’s journey to the false Garden of Eden of California during the Depression. [SMALL FONT]

GRAVE TATTOO, THE

McDermid, Val 543pp 2006



The Grave Tattoo has England’s Lake District as the backdrop for a drama of life and death — the ultimate prize, a bounty worth millions. A little-known fact about Fletcher Christian, leader of the mutiny on the “Bounty”, was that he was born on a farm in Cumbria, in the English Lake District, in 1764, six years before William Wordsworth, whom he probably knew. The theory is that, after the mutiny, Christian left Pitcairn Island and returned to England to clear his name. Did Christian fake his own death in order to return home secretly? [BIG READ]

GREAT GATSBY, THE

Fitzgerald, F Scott 188pp 1926



A novel of the “jazz age” symbolising the American dream. The first part of a trilogy, but quite self-contained. [SMALL FONT]

GREEN ISLAND

Ryan, Shawna Yang 381pp 2016

1947 heralds in turbulent times for the Tsai family. As Taiwan's Japanese colonial rule is replaced by martial law, the family welcome the arrival of their newest member, a daughter, only to have her father imprisoned for his political views. In the decades that follow, as the country progresses towards democracy, they must all endure as best they can, weighing up on a daily basis the betrayals and loyalties necessary for survival. Encompassing the actual events of the time, this is a compelling story of a Taiwanese family negotiating the complex political forces of history.

GUERNICA

Boling, Dave 373pp 2008

Miren Ansotegui might have the pick of Guernica's young men, but new arrival Miguel Navarro is the one who catches her eye, delighting their respective families even as they endure the hardships of the Spanish Civil War. But history is not on Guernica's side and when the Luftwaffe enter the fray on April 26th 1937, the unimaginable happens. This vividly drawn story of the Basque people and the infamous tragedy they faced is an engrossing saga of love and family, woven through with real-life characters and events of the time.

GUERNSEY LITERARY & POTATO PEEL PIE SOCIETY, THE

Shaffer, Mary Ann 256pp 2008

As London emerges from the shadow of World War II, writer Juliet Ashton is looking for her next book subject. When her publisher passes on a letter from a man she's never met — a native of Guernsey who has come across her name written inside a book — they begin to exchange letters. Juliet is drawn into the world of this man and his friends who, under German occupation, formed the Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society. Juliet corresponds with the society's members, learning about their island, their taste in books and the impact the recent German occupation has had on their lives.

GUIDE TO THE BIRDS OF EAST AFRICA, A

Drayson, Nicholas 208pp 2009

Every Tuesday, Rose Mbikwa is to be found leading the members of the East African Ornithological Society on their weekly walk. Mr Malik is a loyal member of the troupe and a secret admirer, (almost) ready to declare his suit. The arrival on the Nairobi scene of one Harry Khan forces the issue: in a contemporary twist on tournaments of yore, Mr Malik and Harry agree to an ornithological challenge. The prize? Asking Rose to the Asadi Club's annual ball. In a charming juxtaposition, birds, politics, colonialism, AIDS, and the scourges of corruption come together to produce both an entertaining and informative read.

GULLIVER'S TRAVELS

Swift, Jonathan 320pp 1726

Satire on humans and human institutions; also a tale of travels to fantastical lands. [SMALL FONT]

GUSTAV SONATA, THE

Tremain, Rose 240pp 2016

Gustav and Anton, Anton and Gustav. Gustav is the only child of an embittered and distant mother, while Anton is the musically gifted son of doting Jewish parents. Their close friendship formed as young children in the late 1940s, lays down the foundations for the rest of their lives. Set in Switzerland, this complex story of friendship and of deception and betrayal, examines the playing out of conscience and conformity in a country espousing neutrality.

HAMILTON CASE, THE

De Kretser, Michelle 369pp 2003

Set in 1930s Ceylon. Sam Obeyesekere, born to a privileged family and educated at Oxford, returns home to practice law. When he is approached to give his thoughts on the Hamilton Case, a scandalous murder that shakes the upper echelon of island society, he is flattered by the request and declares an Englishman guilty of the crime. His accusation will have devastating consequences for his future.

HALF OF A YELLOW SUN

Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi 433pp 2006

This novel recreates a seminal moment in modern African history: Biafra's impassioned struggle to establish an independent republic in Nigeria in the 1960s, and the chilling violence that followed. Adichie weaves together the lives of three characters swept up in the turbulence of the decade: Ugwu, a thirteen-year-old peasant houseboy who survives conscription into the Biafran army, and twin sisters Olanna and Kainene. As Nigerian troops advance and the three must run for their lives, their ideals are severely tested, as are their loyalties to one another. [SMALL FONT]

HAND ME DOWN WORLD

Jones, Lloyd 313pp 2010

Moving from Africa to Europe, a young woman undertakes an ambitious journey involving child kidnapping, people smuggling and exploitation. Revealed to us by the people she encounters, a surprising story unfolds. It is a tale of love and betrayal and need; a contemporary odyssey that compels you to keep on reading to uncover the truth.

HAMNET 🔍

O'Farrell, Maggie 367pp 2020

When the plague rears its ugly head in Stratford-upon-Avon, the Shakespeare household is thrown into disarray. First it is eleven-year-old Judith who falls ill, but it is her twin brother Hamnet who succumbs. His mother is inconsolable and as for his father, he is off in London, writing his plays. Beautifully imagined and exquisitely descriptive, and with its evocative accounts of 16th century daily life, this story of love and loss is an intimate portrayal of a family, with Agnes (whom history calls Anne) at its heart.



"The author is pure genius. An unforgettable book."

"Beautifully structured and exquisitely descriptive sentences."

"I loved the clever way the author confirms she is writing about Shakespeare without ever using his name."

"Beautiful and evocative accounts of life in households of that time."

"I loved the earthy romanticism of the book."

BDS Reviewers

HAND THAT FIRST HELD MINE, THE

O'Farrell, Maggie 374pp 2010

Lexie and Elina are young women living in London 50 years apart; Lexie is a journalist in 1950's Soho and Elina, a present day artist who along with her partner Ted is recovering from the traumatic birth of their first child. When Ted seeks to understand his own childhood, the dual stories begin to collide, solving a decades-old mystery and exposing the reader to the richness of lives passionately led. This is a novel of mesmerising characters and family secrets well-seasoned with the peaks and troughs of love and parenthood.

HANDMAID'S TALE, THE 🔗

Atwood, Margaret 324pp 1987

A visionary novel that looks to the future of the human race and a world radically changed. Offred, the handmaid, learns how to survive in the repressive, post-holocaust Republic of Gilead. Ominous references to the "time before" points to present-day society.

HANNA'S DAUGHTERS 🔗

Fredriksson, Marianne 360pp 1998

In modern-day Stockholm, Anna discovers a sepia photograph of her grandmother as a young woman, quite unlike the cold, forbidding person she thinks she knows. Curiosity leads Anna to discover the realities of past generations.

HAPPINESS

Forna, Aminatta 309pp 2018

In the unlikeliest of encounters — caused by an errant fox on a London bridge – Attila Asare, a Ghanaian psychiatrist in the city to attend a conference, briefly collides with Jean Turane, an American scientist studying urban foxes. However, it is their next meeting that has more significance and using her network of volunteer fox-spotters, Jean is able to help Attila in his search for a young boy caught up in an immigration crackdown. Carefully observing the interconnectedness of our lives, this is a multifaceted story of the many and varied inhabitants of a vibrant and complex city, including the wildlife that calls it home. [SMALL FONT]

HARBOURING 🔗

Patrick, Jenny 297pp 2022

Like so many migrants, the Pengellins from Wales are seeking a better life, and New Zealand, on the other side of the world, beckons. Working as a procurer for Colonel Wakefield and the New Zealand Company, Huw is thrust into the development of early Wellington, while Martha must establish their home. Hineroa Tāroaroa also yearns for a different future, one where she is no longer a slave. Narrated by Huw, Martha and Hineroa, this is captivating story of the fledgling settlement, of the cauldron of colonisation, and New Zealand history brought to vibrant life.



"Riveting reading. I couldn't put it down. I think this is Patrick's best so far."

"Refreshing and easy to read. I enjoyed Patrick's descriptions of the early life of New Zealand."

"A thoroughly researched and therefore very credible story."

BDS Reviewers

HARMONY SILK FACTORY, THE

Aw, Tash 362pp 2005

Set in Malaysia in the 1930s and 1940s with World War II as backdrop, and the Japanese about to invade. It is the story of four people: Johnny, an infamous Chinaman whose shop house, "The Harmony Silk Factory", is used as a front for his illegal businesses; Snow Soong, the beautiful daughter of one of the Kinta Valley's most prominent families; Kunichika, a Japanese officer who loves Snow, and an Englishman, Peter Wormwood, who went to Malaysia and who also loved Snow to the end of his life. A journey that exposes the cultural tensions of the era.

HARLEM SHUFFLE

Whitehead, Colson 318pp 2021

At first glance, the ambitious Ray Carney of Carney's Furniture 125th Street, is as upright and dependable as the furniture he sells to support his growing family. But a second glance reveals the demands he juggles on all fronts – from the disapproval of his plutey in-laws to his involvement – both voluntary and involuntary – with his cousin Freddy's dodgy deals, and the prejudice he faces on a daily basis. With its vibrant language and colourful characters, this multi-layered caper of crime, corruption and capitalism conveys the plight of African Americans in 1960s New York as the civil rights era hits its stride.



"I enjoyed the fine, vibrant language. Highly recommended."

"Despite the grim story outline, the narration is gripping, leading in the last section to page-turning urgency."

"A splendid portrayal of the racial and political divide that divided the US and has many parallels today."

BDS Reviewers

HARVEST OF THORNS, A

Addison, Corban 465pp 2017

Who doesn't love a bargain when it comes to buying clothes, but at what cost? A garment factory fire ... an American corporation ... a whistleblower ... a courtroom. From Bangladesh to Malaysia to Washington D.C., this journey across the world has a company lawyer and an investigative journalist lifting the lid on the international garment trade. Comprehensively researched, this is a compelling and challenging thriller revealing just what is at stake when corporate greed runs rampant.



"For those who enjoyed John Grisham's early works, this will be catnip!"

"This is a fascinating read. There is a lot of information around the supply chain of a big corporation."

"Personal details regarding the characters, and the intensity with which the story is told, makes this an excellent read."

BDS Reviewers

HAVE YOU SEEN LUIS VELEZ?

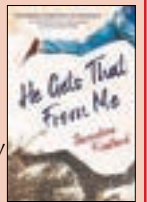
Hyde, Catherine Ryan 320pp 2019

Teenager Raymond Jaffe will end up spending a considerable amount of time trying to track down the eponymous Luiz Velez, in an effort to help his blind, elderly neighbour, Mildred Gutermann. Mildred's caregiver Luis has gone AWOL and when disaffected Raymond steps into the breach, a whole new world opens up for these two vulnerable characters. Set in a challenging New York neighbourhood, this is a captivating story of unexpected friendship, the balm of burdens shared and the ability of kindness and connection to counter loss and regret.

HE GETS THAT FROM ME

Friedland, Jacqueline 291pp 2021

By undertaking a successful surrogate pregnancy, Maggie Fisher ensures a better future for her husband and child, while helping create a family for dads Chip and Donovan Rigsdale. When twins Kai and Teddy are handed over, that should be the end of that, but a DNA test a decade later reveals some surprising results ... and that's when things get messy. Narrated alternately by Maggie and Donovan, this suspenseful, believable story with its convincing characters cuts to the core of what makes a parent, and what makes a family.



"The potential for discussion is huge with this book. I was really pleased I read it."

"Because both sides are skilfully drawn, the tension builds up, with no indication of which will win."

"All characters are well-drawn and convincing. The chapters written in various voices offer good contrast."

BDS Reviewers

HEALING, THE

Odell, Jonathan 340pp 2012

Polly Shine is a healer and midwife and as such is purchased to attend to the slaves of the Satterfield plantation. On arrival she is faced with an unexpected situation; Granada, the young black girl being raised as if she is the daughter of the house, appears to possess a talent similar to her own, one she is reluctant to embrace. But the ability to heal is a precious gift not to be squandered, and Polly's determination to bring it to fruition will affect everyone on the plantation, black or white. Based on oral histories of the period, this is an unforgettable story of strong women and the antebellum South that ponders the true nature of freedom and the healing power of story. [SMALL FONT]

HEART OF DARKNESS

Conrad, Joseph 343pp 1902

Three stories by a master storyteller, *Heart of Darkness* tells of a journey into the heart of Mr Kurtz, the ivory hunter. Powerful adventure.

HEART OF THE MATTER, THE

Greene, Graham 271pp 1948

A policeman in a British colony in Africa during the war is led to disaster. A story of love and faith.

HEARTLAND

Patrick, Jenny 326pp 2014

Sitting in the shadow of Mt Ruapehu, the small town of Manawa is chock-a-block with a zany cast of characters. Donny Mac is right at the centre of the bunch, naive but loveable which places him at the mercy of the town bullies as well as those who have plans for him. There are secrets to contend with, the undercurrent of townies versus locals and the big challenges of life, but above all, a community of people with a heart. Exploring the values and prejudices of small town New Zealand, this delightfully fanciful story is easy to read and will lift your spirits and remind you of what really matters.

HEAT AND LIGHT

Haigh, Jennifer 427pp 2016

Bakerton has seen better days ... now that the coal mines are closed, only what remains on the surface of the land is of value. That is until Dark Elephant Energy comes swooping into town armed with contracts and promises of easy money. Rich Devlin will now be able to pursue his dream of a dairy farm, while Rena and Mack's ability to supply markets and restaurants with organic produce will likely be compromised: the fracking debate has been ignited. There are money men, drillers, activists and all, everyone looking for a cut of the action in small town Pennsylvania. Thought-provoking and relevant, this story is well served by its multiple narrators and confident examination of the economic and environmental dilemmas of energy production and the unforeseen costs of greed and other human frailties.

HEATHER BLAZING, THE

Tóibín, Colm 245pp 1993

Colm Tóibín's *The Heather Blazing* details the life of Eamon Redmond, a judge in Ireland's high court, a man remote from his wife, his son and daughter and, at least outwardly, from his own childhood. The life he has built for himself, between his work in Dublin and his family's retreat by the sea at Cush, is distinguished by order and by achievement. When, like his beloved coastline, it begins to slip away, he is pulled sharply into the present, and finds himself revisiting his past.

HEFT

Moore, Liz 352pp 2012

Arthur Opp describes himself as 'colossally fat'. At the opposite end of the physical spectrum is teenager Kel Keller, an aspiring baseball star. Never the twain shall meet, but for Charlene, Kel's mother. Once a student of Arthur's, she re-establishes contact, setting in play a connection that will change their lives. A tale of suburban New York, this story examines isolation and loneliness and the transformative power of connection and community.

HEIRS, THE

Rieger, Susan 272pp 2017

Compounding the recent loss of their patriarch, the wealthy Falkes family of Manhattan suffers another blow: an unknown woman sues the estate claiming that Rupert was also the father of her two sons. Eleanor, Rupert's widow, and their five adult sons are thrown into turmoil, the unwelcome development calling into question their understanding of themselves as individuals and as a family. This richly drawn saga examines the vexed question of inheritance and how well we can really know someone. With its excellent character development and portrayal of family dynamics, this is an emotionally satisfying read, and a superlative rags-to-riches story.

HELOISE

Hager, Mandy 356pp 2017

They feature in lists of the world's most famous lovers... Heloise D'Argenteuil and Peter Abelard. Springing from 12th century France, theirs was also a meeting of the minds, Abelard being a philosopher and theologian and Heloise, his student. Their relationship with its many challenges plays out against the backdrop of the religious reforms and political intrigues of the early Middle Ages. Anchored by extensive research and enriched with input from classic and medieval philosophers, this novel incorporates the characters' own writing to produce a fascinating and passionate retelling of the love story of this real-life legendary couple.

HELP, THE

Stockett, Kathryn 451pp 2009

Twenty-two year old Skeeter has just returned home after graduating from Ole Miss. She may have a degree, but it is 1962, Mississippi, and her mother will not be happy till Skeeter has a ring on her finger. Aibileen is a black maid, a wise, regal woman raising her seventeenth white child. Something has shifted inside her after the loss of her own son, who died while his bosses looked the other way. Minny, Aibileen's best friend, is short, fat, and perhaps the sassiest woman in Mississippi. She can cook like nobody's business, but she can't mind her tongue, so she's lost yet another job. Seemingly as different from one another as can be, these women come together for a clandestine project that will put them all at risk.

HER FEARFUL SYMMETRY

Niffenegger, Audrey 390pp 2009

Step into the world of mirror twins, family dysfunction and the supernatural. A highly readable ghost story featuring teenagers Julia and Valentina Poole fulfilling the conditions of their aunt's will by moving into her apartment overlooking Highgate Cemetery in London. This fascinating setting is the backdrop for Niffenegger's investigation of the big questions in life: love, loss, identity and death.



HIRED MAN, THE

Forna, Aminatta 293pp 2013

When an English family descend on the Croatian town of Gost for the summer, Duro Kotak is hired to help with the renovation of their cottage, the 'Blue House'. As the restoration progresses, it is not just a beautiful mosaic and other treasures that are revealed, but so too are Duro's memories of Gost's conflicted past when its citizens were at war with one another. As the temperature rises, so too does the tension as Duro tells his story, both past and present, of his familiarity with the 'Blue House' and the nightmare he and his neighbours endured. A beautifully crafted story that presents recent Eastern European history in an accessible and credible manner.



HERD, THE

Edwards, Emily 335pp 2022

To vax, or not to vax... that is the question. It might be a very personal question, but it is one whose answer can have unforeseen consequences for children, as Elizabeth and Bryony discover. From close friends and neighbours in an English village, to adversaries in the court room in a flash, it is a question and moral position that must be defended. Thought-provoking and compassionate, this is a timely story that grapples with the issue of childhood vaccination, in a page-turning, relatable style.



"This is a wonderful book and very suitable for book discussion groups."

"Utterly believable narrative and a very pleasing writing style."

"Thought-provoking, moving and very topical."

"Magnificent twist in the tail."

BDS Reviewers

HISTORY OF LONELINESS, A

Boyne, John 380pp 2014

As Father Odran Yates reflects on his life as a priest he encounters uncertainties and ripples of unease. Has he been wilfully ignorant or just plain naive? As for his clergy contemporaries, especially his friend Tom Cardle who entered the seminary with him when they were teenagers, have they upheld the faith that is so important to them all? Passionate and unflinching, this novel is a powerful examination of Irish life that confronts the accusations levelled at the Church.



HISTORY OF THE RAIN

Williams, Niall 358pp 2014

Every way she turns, Ruthie Swain is surrounded by books, 3958 of them to be precise. From her bed in the attic of the family farmhouse in County Clare, Ruthie seeks out the stories of the Swains: from her great-grandfather the Reverend Swain, her pole-vaulting salmon-loving grandfather Abraham, to her poet farmer father Virgil, and her twin brother Aeney. With the support of her literary legacy and her powerful imagination, Ruthie the storyteller reveals the lives of her unconventional family and life in small town Ireland. Rich with literary references, poetic language and gentle humour, this is a family saga to savour.



HOBBIT, THE 

Tolkien, JRR 318pp 1954

The hobbit, Bilbo Baggins, reluctantly joins thirteen dwarves on a venture to win a share of the treasure held by the dragon, Smaug. A famous fantasy-adventure work, peopled with creatures from folklore and the writer's imagination.

HOKITIKA TOWN  

Randall, Charlotte 272pp 2012

Hokitika in the 1860s is a bustling and colourful town, home to a young lad, Halfie, and a motley bunch of ne'er-do-wells. Delighting in linguistic high jinks, this story brings to life the glory days of the gold rush and offers a vivid snapshot of West Coast history.

HOME FIRE  

Shamsie, Kamila 260pp 2017

It really is a case of the sins of the father ... orphaned siblings Isma, Aneeka and Parvais Pasha are children of a jihadist terrorist whose history is about to shape their futures. When nineteen-year-old Parvais is lured into finding out more about their father, the fall-out ripples right up to the office of the Home Secretary. In this original re-telling of Sophocles' Antigone, Ancient Greece is replaced with contemporary Britain, but the challenges of family, identity and divided loyalties remain, enhanced by a sensitive exploration of the mechanism of radicalisation.

HOMEGOING, THE

Gyasi, Yaa 300pp 2016

It starts with sisters Effia and Esi: Effia with marriage to an English slave trader and Esi, sold as a slave and shipped to the Americas. From 1700s Gold Coast Africa to present day USA, the family bloodline expands over three continents and through seven generations. Using a domestic focus to trace the history of the US and Ghana, this compelling and memorable saga is rich in African culture and reverberates with the fraught legacy of slavery. [SMALL FONT]

HONEYBEE

Silvey, Craig 424pp 2020

Desperation brings fourteen-year-old Sam Watson to the wrong side of a safety rail of a motorway overpass, an act witnessed by Vic, an elderly widower dealing with his own despair. The unlikely bond that forms, and the friendship that develops allows both Vic and Sam to face up to their lives, especially Sam who has many challenges. Compelling and thought-provoking, this Western Australian story exposes its vivid characters to petty crime, violence and drug taking through to gender conformity and mental health issues, all the while creating a poignant yet ultimately hopeful and satisfying coming-of-age story.

HONEY GUIDE, THE

Crompton, Richard 309pp 2013

Unlike his superiors, Mollel, a former Maasai warrior turned detective, is not prepared to relinquish the search for the killer of a prostitute found dead in a Nairobi park. His quest will take him from tower blocks to slums and everything between. Add a riot or two and rocketing tribal tensions and Nairobi is a powder keg just waiting to blow. Set around the period of the 2007 Kenyan presidential elections, this is a compelling whodunnit that brings the streets of this turbulent African city to life.

HONEYDEW 

Pearlman, Edith 275pp 2015

From *Tenderfoot*, the pedicure parlour, to *Forget Me Not*, the antique store, many of the twenty stories in this short story collection are set in the fictional Boston suburb of Godolphin. Often linked, often playful, each story offers an acute view of everyday life, highlighting the unexpected in the ordinary minutiae of living. Anaesthetist, patient, headmistress, shop owner to name but a few: all are treated with respect and compassion with the resultant stories witty and satisfying.

HONOUR

Shafak, Elif 342pp 2012

When Pembe and Adem Toprak migrate to London from Turkey in the 1970s, it is not just their children who accompany them but also the Turkish and Kurdish traditions of many generations. As they adjust to their new life as immigrants, a family crisis unfolds and the challenge of upholding these beliefs in a Western setting reaches breaking point. Multiple narrators present this powerful story of faith and love, examining the resulting family tragedy with compassion and cultural insight. [SMALL FONT]

HOUSE OF MIRTH 

Wharton, Edith 338pp 1905

Introduction written in 1985. Rediscovered novel from the New York world of the moneyed classes. This is the story of the tragedy of a failed social climber, Lily Bart, who desperately seeks to hide her poverty.

HOUSE OF THE MOSQUE, THE

Abdolah, Kader 431pp 2005

Having lived in the house attached to the mosque for eight centuries, Aqa Jaan and his kin epitomise a devout Muslim family. However, change is in the air: the Iranian revolution is underway, and the effect on the extended family is tumultuous. With its heady mix of revolution and relationships, politics and power, this story brings to life a slice of Iranian history imbued with the author's own experiences. A captivating snapshot of the last days of the Shah and the rise of Islamic fundamentalism.

HOUSEKEEPER & THE PROFESSOR, THE

Ogawa, Yoko 180pp 2010

With only eighty minutes of short-term memory, an elderly Japanese mathematics professor greets each new day with no recollection of the previous one, including his housekeeper and her young son. On the clean slate of each new morning they develop a tender and complicated relationship revolving around the professor's joy and passion for mathematics and baseball. A charming story of deceptive simplicity, guaranteed to convert the mathematically challenged to the beauty and mystery of numbers.

HOW TO BE AN AMERICAN HOUSEWIFE

Dilloway, Margaret 331pp 2010

Armed with little more than a handbook entitled 'How to be an American Housewife', Japanese warbride Shoko Morgan can hardly wait to reach California. But decades later when she is finally ready to return home to Japan and make peace with her family, it's not to be. Instead she sends her daughter Suiko (Sue) and grand-daughter Helena who discover a world and a culture as foreign to them as the one Shoko had encountered on her arrival in USA. A charming and poignant story featuring family, forgiveness and foreign shores.

HOW THE ONE-ARMED SISTER SWEEPS HER HOUSE

Jones, Cherie 308pp 2021

Wealthy tourists flock to the tropical delights of Baxter's Beach, Barbados, but for the locals who never get to leave, life in the 1980s is far from idyllic. Lala, whose home is a beachside shack, was raised with the cautionary tale of what happens to girls who disobey their mothers, but still the intergenerational trauma continues. Lala's husband Adan, her grandmother Wilma, her friend and champion Tone; they all tell a different story of this Caribbean paradise, of hardship and violence as the sun shines and the sea sparkles. Told from a variety of perspectives, this is a powerful and haunting story of paradise lost.



"The story is beautifully structured and very gripping."

"The use of language is hypnotic."

"This is a powerful book about women and domestic violence. It's a haunting story."

"Such a vibrant writing style. It brings the beauty, violence and struggles to life."

BDS Reviewers

HOW THE LIGHT GETS IN

Penny, Louise 402pp 2013

Although his enemies in the Sûreté are sharpening their knives, Chief Inspector Armand Gamache of the Homicide Department gives the appearance of 'business as usual' as he goes about investigating the death of a woman who was once one of the most famous people in Canada. Moving between the isolated village of Three Pines and Montreal, the gentlemanly Gamache must solve the mystery of Constance Pineault's life while simultaneously uncovering the corruption festering in the Quebecois elite. Quirky characters, carefully controlled tension and a lacing of subtle humour render this multi-layered story a most satisfying and enjoyable read.

HOW TO BE GOOD

Hornby, Nick 243pp 2001

Dr Kate Carr wants a divorce from her husband David, an under-employed writer with a regular local newspaper column entitled, "The Angriest Man in Holloway". Family life is turned on its head when David experiences a personal transformation at the hands of a faith healer.

HOW TO GET FILTHY RICH IN RISING ASIA

Hamid, Mohsin 228pp 2013

The exhortations from this 'how-to' guide will be uncomfortably familiar to citizens of a capitalist society. To achieve the status of filthy rich, it is necessary to heed the instructions from the initial 'move to the city' (step one), through to the final aphorism 'have an exit strategy' (step twelve). Along the way it is recommended that you 'avoid idealists' (step four), and if necessary, 'be prepared to use violence' (step seven), and let's not forget the requisite 'dance with debt' (step ten). Accompanying the nameless protagonist from his nameless Asian country on his rag-to-riches trajectory, this entertaining no holds barred parody offers the reader a thought-provoking satirical overview that plumbs both the heights and depths of wealth and poverty.

HOW TO STOP A HEART FROM BEATING

Ballantyne, Jackie 302pp 2007

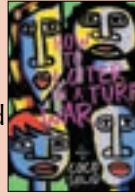
The year 1961 is a pivotal one for nine-year-old Solly McKeen. She is a loner in a family of twins, and seen as a bit of an oddity by everyone in her dairy-farming community in South Otago. On learning about the unnamed paupers' graves in the local cemetery, she promises to people them, imagining characters, names and causes of death for each. While Solly unravels death and fills in the blanks on the gravestones, she unwittingly uncovers family secrets.

HOW TO LOITER IN A TURF WAR

Hansell, Jessica (aka Coco Solid) 176pp 2022



The sun is shining, but the bus is late and so begins a day in the life of three friends in Tāmaki Makaurau. Te Hoia, a political science student, Rosina, an aspiring artist, and Q, a poet in the making, all have things to do and places to go, culminating in an art show exhibiting some of Rosina’s work. This is a clever and engaging story of a South Auckland suburb changing before one’s very eyes, touching on got-your-back friendship, racism and gentrification hard at work.



“The author has crafted a clever, engaging and very different novel.”

“A fabulous book. A story of friendship fiercely maintained as they make their mark on their local neighbourhood.”

“This book gives a lot to ponder and quite a lot of moments where the Pākehā reader might feel a bit uncomfortable. Really well done.”

BDS Reviewers

HOW TO STOP TIME

Haig, Matt 336pp 2017

Would the real Tom Hazard please step forward... he may currently be a 41-year-old history teacher in North London, but what about his stints in Tudor England, 1920s Paris, and 18th century Tahiti? Tom is not a time traveller, just very long-lived. Ageing a year for every fifteen chronological years means that yes, he has rubbed shoulders with Will Shakespeare, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and even Captain Cook. But it’s not all fun and games and the one thing he cannot risk is falling in love, or falling out with the Albatross Society, a clandestine organisation supposedly there to support people like Tom, that is, if they conform. Lively and highly imaginative, Tom’s predicament offers the reader an entertaining tale and a unique reflection on the meaning of life.

HOW TO WALK AWAY

Center, Katherine 302pp 2018



In a story that begins with an engagement and ends with a wedding, Margaret Jacobsen is a worthy heroine. About to start her dream job, Maggie is flying high... until she isn’t. When her life changes in an instant, during the months of rehabilitation that follow, she has no choice but to start living the life she has been given, not the one she was anticipating. Both poignant and funny, this is a captivating story with appealing characters and a heart-warming message of hope amidst adversity.

HUMANS, THE

Haig, Matt 291pp 2013

Have you ever wondered what an alien would make of life on Earth? Well, Cambridge maths Professor Andrew Martin could be the one answering the question. Although he has just solved a seemingly impossible-to-solve mathematical problem, everything else seems to be at odds, and it’s only going to get worse before it gets better. In this perceptive and quirky commentary on the experience of the human condition from someone with little experience, Prof Martin offers the reader wry and humorous observations on the contrariness of modern living and the challenges of love and life for those who call Earth home.

HUNDRED YEAR OLD MAN WHO CLIMBED OUT THE WINDOW AND DISAPPEARED, THE

Jonasson, Jonas 396pp 2012

And if that’s not amazing in itself, there’s more to follow. Allan Karlsson goes AWOL on the occasion of his 100th birthday party setting forth on a hair-raising adventure. It turns out that this is not such an unusual occurrence for him as he has been present at many of the important events of the 20th century. In fact, Churchill, Franco, Mao, Truman and Stalin, to name a few, have cause to be grateful to him. Refreshing and original, Allan’s escapades will have you chuckling as you reflect on the history and politics of last century.

HUNGER GAMES, THE

Collins, Suzanne 454pp 2008



Every year, the twelve districts of Panem (the remains of North America) hold the ‘Hunger Games’, a reality TV show like no other. Pitted against one another, the tributes, twelve girls and twelve boys, compete to determine the future prosperity of their regions. But the price is high; it is a fight to the death. Katniss Everdeen has the dubious honour of representing District 12 in this year’s games. This deceptively simple and accessible story immerses you in a future that is all too possible. The story is fast-paced, populated with dynamic characters and overflowing with complex and sophisticated moral questions. As gripping as it is thought-provoking.

I AM PILGRIM

Hayes, Terry 703pp 2013



Faced with the possibility of a homeland terrorist threat, a US spy (codename: Pilgrim) is hauled back from retirement to track down the suspected terrorist and prevent full scale calamity. From a public beheading in Mecca to a trail of murder encompassing New York, the Hindu Kush and Turkey, this is a riveting story with exotic settings and populated with well-developed characters. Referencing real world events and maintaining nail biting tension as the day of reckoning approaches, this is a complex and shockingly credible thriller. [BIG READ]

I DO NOT COME TO YOU BY CHANCE

Nwaubani, Adaobi Tricia 343pp 2009

Click on your email and be ready for riches — once you've handed over your bank account details. A young Nigerian man's fine education has not delivered prosperous employment and his family's financial problems are mounting. The solution: Kingsley reluctantly enters the world of email scamming and assists his Uncle 'Cash Daddy' in filching the gullible rich. A poignantly humorous morality tale that not only examines the connection between poverty and crime, but highlights the relationship between Africa and the West.

I LET YOU GO

Mackintosh, Clare 371pp 2014

The only way Jenna Gray believes she can survive the nightmare of her life after the death of a child in a hit and run incident is to just walk away from everything. She finds sanctuary on the Welsh coast, but even that isolation is not sufficient to elude the long arm of the law and worse. Narrated from multiple viewpoints, this is a clever, insightful psychological thriller with authentic detail from its former police investigator author and the unexpected to keep you on your toes.

ICE, THE

Paull, Laline 348pp 2017

Tom Harding and Sean Cawson had been the best of friends, united by their passion for the Arctic even though Tom, an environmentalist wanted to save it, and Sean, a businessman, wanted to conquer it. Three years after being lost in an accident, Tom's body is released by a calving glacier – witnessed by a boatload of tourists on the lookout for the last of the polar bears – and once again Sean must relive what has happened and examine the choices they both had made. From its unique Arctic setting and depiction of climate change to the juxtaposition of the environment and the world of commerce, this is an unforgettable eco-thriller of the near future. [SMALL FONT]

IDEA OF PERFECTION, THE

Grenville, Kate 401pp 2001

Two outsiders arrive at the depressed little bush town of Karakarook, New South Wales. Their opposing concerns manifest in the debate over the town's old wooden bridge: heritage versus modern engineering. Funny and touching in its observations of the plain and the flawed.

ILLUMINATIONS

Sharratt, Mary 274pp 2012

Mystic, visionary, musician, healer and saint ... Hildegard von Bingen was an unconventional woman of her time. Offered up to the Church as a child, she endured decades of seclusion before emerging as a courageous leader and founder of her own monastery. Based on historical material, this richly imagined story brings to vivid life this extraordinary medieval figure, remembered today for her legacy of beautiful music, spiritual insight and her influence on modern feminist thinking. A fascinating and inspirational read.

IMPERFECTIONISTS, THE

Rachman, Tom 274pp 2010

A wise, funny and moving novel about the people who write and read an international newspaper based in Rome. We meet the hapless obituary reporter who will do anything to avoid work, the lonely executive who falls for the man she just fired, and the eccentric publisher who pays more attention to his basset hound than to his struggling paper. Rachman reveals how the private comedies and tragedies of these characters intertwine at work and at home.

IMPROVEMENT

Silber, Joan 227pp 2019

All it takes is a single act of defiance... pivoting on Reyna, a single mother in Harlem and her eccentric aunt Kiki, this is a story spanning a generation that links seemingly unconnected people in the US, Turkey and Germany. Woven through this intricate tapestry of lives is a compassionate portrayal of human fallibility and the possibility of redemption for its many and varied narrators.

IN A LAND OF PAPER GODS

MacKenzie, Rebecca 339pp 2016

Distinguished from her classmates by her spirited imagination, Henrietta S. Robertson must tolerate as best she can, life in a boarding school for the children of missionaries on Lushan mountain, Jiangxi Province. Allowing the parents to pursue their call to bring the Gospel to China, Etta and her classmates live a constrained life, isolated from their parents and caught between religions and cultures. It is 1941 and with the invasion of the Japanese they must now face life in an internment camp. Hauntingly written, this is a poignant coming-of-age story told from the unique perspective of its captivating young narrator.

IN FALLING SNOW

MacColl, Mary-Rose 450pp 2012

As if Grace Hogan didn't have enough to juggle what with her husband and young children and her own medical career, now there is international travel to contend with. When the invitation to a French WW1 reunion arrives for her grandmother, Grace reluctantly attends in her place, discovering Iris's astonishing earlier life and the truth of her own heritage. When Iris had travelled from Australia to the battlefields of Europe to find her underage brother, she'd ended up serving in a field hospital, staffed only by women, close to the Western Front. Inspired by true events and moving between 1970s Brisbane and life at the abbey at Royaumont, this is a powerful story of love, sacrifice and the changing role of women in medicine.



"All enjoyed this book. None of us knew about the Scottish women doctors and their work in WWI, so found this very educational."

Auckland 008

"Slow beginning, but overall everyone fascinated by this previously unknown undertaking by the socialist Scottish women's effort in France, WWI."

Christchurch 086

"Our group loved this book and it stimulated great discussion about the role of women in medicine and war."

Nelson 048

IN HER WAKE

Jennings, Amanda 364pp 2016

The Pandora's box that is wrenched open with the sudden death of her parents, throws Bella Campbell's carefully ordered life into turmoil. Armed only with a name and address in Cornwall, Bella is about to embark on a journey of self-discovery like no other. In this chilling, emotionally charged psychological thriller, her search for the truth will bring into focus the paradox of love and the fallibility of human nature.

IN MY FATHER'S DEN

Gee, Maurice 175pp 1972

When Celia Inverarity is brutally murdered, Paul Prior, her English teacher and mentor, is the chief suspect. Celia's death and the violence that follows, cause him to examine the past — a past that is as secret as his father's den.

IN THE CLEARING

Pomare, J.P. 328pp 2019

What happens in the Clearing, stays in the Clearing... but is it really possible to walk away from a cult? Adrienne has a vision to lead twelve perfect children into the future, but it involves a commitment and determination that affects the different members of the community to varying degrees. But it is too much for Amy who flees to the 'outside'. And just where does Freya Heywood fit in, with her son Billy and her normal, everyday life? Told through Amy and Freya's intertwining stories, this chilling fast-moving contemporary psychological thriller, set in the Victorian bushland, echoes real-life events from 1960s and 70s Australia.

IN THE SHADOW OF THE BANYAN, THE

Ratner, Vaddey 322pp 2012

Raami is only seven when the Khmer Rouge came to power in Cambodia. During their reign of terror when she and her family are subject to the horrors of their society and way of life being destroyed, Raami's survival is bolstered by the poetry and myths that were an integral part of her early childhood. Based on the author's own experiences, this moving account is rendered beautiful by its lyrical writing and the kindness and hope Raami encounters amidst the chaos. [SMALL FONT]

INDUSTRY OF SOULS, THE

Booth, Martin 250pp 1998

As he wakes up on his eightieth birthday, Alexander Bayliss, a British citizen who spent twenty-five years in a Soviet gulag after being charged with espionage, and the next twenty years in the Russian village of Myshkino, has a major decision to make: will he remain in the village or return home to England where his family has just discovered that he is alive? We learn of the human side of his gulag life and his experiences in the village, and how the collapse of the Soviet Union affected them. Short-listed for the Booker Prize. [This book is 'well-loved' but it is out of print and new copies can't be purchased.]

INFATUATIONS, THE

Marías, Javier 346pp 2013

Frequenter of a local café, María Dolz becomes intrigued by a seemingly perfect couple who regularly occupy a nearby table. But there is to be no perfect life ahead for Luisa and Miguel: Miguel is murdered in broad daylight in a busy Madrid street, something María would not question but for overhearing a disturbing conversation concerning the planning and execution of a murder With its metaphysical and literary underpinnings, this murder mystery with a difference provides in its slow unravelling many opportunities to dwell on the deep questions of life and human motivation.

INFINITE HOME

Alcott, Kathleen 317pp 2016

Edith's crumbling Brooklyn apartment building is home to an eclectic collection of tenants: Adeleine, Thomas, Paulie and Edward, each and every one struggling with the challenges of daily life. However, when Edith's son Owen comes sniffing around sporting brochures for homes for the elderly, and plans for the brownstone, this diverse group of New York residents unite to protect their ailing landlady. Written with short chapters allowing the narrative to move easily between its memorable characters, this is a heart-warming story of home, community and connection.

INHERITANCE

Patrick, Jenny 313pp 2010

This is a story of friendship, family and the influence of the past on the present. The appearance of a character from a previous novel *Landings*, establishes the setting of 1960s Samoa, a melting pot of approaching political independence, family tensions, and challenges to 'fa'asamoa', the traditional Samoan way. Moving between Samoa and 1990s New Zealand, the author considers the weight of cultural expectations and the possible conflict between truth and love. A book to relish, rich in cultural and historical detail.

INSATIABLE MOON, THE

Riddell, Michael 367pp 1997

Arthur, along with other recovering psychiatric patients, lives in a boarding house in Ponsonby, Auckland. Believing himself to be the second son of God, and intent on his crusade to do God's work, Arthur encounters an eclectic mix of quirky and vulnerable people. From his fellow boarders and a local minister having a crisis of faith, to a disillusioned housewife from Howick, and an aggressive TV journalist, each character is clearly drawn and instantly recognisable. With its gentle spiritual overtones and its social policy observations, this is an unconventional story, thoroughly enjoyable and rich with thought-provoking ideas.

INTO THE BEAUTIFUL NORTH

Urrea, Luis Alberto 338pp 2009

Inspired by 'The Magnificent Seven', a young Mexican woman and her friends set out on a journey from southern Mexico, north to USA. Their mission: to recruit seven men to help restore their village. A road trip with a difference, this is comic satire with a dash of magic realism. An upbeat and entertaining story, that offers unexpected and insightful views of both sides of the border.

INTO THE DARKEST CORNER

Haynes, Elizabeth 396pp 2012

When something seems too good to be true, then it usually is. In this case, the 'something' is Lee who on first acquaintance is a charismatic and appealing man. Catherine certainly thinks so, but finds out to her detriment the difference between his public and private faces. A challenging thriller that considers the horrors of abusive relationships. Compelling reading at its best, but the book includes violence and abusive sexual content.

INVESTIGATION, THE

Lee, J M 323pp 2014

Where he was once a World War Two prison guard, Yuichi Watanabe is now himself held captive. During his incarceration as a 'low-level war criminal' by the Americans, he has time to remember his experiences in the notorious Fukuoka Prison: the Korean prisoners, the Japanese guards and particularly the investigation he undertook to find the killer of the prison guard Sugiyama Dozan. What he discovers is unexpected given Sugiyama's reputation as the 'Butcher' and leads to Yuichi's exposure to the Korean poet Yun Dong-ju. Inspired by a true story, this novel is not only a complex murder mystery but a celebration of the power of literature and the resilience of the human spirit.

INVISIBLE MOUNTAIN, THE

De Robertis, Carolina 424pp 2009

The culture and history of 20th Century Uruguay is presented through the lives of three women in the Firielli family: Pajarita, her daughter Eva and granddaughter Salome. From humble beginnings to city sophistication, from struggles for freedom and independence to political revolution and turmoil, their stories reveal the challenges and hardships of life in a changing South America. This compelling saga immerses the reader in what it is to be Uruguayan.

IS SHE STILL ALIVE?

Duder, Tessa 368pp 2008

A collection of thirteen stories for women who have moved beyond youth and into maturity, who have seen and experienced much of what life has to offer, and wear their years with pride. The wonderful, wise and witty women she has created will strike a chord with their tales of loves and dreams they have lived and lost, their tragedies and their triumphs and most of all, their enduring spirit and often unexpected strength. Is she still alive is the question women of a certain age hear all too often — in Tessa Duder's wonderful new stories the answer is a resounding yes.

ISLAND OF MISSING TREES

Shafak, Elif 343pp 2021

Hidden beneath the tree that grows through the roof of 'The Happy Fig' taverna, teenagers Kosta and Defne happily ignore the social prohibitions of their respective Greek and Turkish communities, until Civil war breaks out, in 1974. Reunited decades later, they migrate to London to fashion a new life, but for their daughter Ada, the toll of intergenerational trauma demands answers from the past. Lyrical, haunting and thought-provoking, this is the story of Cyprus' tumultuous history traced through the lives of a single family and revealing the devastation to its people and the natural world.



"I was hooked from the first page. Beautifully written!"

"This is a stand-out book amongst others."

"I enjoyed it so much I'm off to reserve a table at our local Cypriot restaurant!"

"The narrator is unusual, but overall the book's a winner."

BDS Reviewers

ISLAND

Todd, Penelope 299pp 2010

This is the story of an isolated quarantine station and its community; its dedicated staff and those they tend, the sailors and immigrants. It is a place set apart with its inhabitants balancing passion and hope alongside sickness and death. The unusual setting, the evocative descriptions of the island and the sympathetically drawn characters give rise to a tender and accomplished novel of colonial New Zealand.



JANE AUSTEN PROJECT, THE

Flynn, Kathleen A 373pp 2017

Rachel Katzman and Liam Finucane are researchers from the future. Their mission? Visit 1815 England, infiltrate Jane Austen's inner circle, 'rescue' an unpublished manuscript and determine what malady Jane is suffering from, all while keeping to their directive not to tamper with history. Of course, easier said than done, and now posing as wealthy West Indian planters, they are challenged not just by the dictates of 19th century society, but by their connection to the very people they are deceiving. Lavish with authentic period detail and a cast of familiar characters, this engaging and unputdownable story will have you signing up for time travel, before you can say "Jane Austen".



JANE EYRE

Brontë, Charlotte 560pp 1847

The story of an orphan brought up in an institution. She becomes a governess and falls in love with her pupil's father. Classic. [BIG READ]



JEEVES AND THE WEDDING BELLS

Faulks, Sebastian 259pp 2014

I say, Bertie Wooster contemplating matrimony? Surely not! Bertie and his valet Jeeves are once again embroiled in well-meaning meddling to help their friends. This time round however, the two bachelors are required to swap their traditional roles of master and servant with ensuing hilarity. In this brilliant homage to P.G. Wodehouse, his eccentric and much-loved characters grace the pages again in a riot of deception and chaotic misunderstandings. With its wry observations of the early 20th Century British class system and its clever use of language, this entertaining and light-hearted story will appeal to both Wooster and Jeeves fans and newcomers alike.



ISLAND OF SEA WOMEN, THE

See, Lisa 263pp 2020

When Young-sook and Mi-ja first meet, it is not an auspicious beginning. Mi-ja is caught stealing food, but the wisdom of Young-sook's mother prevails and the two girls become friends and then train together for their village haenyeo, the all-female diving collective. In the decades that follow, their friendship is forged through the turbulent events of Japanese colonialism, World War II, and the Korean War, but is ruptured by tragedy. Set on the Korean island of Jeju between the 1930s and 2000s and steeped in Korean culture and traditions, this is a fascinating story of friendship, narrated by Young-sook and anchored in real events.



"Well-researched, well-written, fascinating subject matter."

Wellington 213

"Fascinating story that everyone enjoyed reading. A lively discussion."

Riversdale 001

"Tragic, informative and very well written. The power of female relationships was fascinating."

Invercargill 001

JERNINGHAM

Sanders, Cristina 388pp 2020



When Jerningham Wakefield arrives in the fledgling settlement of Port Nicholson, the infamous Wakefield family has much to accomplish and accomplish it, it does. With the New Zealand Company luring migrants aplenty, there is land to be purchased, horses and victuals to be traded, new settlers to be placated and of course, Māori to be negotiated with. Arthur Lugg, bookkeeper, procurement officer and Jerningham's minder (by order of Colonel William Wakefield), relates this pacy and vibrant story of early European settlement, and the complex and charismatic Jerningham's role in it. With its careful observations and vivid descriptions, this historically grounded novel provides readers with an easy and enjoyable lesson in New Zealand colonial history.



"Group absolutely loved this book. We felt it should be a compulsory read for all NZers."

Ashburton 004

"The history was fascinating and the author really brought to life the mores and customs of the time. A great read."

Wellington 153

"Authentic. Great read. Great historical novel."

Hokitika 003

"We all thoroughly enjoyed this book. Richly imagined, well-researched and very descriptive of our early settlers."

Wellington 107

JOURNAL OF DORA DAMAGE, THE

Starling, Belinda 452pp 2007

In Victorian London, when Dora Damage is forced to take over her sick husband's bookbinding business, she finds herself binding expensive volumes of pornography commissioned by aristocratic roués. Her charm and spirit carry her through as she contends with violent debt collectors, an epileptic daughter, evil doctors, a rheumatic husband, errant workmen, nosy neighbours, and a constant stream of wealthy dilettantes. Gradually Dora is pulled into an illegal trade of sex, money, and deceit.

JOURNAL OF MRS PEPYS, THE

George, Sara 240pp 1998



A fictional account of Elizabeth Pepys, wife of the diarist, Samuel. The minutiae of daily life, the ups and downs of marriage, and the struggle from poverty of this famous 17th-century household, are set against the huge events of fire and plague.

JUDAS

Oz, Amos 274pp 2016

Once upon a time there was a house on the outskirts of Jerusalem and in it lived an old man, his beautiful widowed daughter-in-law and a hapless young man. Having abandoned his studies, the young man in question, Shmuel Ash, accepts employment, in the winter of 1959, as Zionist Gershom Wald's live-in companion expressly required to spend each evening debating with his employer. Moving between the provocative mix of Judaism, Christianity and the Jewish/Arab conflict, their nightly wrangling gives voice to arguments of intellectual challenge and the history of their fledgling nation. A complex and multi-layered story with betrayal at its heart. [SMALL FONT]

KEEPER OF SECRETS, THE

Thomas, Julie 358pp 2013



In an attempt to bolster young violinist Daniel Horowitz's interest in playing, musician Rafael Gomez sets out to track down a precious 1742 Guarneri violin owned by the Horowitz family but confiscated by the Nazis. It is an international story ranging from Europe to the US and the Antipodes and reflects comprehensive research into what happened to Jewish families and their prized possessions. With its riveting plot and its rich musical content, this is an intriguing mystery and a triumphant story of a family and its heritage.

KILLED AT THE WHIM OF A HAT

Cotterill, Colin 270pp 2011



Introducing Jimm Juree, crime reporter formerly of Chiang Mai, now a reluctant chief cook and bottle washer at her family's 'Gulf Bay Lovely Resort and Restaurant' in the south of Thailand. But there's no resting on her laurels; when the bodies start piling up, Jimm sees a chance to keep her career on track and moves into crime solving mode, teaming up with local policeman Sergeant Phoon. Highly entertaining and surprisingly thought-provoking, its light hearted approach is well balanced by an intricate plot and delightfully eccentric characters. The title and chapter headings, courtesy of George Bush, add to the quirky and original style of this exotic whodunnit.

KINDNESS OF YOUR NATURE, THE

Olsson, Linda 216pp 2011



Seeking refuge from her early life in Europe, Marion Flint leads a reclusive existence on a North Island west coast beach. But it is not until she befriends Ika, a vulnerable and abused child, that she begins to confront her own demons. The friendship that develops allows both Marion and Ika the possibility of learning to trust others again. With its careful handling of complex relationships, this story is a sensitive yet unflinching examination of family dysfunction and abuse.



KINDNESS OF ENEMIES, THE

Aboulela, Leila 320pp 2015

While researching the life of Imam Shamil, a 19th century Muslim chieftain, history professor at the University of Aberdeen, Natasha Wilson with her Russian/Sudanese heritage, is drawn into the life of one of her students; Oz is a descendant of Shamil, and like Natasha is grappling with his cultural identity. When he comes to the attention of the authorities for his supposed extremism, Natasha's carefully constructed life is also called into question. Intertwined with their story is that of Shamil and his involvement with the court of the Tzar. With parallel storylines and settings in Scotland, Georgia and Sudan, this engaging story vividly depicts the experience of living in exile and yearning for home.

KINSHIP OF SECRETS, THE

Kim, Eugenia 292pp 2018

When Calvin and Najin Cho with daughter Miran in tow, migrate to the US in 1948, they have every intention of sending for their second child once they are established. However, the advent of the Korean War, throws these plans into disarray, and it is not until Inja is a teenager that she is reunited with her parents and sister. With its basis in the author's family history, this story offers a richly detailed and thoughtful rendering of both the migrant experience and modern Korean history and culture viewed through the lens of its unique sibling narrators. [SMALL FONT]

KITE RUNNER, THE

Hosseini, Khaled 324pp 2003

Narrated by Amir, a forty-year-old novelist living in California. He tells the story of a boyhood friendship destroyed by jealousy, fear and ruthless evil that transcends politics. Running parallel to this personal narrative of loss and redemption, is the story of modern Afghanistan and of Amir's relationship with the war-torn city of his birth.

KNOWN WORLD, THE

Jones, Edward P 388pp 2004

Henry Townsend is a former slave. Under the tutelage of his former white owner, Henry works hard and is able to purchase his own land and eventually he acquires more than 30 slaves — a black man owning black slaves. Henry runs his small plantation with strong discipline but when he unexpectedly dies, his widow Caldonia has to carry on. Overwhelmed by grief, she is unable to cope and chaos results. [SMALL FONT]

LACUNA, THE

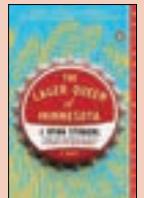
Kingsolver, Barbara 527pp 2009

An archivist reveals the story of a fictional character, Harrison Shepherd, the son of an American father and a Mexican mother, growing up in both countries, and whose life becomes entwined with Diego Rivera, his wife Frida Kahlo and their exiled friend Lev Trotsky. Against the backdrop of the momentous political events of the 1930s to the rise of McCarthyism in the 1950s, American society's confusion of paranoia and conformity is played out through Shepherd's experiences. Combining intensive research, wry humour and perceptive observations, Kingsolver provides an absorbing view of this era and a reflection on the power of words. [BIG READ]

LAGER QUEEN OF MINNESOTA, THE

Stradal, J Ryan 323pp 2019

Two estranged sisters, one granddaughter and the lure of brewing beer... when Helen inherits the family farm, she has the wherewithal to take on the brewing industry while Edith, her sister, must make her own way in the world. Decades later when it seems Dianne, Edith's granddaughter also has beer flowing through her veins, destiny is at play, and maybe, just maybe it is time for Helen and Edith to let bygones be bygones. Warm and engaging, this quirky story of the American Midwest offers an intoxicating mix of ambition and family dynamics playing out against the evolving US beer culture. Note: prior experience of beer drinking or brewing is not a prerequisite for enjoying this story.



"I recommend this book highly. It's a quirky book and I enjoyed it thoroughly."

"A deeply affecting family saga. A cast of lovable, funny and quintessentially American characters."

"It's refreshing to read something quite different from the norm."

BDS Reviewers

LAND MORE KIND THAN HOME, A

Cash, Wiley 335pp 2012

One Sunday, nine-year-old Jess Hall watches in horror as his autistic brother is smothered during a healing service in the mountains of North Carolina. The unimaginable violence that follows must be untangled by a local sheriff with his own tragic past. A Land More Kind Than Home is a spellbinding, heart-breaking story about cruelty and innocence, and the failure of religion and family to protect a child. It is a novel thick with stories and characters connected by faith, infidelity and a sense of hope that is both tragic and unforgettable.

LANDINGS

Patrick, Jenny 316pp 2008



This is the story of the Whanganui River at the beginning of the 20th Century; a bustling thoroughfare and lifeblood to the diverse characters living on its banks. An accident involving one of the tourist boats sets into play events that have wider implications for the community. An easy to read novel providing insight into this period of New Zealand nation building.

LANDSCAPE WITH SOLITARY FIGURE

Koea, Shonagh 263pp 2014



Ellis Leigh, a woman of a certain age, has adopted a solitary life. From her reduced circumstances, she reflects on her situation and the chain of events that have led her to this bungalow, to this garden, to this isolation. An unsettling contemplation of human behaviour, this is a story beautifully rendered by rich imagery, intricate detail and the acute observation of small-town New Zealand.

LANGUAGE OF FLOWERS, THE

Diffenbaugh, Vanessa 308pp 2010

Life has not been easy for Victoria Jones. Damaged by the foster care system she has graduated from, she communicates with others and makes sense of her world using the Victorian language of flowers. With an intriguing juxtaposition of the old fashioned and the contemporary, the author considers the perennial issues of love, belonging and forgiveness in this absorbing and compassionate story.

LARNACHS, THE

Marshall, Owen 293pp 2011



Based on 19th Century events in Dunedin and Wellington, this is the story of William Larnach, prominent businessman and politician, his third wife Constance and his youngest son Douglas. The relationship that develops between Conny and Dougie shocks the socially constrained society of the time and ultimately leads to tragedy. Subtly narrated in alternate voices, and rich with the historical details of colonial New Zealand, this is a convincing story of love, scandal and morality.

LAROSE

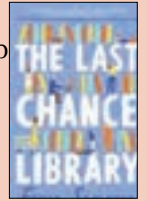
Erdrich, Louise 435pp 2016

When five-year-old Dusty Ravich is shot in a hunting accident, the Ravich and Iron families must find a way to deal with the tragedy on their close-knit North Dakota reservation. Following ancient Obijwe tribal traditions, five-year-old LaRose Iron is in turn 'gifted' to the Ravich family in retribution, and thus begins a journey of fragile recovery. With its focus on contemporary Native American culture, this is a powerful, well-crafted story examining the quest for justice and restoration in a fractured community.

LAST CHANCE LIBRARY, THE

Sampson, Freya 322pp 2021

When austerity rears its ugly head and Chalcot Library is for the chop, it is a wake-up call for twenty-eight-year-old library assistant June Jones. Chalcot Library has always been at the centre of her life and its threatened closure forces her out of her sheltered existence and into joining her library patrons in their campaign of resistance. Quirky characters, an English village, and a library under threat guarantee a heart-warming read and a thought-provoking reminder of the value of libraries and the importance of community.



"A delightful 'Eleanor Oliphant' kind of tale. I enjoyed the heart-warming moments."

"While it's a lighter rom-com style book, it is both funny and sad and memorable."

"An enjoyable, easy read for those groups desperate for the occasional light read."

BDS Reviewers

LAST DAYS OF NIGHT, THE

Moore, Graham 357pp 2017

Fresh out of law school, Paul Cravath is ready for whatever legal challenge comes his way, and when he is hired to defend George Westinghouse from a billion dollar lawsuit posed by rival inventor Thomas Edison, the battle is on. In the epic clash that came to be known as the 'War of the Currents', direct and alternating current are pitted against one another for the prize of electrifying America. Featuring the triumvirate of Edison, Westinghouse and Nikola Tesla and other larger-than-life characters, this historically based story from the 1890s is an exciting and dramatic foray into the early days of a technology that changed the world.



"The author tells a fast-paced narrative, replete with strong and interesting characters."

"A fine piece of writing, one of the best of its type that I've come across."

"The story involves many well-known businesses of the day but the author notes that it is a dramatisation of history, not a recording of it."

BDS Reviewers



LAST DAYS OF RABBIT HAYES, THE 

McPartlin, Anna 436pp 2014

Single mum 'Rabbit' Hayes is coming to the end of her innings ... prematurely, it has to be said but that is not going to stop her making the most of what time she does have left. Gathered at the hospice in her final days are her friends and family, recalling and celebrating the life she has led to the full. Tempered with Irish humour and the perfect balance of sadness and hope, this is a credible, heart-warming story of a reluctant but beautiful journey.

LAST PAINTING OF SARA DE VOS 

Smith, Dominic 374pp 2016

Two talented women more than three centuries apart, rising to the challenges of putting brush to canvas: Sara de Vos, a Dutch painter of the Golden Age and Ellie Shipley, an Australian art history student starving in a garret in 1950s New York. Persuaded to emulate Sara's only known work, 'At the Edge of the Woods', Ellie sets in play a series of events, drawing in Marty De Groot, owner of the painting, and culminating in a Sydney exhibition Ellie will curate decades later. As multi-layered as the painting at its heart, this meticulously researched story celebrates the creation of art and its magnetic pull on those within its orbit, underpinned by realistic characters and an attention to detail, down to the last brushstroke.

LAST RUNAWAY, THE 

Chevalier, Tracy 373pp 2013

Honor Bright's name perfectly describes her disposition, one well suited to the trials that await her: crossing the Atlantic, the death of her sister and making a home in Ohio. It is the 1850s and Honor arrives in a period of turmoil for the Quaker community she has to marry into. The Underground Railway is in full swing and Honor, against the wishes of her new family, is compelled by her faith to help the runaways. Much is at stake but Honor is not one to back down from a challenge whether it be from the community who demands conformity, or from the slave hunters set on enforcing the law. The appealing combination of Quakers, quilting and moral quandaries makes for an engaging and heart-warming read.

LAYING ON OF HANDS, THE

Bennett, Alan 199pp 2002

Bennett's extraordinary ear for dialogue and sharpness of perception have made him a master-storyteller. In "Father! Father! Burning Bright" he writes with tragicomic insight about a son's vigil at his father's deathbed where their lifelong battle continues to the end. "The Laying on of Hands" is a brilliantly funny satire, while in "Miss Fozzard Finds her Feet", a lonely, unmarried department store clerk discovers there is more to life than looking after her brother.

LAST THING TO BURN, THE

Dean, Will 242pp 2020

In a cottage in a corner of an English field, Lenn and Jane unhappily co-exist. Jane wasn't always called Jane, and this isn't the life she was seeking. But now, seven years down the track, Jane has even more to lose and all she needs is a moment's inattention from her husband ... her jailer ... her owner.



A dark and harrowing contemporary tale of human trafficking, this is a story of courage and resilience and the sweet possibility of revenge.

"This story, although dark and hard to read at times, is gripping — a real page turner."

"Gripping! The atmosphere of dumb menace engendered by the farmer and helpless despair felt by the woman is graphic."

"Appeal does not describe the engagement of the reader — 'appalled fascination' might be more apt!"

BDS Reviewers

LET ME SING YOU GENTLE SONGS  

Olsson, Linda 267pp 2005

One bleak March evening, Veronika arrives in a small Swedish village in pursuit of stillness and solitude. Her arrival is silently observed by Astrid, her reclusive neighbour, who, in the safety of her home, guards family secrets and personal tragedy. The two women — one young, one old — are drawn together, and against a backdrop of changing seasons, they become friends. Set in Sweden and New Zealand.

LIE, THE 

Dunmore, Helen 292pp 2014

In comparison with his harrowing experiences in the trenches, it is really a small lie – initially one of omission – that is to be Daniel Branwell's undoing. Haunted by the death of his childhood friend and fellow soldier Frederick Dennis, Daniel is home again in Cornwall, struggling to find his place in the scheme of things. When he accedes to the final wishes of an elderly woman who has befriended him, the deception begins and Daniel discovers that 'no good deed goes unpunished'. Moving seamlessly between Daniel's childhood, and WW1 and its aftermath, this is a tender story of friendship and loss and the long shadows cast by war.

LIFE AFTER LIFE

Atkinson, Kate 352pp 2013

During a snowstorm in the English countryside, a baby is born. But this is no ordinary baby: Ursula Todd is destined to live her life over and over again through the first half of the 20th century. Following a myriad of storylines, Ursula's alternative lives offer a rich tapestry of possibilities shaped by personal choice and the capriciousness of fate. With its vivid vignettes of English life, particularly during the war years, and its capacity to reflect all that we may aspire to or regret, this is an engrossing and interesting read.

LIFE DRAWING

Black, Robin 240pp 2014

Augusta and Owen achieve what many people aspire to: getting away from it all. Their retreat to the countryside near Philadelphia is supposed to allow them to focus on their art (Gus a painter, Owen a writer) and their long-standing marriage. Good in theory but with a catalyst in the form of a friendly new neighbour, and the 'baggage' that has come with them from their past life, their work is cut out for them. This riveting story presents a fascinating portrait of marriage, of love and betrayal and the complex emotional landscape of long-term intimacy.

LIFE OF PI, THE

Martel, Yann 319pp 2001

The story of Pi, an unusual boy, brought up in a zoo in India. When Pi's father decides to move the family to Canada and sell animals to the great zoos of America, the ship taking them across the Pacific sinks. Pi finds himself on a life-raft along with a hyena, an orang-utan, a zebra, and a Bengal tiger. [SMALL FONT]

LIGHT IN HIDDEN PLACES, THE

Cameron, Sharon 401pp 2020

When the Germans invade the Polish city of Przemysl during WWII, it is just sixteen-year-old Fusia and her six-year-old sister Helena against the world... but before long Max Diamant turns up on their doorstep, having escaped from a train heading to a concentration camp. Already close to the Diamant family, Fusia doesn't hesitate to offer refuge to Max, little realising that he will be the first of thirteen people she and Helena will hide in their apartment. Based on the true story of Polish war heroine Stefania Podgorska and supported with photos and Author's Note, this is a gripping, inspiring and suspenseful story of ordinary people doing remarkable things in the worst of times.



LIGHT BETWEEN OCEANS, THE

Stedman, ML 343pp 2012

Above all else, Isabel Sherbourne wants a baby. When in 1926 a dinghy washes ashore on the isolated West Australian island of Janus Rock where her husband Tom is the lighthouse keeper, it seems as if all their prayers are answered. That is, until four years later when baby Lucy is reunited with her mother, and Tom and Isabel must face the devastating consequences of their actions. With its exquisite descriptions of life on the island and its sensitively portrayed characters, this story engages the reader on all levels leaving them pondering the dilemmas of right and wrong and the power of forgiveness.



"Beautifully crafted novel. Sad outcomes and no winners. Highly recommended."

Auckland 389

"Highly recommended. Beautifully written, descriptive writing bringing images and people to life. A must read!"

Balclutha 001

"Group had mixed feelings. Majority felt it was well-written, easy to read and moving. Others struggled with the moral issue. An emotional read."

Hamilton 029

LIFEBOAT, THE

Rogan, Charlotte 275pp 2012

When the Empress Alexandra sinks on a transatlantic voyage in 1914, Grace Winter's newly privileged life is over before it has really begun. Only recently married and now most certainly widowed, she must survive being in an overcrowded lifeboat where each of the 39 survivors will struggle with the daunting question: What are you prepared to do in order to survive? A fast moving story that throws up ethical dilemmas that one hopes one never has to face.



LIMESTONE

Farrell, Fiona 240pp 2009

Clare Lacey is on a quest. In Ireland to attend an art-history conference, she sets out to find her father who walked out one day to buy a pack of cigarettes when she was a child, and disappeared. She is urged on her way by chance encounters: with a woman in a high tower, a blind man at a crossroads, a couple of rotund earthlings, a singer whose song she does not understand... Clues lie all around on a labyrinth of walls – but the final clue lies deep within. This is a contemporary novel about inheritance, belief, art, love... and limestone.



LESSONS IN CHEMISTRY 

Garmus, Bonnie 386pp 2022

The only certain thing is change... something that Elizabeth Zott can attest to, not only in her work as a research chemist battling the gender inequality of the time, but in her life in general. It is California in the 1950s and 60s, so when Elizabeth becomes pregnant, she loses her job. But change is afoot... and as the reluctant star of a TV cooking show, she initiates her own quiet revolution. Engaging and entertaining, this satisfying story, with its quirky and resourceful heroine, illuminates the sexism and misogyny of decades past.



"Quirky and highly original. It was fun to read."

"Sad and romantic in places. Hopeful and frustrating. Engaging on every page."

"A well-constructed book in terms of pace; it never slowed down."

"Incredible (but unfortunately also believable) sexism, both overt and covert."

BDS Reviewers

LIST OF MY DESIRES, THE 

Delacourt, Gregoire 292pp 2014

It is a question we all have pondered: what would we do if we won the lottery? Jocelyne faces such a conundrum when she wins the EuroMillions jackpot. Life in a French provincial town with her husband and her dressmaking shop and blog, is simple but satisfying. But now, well ... the jury is still out on whether money can buy happiness or not. Bursting with Gallic charm, this short but perfectly formed morality tale explores our universal search for happiness with a light touch and a generous spirit.

LITTLE DISASTERS 

Vaughan, Sarah 415pp 2020

Ed and Jess have three children. Ed is a great dad... when he's at home, that is. The rest of the time it is up to Jess to manage everything, and she is finding Betsey, the baby, hard work. It all comes to a head when Betsey ends up in the Emergency Department with an injury that is not easily explained. The doctor on call is none other than Liz, one of Jess's good friends. This forces Liz to re-evaluate their relationship, Jess's 'perfect' family, and even her own choices. This authentic portrayal of motherhood is delivered through its well-developed characters and its empathetic examination of parenting and postnatal depression.

LITTLE FRIEND, THE

Tartt, Donna 555pp 2003

In a small Mississippi town, twelve-year-old Harriet Cleve Dufresnes has grown up in the shadow of her brother Robin's murder. Robin's killer has never been identified and ten years later, his family are still devastated by the tragedy. One summer, in an attempt to resurrect the happy family she knows only from photographs, Harriet resolves to get revenge on the man she believes murdered her brother. [BIG READ, SMALL FONT]

LOLITA

Nabokov, Vladimir 312pp 1955

Tragedy about "the rapture and the tenderness of a middle-aged man for a too-young girl". Erotic, but with delicacy. Set in the US. [SMALL FONT]

LONG, LONG WAY, A 

Barry, Sebastian 304pp 2005

The story of Willie Dunne, a young man who leaves his native Dublin in 1914 to join the Allies on the Western Front. Caught between the catastrophic violence he encounters there and the growing political tension at home over Irish independence, Willie finds himself confronting unbearable choices regarding family, patriotism, and the devotion he feels towards his regiment.

LOOP TRACKS 

Orr, Sue 328pp 2021

Charlie Lowry has a story to tell, a particularly New Zealand story: from her 1978 teenage pregnancy with its abortion or adoption dilemma, leapfrogging ahead to the arrival of the Covid pandemic. It's all here with her parenting of her grandson Tommy (now off to university), the constraints of a Level 4 lockdown, and even the 2020 General Election with its euthanasia and cannabis referenda. Poignant and appealing, this thoughtful story of family, choices and consequences, integrates real-life events of New Zealand past and present, perfectly capturing the zeitgeist of an evolving society.



"Extremely well-told story. Characters are appealing and the story is easy to read."

"Very readable with well-drawn believable characters."

"It's a great book and my only reservation is the book discussion — it could reawaken some painful memories."

BDS Reviewers

LONG SONG, THE

Levy, Andrea 312pp 2010

July, a mulatto house slave narrates the story of her tumultuous life in 19th Century Jamaica. It is a turbulent period featuring the Baptist revolts and eventually the emancipation of slaves. A complex and poignant novel laying bare the tyranny of slavery with surprising charm and humour.

LORD OF THE FLIES, THE

Golding, William 248pp 1954

A story of survivors of an air crash on a tropical island. Allows human nature to be observed, while well brought-up schoolboys descend into savagery when society's rules are lost. UK. [SMALL FONT]

LOST FLOWERS OF ALICE HART, THE

Ringland, Holly 377pp 2017

Alice Hart is a survivor: not just of the house fire that claims her parents' lives when she is nine, but also the betrayal she suffers at the hands of her grandmother June, and the dangerous lure of Dylan, a charismatic man of deceptive appearance. But to survive is not enough and Alice is on a hard-fought voyage of self-discovery, taking her from sugar cane fields by the sea to a flower farm, the Outback and back again. Anchored in the language of native Australian flowers, this bittersweet story of transformation sensitively presents the prospect of overcoming personal trauma.

LOST WIFE, THE

Richman, Alyson 358pp 2011

To stay or to go ... Lenka Kohn must choose between remaining with her family in Prague as the Nazis invade or fleeing with her young husband Josef to USA. Separated by war, each believes the other dead; Lenka in a concentration camp and Josef in a torpedoed ship. Decades later they unexpectedly encounter one another at a wedding in New York. Inspired by true events, this is a profoundly moving love story that reflects on the haunting power of first love and our ability to endure, as well as adding to our knowledge and understanding of the Holocaust.

LOTTERY

Wood, Patricia 310pp 2007

Perry L. Crandall ("L" for Lucky) isn't retarded – he'll tell you so. His beloved Gram tells him being slow isn't a bad thing; he'll get where he needs to go in his own time. When his life is radically changed by two events: the death of his grandmother and his winning \$12 million, it's Perry's relatives – who'd only just cheated him out of the inheritance he was due on his grandmother's death – who are holding out their hands for the money.

LOVE

Morrison, Toni 202pp 2003

Many women are obsessed with Bill Cosey, owner of the Cosey Hotel and Resort on the US East Coast. More than just being the owner, he shapes their yearnings for a father, husband, lover, guardian and friend. Even after his death, he dominates their lives. [SMALL FONT]

LOVE AND MONEY

McGee, Greg 352pp 2012

Those were the days ... 1980s New Zealand ... Rogernomics, the boom and bust sharemarket and the first rugby world cup. The feckless Michael McGuire has fallen on hard times needing to be propped up by his three ex-wives and various offspring. With the dizzying events of the era, a protagonist used to leaving chaos in his wake, and acute observations of the New Zealand lifestyle, this is an entertaining and nostalgic read. [SMALL FONT]

LOVE AS A STRANGER

Marshall, Owen 286pp 2016

Once upon a time there was a dutiful wife (Sarah) who met a lonely widower (Hartley) while supporting her husband (Robert) through chemotherapy treatment in Auckland. What starts as a simple friendship develops into a relationship with unforeseen consequences. This is a story as old as time, of love and the human condition, sensitively written and with empathetic characters wrestling with moral choices.

LOVE, HATE & OTHER FILTERS

Ahmed, Samira 255pp 2018

Maya Aziz can appreciate that her parents will want to control her life for as long as possible, but she is having none of it. She has her sights set high – studying film-making in New York – and nothing is going to stop her. Even a terrorist attack that adds yet another layer of scrutiny for them as Muslims and people of colour, will not deter her. With its thought-provoking depiction of Islamophobia in contemporary America and its exploration of the challenges for children of migrants, this is an engaging coming-of-age story that will appeal to readers of all ages.

LOVE OF A GOOD WOMAN, THE

Munro, Alice 340pp 1998

Munro's ninth collection of short stories, set in western Canada. The subject matter is classic Munro: secrets, love, betrayal, and the stuff of ordinary lives. But, as is usual, the path she takes is anything but ordinary.

LOVE IN A COLD CLIMATE 

Mitford, Nancy 437pp 1949

Also contains *The Pursuit of Love*. A delicious exposé of the English upper crust. Aristocratic England in its full decadence. [SMALL FONT]

LOVING WAYS 

Gee, Maurice 214pp 1996

A novel set in Nelson. Three siblings come together after thirty years' separation around the sickbed of their father. About characters who want or who lack love. Some violence may disturb.

LOWER RIVER, THE

Theroux, Paul 323pp 2012

Ellis Hock, unhappy and disenchanted with his life in small town USA, resolves to return to the one place in the world where he remembers being happy; the village of Malabo in the Lower River area of Malawi. He has high hope of regaining his equanimity, but this is a different Africa from the one he encountered decades earlier as a Peace Corps volunteer, an Africa that will bring him to the very brink. Tackling universal questions of good and evil and highlighting the clash between the First World and the Third, this is a book guaranteed to seize and challenge the reader with its powerful writing and insider's view of contemporary Africa.

LOWLAND, THE 

Lahiri, Jhumpa 352pp 2013

From a traditional Hindu family, brothers Subhash and Udayan Mitra are heading in different directions; one is a revolutionary determined to end poverty and exploitation, and the other a scholar, far from India's shores. But a life cut short brings into play familial obligation and the dilemma of a pregnant widow. Set in post-Independence India and America, this is an understated and sensitively crafted novel encompassing complex family dynamics, the price demanded by idealism and cultural expectations, and the lowland of Calcutta where it all begins.

LUCKY BASTARD 

Wells, Peter 478pp 2007

How do you make sense of the past when it suddenly explodes into the present? In post-war Japan, Eric Keeling must investigate an alleged war crime, but do his actions constitute a further crime? In New Zealand, half a century later, this is the question that confronts his two children. They have grown up with a difficult father who was traumatised by his past as a prisoner of war. Was he a war hero, or guilty of an unscrupulous act of revenge? As their father loses his hold on reality, they must sift through the facts and fictions of what really happened and in the process they discover a new sense of family.

LUMINARIES, THE 

Catton, Eleanor 832pp 2013

It is 1866 and Walter Moody has come to make his fortune upon the West Coast goldfields. On the night of his arrival, he stumbles across a tense gathering of twelve local men, who have met in secret to discuss a series of unsolved crimes. A wealthy man has vanished, a whore has tried to end her life, and an enormous sum of money has been discovered in the home of a luckless drunk. Moody is soon drawn into the mystery: a network of fates and fortunes that is as complex and exquisitely patterned as the night sky. [Taken from the book cover - Victoria University Press.] Winner of the Man Booker Prize. [BIG READ - this book is read over two months - groups on a full programme would receive only 9 books for the year.]

MADAME BOVARY 

Flaubert, Gustave 274pp 1856

Describes the fall of Emma Bovary into adultery, debt, and eventual death. Classic of World Literature.

MACHINES LIKE ME

McEwan, Ian 306pp 2019

Forget Margaret Thatcher's victory in the Falkland Islands' War and even Alan Turing's untimely death, this is an alternative 1980s London where it is not a case of the robots are coming but that the robots have arrived. When Charlie Friend purchases a synthetic human and persuades his girlfriend Miranda to help programme Adam's personality parameters, the stage is set for a love triangle with a difference. With a nod to a future with artificial intelligence, this is a thought-provoking and entertaining story vibrating with ethical quandaries and moral choices as it examines the age-old question: what makes us human?

MADONNAS OF LENINGRAD 

Dean, Debra 229pp 2006

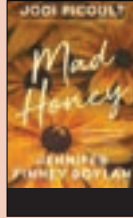
Marina Buriakov, an 82-year-old Russian émigré, is preparing for her granddaughter's wedding near Seattle, while fighting a battle against Alzheimer's. Disappearing into the memory of her time as a young Hermitage Museum guide, Marina relives the siege of Leningrad and how museum staff members were instructed to remove the museum's priceless masterpieces for safekeeping. During the siege, young Marina constructs a mental version of the museum, committing to memory the paintings, and their placement. Sixty years later, this "memory palace" is all Marina has left.

MAD HONEY

Picoult, Jodi & Boylan, Jennifer F 464pp 2022



Both Olivia McAfee and Ava Campanello end up in Adams, New Hampshire to escape family violence, but when their respective children, Asher and Lily, meet at school and fall in love, the trauma is not over: Lily is found dead, Asher is charged with her murder and in the trial that follows, everyone's secrets will be exposed. Narrated alternately by Olivia and Lily, this is a thoroughly researched story that juggles a riveting courtroom drama, the art of beekeeping and issues around gender conformity, identity and domestic abuse.



"A very gripping storyline with a surprise twist at the end!"

"There's a lot going on in this book and it is very thought-provoking."

"The book is increasingly gripping as it progresses. It's quite a page turner."

"Quite a sensitive topic but perhaps one we need to be aware of."

BDS Reviewers

MAID, THE

Prose, Nita 340pp 2022

It would be easy to underestimate Molly Gray. As a maid at the Regency Grand Hotel, she unashamedly strives to return things to a 'state of perfection'. But when one of the guests – the notorious Mr Black – is found murdered in his hotel bed, Molly's unique take on the world comes to the fore. Weaving an enjoyable morality tale through a classic whodunnit, this is an intriguing contemporary mystery with a very distinctive protagonist.



"A story that would appeal widely and leave most readers a little happier."

"This is such an enjoyable morality tale."

"Molly's character — always willing but bewildered in social situations — is very appealing."

"This is an easy read, it is not a 'deep' book. It will suit some groups beautifully."

BDS Reviewers

MAJOR PETTIGREW'S LAST STAND

Simonson, Helen 457pp 2010



Village politics, family disputes, property developers, religious conflict, hunting, a golf club and a good dollop of snobbery, the quintessential English village of Edgecombe St Mary has it all. At the heart of the story is retired widower Major Pettigrew and his developing relationship with Mrs Ali, the Pakistani village shopkeeper. A light hearted and entertaining story with colourful characters and an underlying examination of stereotypes and cultural expectations.

MALICE

Higashino, Keigo 280pp 2014



Author Kunishiko Hidaka never gets to finish his popular serialised novel, instead, seemingly mid-sentence, he is murdered and his body found by his wife Rei and best friend and fellow writer Osamu Nonoguchi. Enter one Detective, Kyochiro Kaga, an insightful and painstaking operator poised to sift fact from fiction. Identifying the killer is one thing, but understanding the motive is a far more demanding task and is at the heart of this complex and understated Japanese thriller.

MAN CALLED OVE, A

Backman, Fredrik 304pp 2014

Imagine how frustrating it is when your earnest attempts to end your life are continually interrupted by people needing your help. Such is the experience of Ove, a Swedish gentleman in his twilight years who finds himself surrounded by incompetents and time wasters. But for all his curmudgeonly ways, Ove is drawn into the lives of his neighbours where his uncompromising routines and staunch principles collide with the messiness of twenty first century living, with comic effect. Bringing a light touch to some challenging issues, this is a deceptively simple story of community and friendship that will have you lamenting the fact that Ove is not around to back your trailer for you.

MAN IN THE SHED, THE

Jones, Lloyd 265pp 2009



Written from 1991-2006, this collection of fourteen short stories focuses on family and relationships, achieving a haunting commentary on human behaviour. With its excellent sense of place, it is possible to recognise familiar locations and in turn find yourself questioning what you are seeing and believing. Easy to read yet thought provoking and clever.



MAN I THINK I KNOW, THE

Gayle, Mike 310pp 2018

James DeWitt and Danny Ellen seem the unlikeliest of friends. They may have both attended the same prestigious school – ‘King’s Scrivener for Boys’ – but their life trajectories have long since diverged. That is, until now. James was a property developer and recently elected MP and Danny, on the dole and drifting. However, when James suffers a debilitating brain injury and Danny is forced to take a short-term job, they connect again and the possibility of redemption is on the cards. Exploring the possibility of finding happiness in unexpected places, this is an emotionally charged but satisfying story about male friendship and is a cogent reminder that life doesn’t always work out as planned.

MANSFIELD

Stead, CK 245pp 2004



A fictional account of three years in the life of Katherine Mansfield, from 1915 to 1918, against the backdrop of WWI. It explores her loves and desire to write the “new kind of fiction”. Friendships with TS Eliot, Bertrand Russell, DH Lawrence and others are portrayed, as well as her erratic relationship with John Middleton-Murray.

MAP OF GLASS, THE

Urquhart, Jane 371pp 2005

Jerome is a young artist spending a few months on an island in Lake Ontario. But his idyll is shattered when he discovers a man frozen in the ice near the shore. One year later Sylvia, the dead man’s lover, appears at his studio driven by the need to recount her story to the stranger who discovered him. A tender and haunting story unfolds which stretches long and wide, a story that begins with Sylvia’s childhood and mysterious illness and ends with her lover’s tragic death.

MAP OF LOVE, THE

Soueif, Ahdaf 529pp 1999

A century after one of her forebears married into an Egyptian family, Isabel Parkman returns to Egypt, after falling in love with an Egyptian in New York. A story-within-a-story that explores interracial love, British colonial history, and the effects of imperialism in a third-world country. [BIG READ]

MARCH

Brooks, Geraldine 346pp 2005



Set during the American Civil War and using the journals and letters of Bronson Alcott, Louisa May Alcott’s father. March tells the story of John March, the absent father in Little Women. In Brooks’ telling, March is portrayed as an abolitionist and idealistic chaplain on the front lines of a war that tests his faith in himself, and in the Union cause. He learns that his side, too, is capable of barbarism and racism. Sick and discouraged, he returns to his little women who have grown strong in his absence.

MARTIAN, THE

Weir, Andy 370pp 2014



Astronaut Mark Watney has cause to be very grateful for his green thumb. Stranded on Mars with limited resources and a long wait for potential rescue, being able to grow food could make all the difference. Fortunately Mark is an engineer as well as a botanist and he will need every skerrick of knowledge and resourcefulness he has to stay alive in the Martian environment. This is a gripping survival story of nail-biting tension and plausible science so convincing that you’ll be puzzled as to why you can’t remember the coverage of the mission launch. [SMALL FONT]

MASTER, THE

Tóibín, Colm 359pp 2004



Tóibín turns a lifelong obsession with writer Henry James into a scrupulously researched and artfully rendered biographical novel. The narrator takes us inside the mind of James, focusing on his middle years around 1890 when he went from failure to renown. This book is a fictional study based on biographical materials, and family accounts.

MASTER BUTCHER’S SINGING CLUB, THE

Erdrich, Louise 388pp 2003

When Fidelis Waldvogel, World War I veteran, returns from war, he finds and marries the pregnant lover of his best friend who was killed in action. Seeking to make a good life for Eva and her son, Fidelis journeys to the United States and settles down in Argus, North Dakota to the life of a butcher. Erdrich’s novel traces Fidelis’s life with Eva and their four sons as it entangles with that of the charismatic Delphine Watzka in an exploration of love, loss, sacrifice, and strength. [SMALL FONT]

MATTER OF PARIHAKA, THE

Bohan, Edmund 231pp 2000



The third Inspector O’Rorke novel set in colonial New Zealand. The invasion and destruction of Te Whiti’s community of Parihaka in 1881, prompts an investigation into police brutality. A skillfully woven blend of fact and fiction, and an evocatively told tale of political and personal intrigue.

ME BEFORE YOU

Moyes, Jojo 503pp 2012



Lou Clark, working class ex-shop assistant and Will Traynor an ex-corporate lawyer are an unlikely pair. Under normal circumstances they would never have met but Will is a quadriplegic in need of a carer and Lou fits the bill. This is their story: two young people grappling with the challenges that follow tragedy. Mesmerising, poignant but never puerile, this book examines many serious issues. Easy to read, hard to stop thinking about.

MEASURE, THE

Elrick, Nikki 349pp 2022

Out of the blue, the age-old question, 'how long is a piece of string?', suddenly matters to every adult on the planet. Arriving on every doorstep of anyone 22 or older is a small box containing a length of string and engraved with the words, 'The measure of your life lies within'. These mysterious revelations grip the world affecting every facet of life from the mundane to those wielding power. What does it mean to know how your days are numbered, or those of the people you love? Thought-provoking and moving, this intriguing story follows seemingly unconnected characters as they grapple with their mortality and how to live their lives, regardless of their length.



"What a super idea for a book.
An excellent one to discuss."

"Wow! A deeply thought-provoking read that
kept the reader gripped until the final page."

"A terrific debut novel from this author.
A unique story-line."

"Perfect book group book with abundant discussion topics."

BDS Reviewers

MEET ME AT THE MUSEUM

Youngson, Anne 207pp 2018

On the face of it, a farmer's wife from Bury St. Edmunds in England and the curator of a museum in Denmark would not seem to have a lot in common. However, when Tina Hapgood writes a letter of enquiry, the letter is fielded by Professor Anders Larsen and lo and behold, their life-changing correspondence begins. Initially the 2000-year-old Tollund Man is the subject of their exchanges, but over time their lives and concerns begin to dominate. From their respective marriages and families, to their views on history and archaeology, music and poetry, it all finds its way into their letters. Well-crafted and thoughtful, this book is a moving reflection on lives well-lived and the joy of unexpected friendship.

MEMOIRS OF A GEISHA

Golden, Arthur 434pp 1997

The geisha, Sayuri, narrates the tale of her life; her origins as an orphaned fishing-village girl in 1929, the auction of her mizuage (virginity) as a teenager, and her reminiscent old age as the distinguished mistress of the patron of her dreams. Golden captures a vivid, now-vanished world in Japanese culture. [SMALL FONT]

MEMORY

Mahy, Margaret 234pp 1987

On the fifth anniversary of his sister's death, nineteen-year-old Jonny Dart is still troubled by guilt and an imperfect memory of the accident that took her life. He goes searching for the only other witness to the fatal event, but instead of finding the answers he is looking for, he finds Sophie, in whose house past and present merge for both of them. A "problem" teenager and a lady suffering from Alzheimer's Disease are the heroes.

MEMORY KEEPER'S DAUGHTER, THE

Edwards, Kim 401pp 2005

On a winter night in 1964, Dr David Henry is forced by a blizzard to deliver his own twins. His son, born first, is perfectly healthy. Yet, when his daughter is born, he notices immediately that she has Down Syndrome. He makes a split-second decision and asks his nurse to take the baby away to an institution and never to reveal the secret. But Caroline, the nurse, instead disappears into another city to raise the child herself. So begins this story that unfolds over a quarter of a century in which these two families, ignorant of each other, are yet bound by that fateful decision.

MEMORY OF RUNNING, THE

MacLarty, Ron 406pp 2005

Smithson ("Smithy") Ide is an overweight, friendless, chain-smoking, and hard-drinking 43 year old. His life becomes completely unhinged when he loses his parents and long-lost sister within a week. To escape his grief, drunk and wearing a suit, and with no money, he gets on his bike and begins to pedal west. Along the way, he flashes back to his past and the hardships of his beloved sister's schizophrenia, while his dejection encourages strangers to share their life stories with him.

MEMORY STONES, THE

Brothers, Caroline 453pp 2016

Little do the Ferraro family realise that the gathering at their beach house will be their last. It is 1976, and in the blink of an eye – with the arrival of the military junta – they are dispersed: Osvaldo the father exiled to Europe, Julieta the eldest daughter to the safety of Miami while Yolanda remains in Buenos Aires, to begin the long search for their teenage daughter, Graciela. In the years that follow, the empty trail they share with many other relatives of 'the Disappeared' is agonising, even more so with the possibility of a grandchild to trace as well. From its lyrical writing and memorable characters to its basis in Argentinian history, this is an inspiring story of a family never giving up hope in the face of a nation behaving deplorably.



MEND THE LIVING

Kerangal, Maylis D 230pp 2014

It may be the middle of the winter but Simon Limbeau and his friends relish their crazy early morning surfing session at Le Havre. But it is to be Simon's last – on their way home, there is an accident and Simon ceases to be the vibrant young man he was and will become a source of life to many others. In the 24 hours that follow, a complex operation swings into gear: from organ harvesting to donation, each careful detail, each heart-felt emotion, family and friends to nurses and doctors, and finally to Claire Mejan who will receive Simon's heart. This is an unforgettable story of transformation that honours the players of life and death in this French drama, deftly capturing in its eloquent language the miracle they are involved in.

METAL HEART, THE

Lea, Caroline 378pp 2021

When devoted sisters Dorothy and Constance Reid withdraw to the small island of Selkie Holm, the last thing they are expecting is the arrival of five hundred Italian prisoners of war who have been sent to Orkney to bolster the islands' defences. One POW in particular – Cesare – will have a powerful effect on the relationship between these identical twins who have always looked out for each other, especially since Con's traumatic experiences at the hands of a local man. Captivating and heart-wrenching, with its beautiful descriptions of the Orcadian landscape, this is an unexpected story of WWII, inspired by real events and revealing the beauty and hope that is still possible in the worst of circumstances.



"I adored this book and read it late into the night."

"I enjoyed this novel and really liked the fact/fiction aspect woven in with Orcadian legends."

"The characterisation is excellent, and the writing is superb and captivating."

BDS Reviewers

MIDDLEMARCH

Eliot, George 896pp 1872

Novel about Dorothea, a woman of intelligence, limited by a narrow society. English classic. [BIG READ, SMALL FONT]

MIDDLESEX

Eugenides, Jeffrey 529pp 2002

The story of Calliope Stephanides' transformation into Cal begins, "I was born twice: first as a baby girl ... in January of 1960; and then again as a teenage boy ... in August of 1974." Middlesex spans three generations, crosses two continents, from a small Greek village to the streets of Detroit, covers historical events and reveals family secrets as Cal sets out to discover himself by tracing the story of his family [BiG READ]

MIDNIGHT AT THE BRIGHT IDEAS BOOKSTORE

Sullivan, Matthew 326pp 2017

Who ever heard of a bookshop staying open to midnight? But the Bright Ideas Bookstore is not just a shop, it is a haven, not only for the BookFrogs, the down and out regulars who frequent its aisles but also for bookseller Lydia Smith. When Joe Molina, Lydia's favourite BookFrog ends his life in the store, he leaves behind a puzzle, one that involves Lydia and the traumatic events of her childhood. Joe's trail of breadcrumbs – coded messages he has left in books – draws Lydia back into her past and the unsolved Hammerman massacre that has defined her life. Intricately plotted and scattered with singular characters, this entertaining and disturbing mystery proffers the perfect diversion for booklovers and puzzle solvers alike.

MIGRATIONS

McConaghy, Charlotte 276pp 2020

When Franny Stone with her bad case of wanderlust and affinity for birds, inveigles her way onto a fishing boat in order to follow the last Arctic terns on their migration to Antarctica, it is the beginning of an epic voyage. Set in the near future with the effects of climate change well in play, the story moves seamlessly between time and place unreeling a nautical adventure and a journey of personal redemption for Franny and her complicated past. Haunting, riveting, but undeniably hopeful. [SMALL FONT]



"A riveting read, the hints of a dark event keep us reading."

"An intense love-story — it's a thread throughout the book, as is her courage — and wanderlust."

"A gripping read. The well-crafted prose creates atmosphere and place very well."

BDS Reviewers

MILA AND THE BONE MAN

Roche, Lauren 272pp 2022



Mila's family hail from Northland, and with their happy home and their proximity to a nearby forest, she has an idyllic childhood. But for every idyll, there is its counterpart, and the grief and trauma that visit the family cause Mila to seek exile in Auckland. But the lure of the north eventually draws Mila back to accept the mantle of healer. Compelling and emotionally engaging, this story considers the complex issues of guilt and grief, and the healing and peace available through the natural world.



"Very original story and very engrossing. I couldn't put it down."

"It's a compelling story and well-told."

"The chapters are short and encourage you to read one more, one more ..."

"The story is told with compassion bred from experience and heavily influenced by the author's life."

BDS Reviewers

MINIATURIST, THE

Burton, Jessie 425pp 2014



When Petronella Oortman marries the rich merchant Johannes Brandt in 1686, he presents her with a miniature of their home as a wedding gift. The miniaturist contracted to furnish it creates artefacts that not only reflect the contents of the Brandt household but mysteriously foretell future possibilities as well. But Nella will need to have her wits about her if she is to survive these intrigues and the deception that swirls around her in this pious and repressed society. This is an absorbing, atmospheric tale with a young heroine equal to the demands of Calvinistic Amsterdam which is presented in meticulously researched detail.

MISS BENSON'S BEETLE

Joyce, Rachel 388pp 2020

There is nothing wrong with Margery Benson's imagination, it just needs to be set free, and finally at the age of 46, it is unleashed! Along with assistant Enid Pretty, these unlikely companions set forth from England in 1950 on the adventure of a lifetime: to find the golden beetle of New Caledonia. Their search for this mythical insect becomes an exhilarating journey of self-discovery requiring large doses of gumption and its twin, risk-taking. Both comedic and deeply affecting, this is a captivating story of both the power of friendship and the lasting effects of war.

MISS CHOPSTICKS

Xinran 257pp 2007

The Li sisters don't have much education, but one thing has been drummed into them: their mother is a failure because she hasn't managed to produce a son, and they themselves only merit a number as a name. When circumstances lead the sisters to seek work in distant Nanjing, the shocking new urban environment opens their eyes. And when the money they earn starts arriving back at the village, their father is forced to recognise that daughters are not so dispensable after all.

MISS JANE

Watson, Brad 279pp 2016

Miss Jane Chisholm of rural Mercury, Mississippi, has been blessed with an inquisitive and agile brain, but less so when it comes to the usual anatomy that ensures the prospect of a husband and family. In short, Jane is 'different' and she will need to find her place in a world with rigid expectations for its young women. In her corner from the moment of her birth in 1915, is the local doctor, Ed Thompson, an ally paving the way for Jane to explore and reshape the boundaries of her existence. Inspired by the life of the author's great-aunt, this is an uplifting story, sensitively rendered and joyous in its celebration of the countryside that provides solace to a unique and courageous heroine.

MISS GARNET'S ANGEL

Vickers, Salley 342pp 2000

When Julia Garnet is touched by the spirit of the Archangel Raphael depicted in the paintings she discovers in a local Venetian church, her cautious life begins an unexpected transformation. "...like the shifting sea-light of Venice, nothing here is quite as it seems".

MISS WEBSTER AND CHÉRIF

Duncker, Patricia 244pp 2007



Miss Webster and Chérif tells the story of Elizabeth Webster, a single woman pushing seventy. Forced out of her teaching job, she unleashes her sharp tongue on everyone in the English village of Blessington. To recover from a sudden illness, she travels to North Africa where she has a brush with terrorism. Three weeks after Miss Webster has returned home, her doorbell rings, and she finds on her doorstep a beautiful young Arab man carrying a large suitcase.



MISSION HOUSE

Davies, Carys 339pp 2019

Ooty, a former British hill station in southern India, is just what the doctor ordered. Hilary Byrd is overdue for a rest from the bruising challenges of 21st century London and Ooty promises the quiet, tranquil life he so desperately needs. Befriended by the Padre and his adopted daughter Priscilla with whom he falls in love, Hilary is drawn into a gentle, blinkered existence that is oblivious to the brewing political and religious tensions. Poignant and understated, this is a nuanced story that weaves the British imperial past with the new realities of contemporary India.



“The book is compelling, gentle, subtle, spare and human.”

“A slow, quiet read. It was interesting to look up various incidents that are referred to. Well researched.”

“A delightful book. The characters are so real and the reader is drawn into their stories.”

BDS Reviewers

MISTER PIP

Jones, Lloyd 220pp 2006



Mister Pip is set during Papua New Guinea’s blockade of Bougainville in the 1990s. When the school is closed in a remote village, Mr Watts takes over its running. He resorts to reading Great Expectations aloud to his students, among them the young Matilda. The 19th century world of Dickens is so different from Matilda’s own, but it helps her understand her own existence better. When the copy of Great Expectations goes missing, Mr Watts encourages the children to remember fragments of the story and tell them to the class. And so the original story is reconstructed from the children’s memories.

MOBY DICK

Melville, Herman 480pp 1851

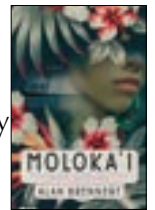


The classic American story of the white whale and the evil seaman. [BIG READ]

MOLOKA’I

Brennert, Alan 384pp 2003

When Rachel Kalama is seven, she is discovered to have leprosy and is quarantined in a leprosy settlement on the Hawaiian island of Moloka’i. This is the story of her life; from the moment she is taken from her family (never to live with them again), to her eventual cure as an adult and beyond. Not only does it chronicle the experience of an isolated community celebrating life while over-shadowed by disease, but also the changes in the management of leprosy. Based on extensive research, it is an inspiring story revealing a fascinating period of early 20th Century history.



MOOR’S ACCOUNT, THE

Lalami, Laila 428pp 2015

The 1527 Spanish expedition to colonise Florida decimated its original contingent of 300 souls to a mere four, one of whom was a Moroccan slave. Here Estebanico tells the story of his life interwoven with his account of their attempted conquest; of the starvation and drownings, of disease and altercations with indigenous tribes, of challenge after challenge as they struggle from the Gulf Coast to Mexico. Based on historical events, this is a riveting and unforgettable chronicle of survival and discovery in the New World, narrated by a man usually consigned to a footnote in history.

MISTAKE, THE

James, Wendy 278pp 2012

Jodie Garrow has come a long way: 25 years ago she was single, pregnant and desperate; now she is married to a successful lawyer and the mother of two teenagers. Following a chance encounter with a face from the past, her life starts to unravel and she becomes subject to the court of public opinion and trial by media. Examining family, the power of the media, and the judgements we make of one another, this is a provocative and compelling story. [SMALL FONT]

MISTAKE, A [NZ book]

Shuker, Carl 182pp 2019



Wellington consultant surgeon Elizabeth Taylor has an enviable unblemished record, but when a small error in care leads to catastrophe, Liz and her surgical team come under huge scrutiny. The distraught family, the social media barrage, there is no end to the blaming and shaming coming Liz’s way. An impressive level of medical detail coupled with its exploration of the challenges of professional accountability and culpability delivers an intense and compelling reading experience. This finely crafted story is enhanced by the parallel retelling of the Challenger space shuttle disaster and its reminder of the consequences of system failures.

MORNINGS IN JENIN

Abulhawa, Susan 331pp 2010

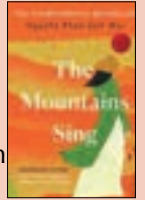
Palestine 1948. The Abulheja family are forcibly removed from their ancestral home in Ein Hod and sent to live in a refugee camp in Jenin. Through Amal, the bright granddaughter of the patriarch, we witness the stories of her brothers: one, a stolen boy who becomes an Israeli soldier; the other who in sacrificing everything for the Palestinian cause will become his enemy. Amal's own dramatic story threads its way through six decades of Israeli-Palestinian tension: it is one of love and loss, of childhood, marriage, parenthood, and finally the need to share history with her daughter, to preserve the greatest love she has.



MOUNTAINS, SING, THE

Nguyễn Phan, Quế Mai 339pp 2021

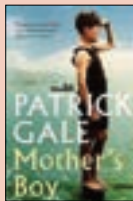
With little choice in the matter, Dieu Lan has become the resourceful and unwavering matriarch of the Trần family, shepherding her divided clan through the turbulent events of her nation's history – the Japanese Occupation in WWII, the Land Reform and the 'American' War. Narrating the story of their family's fluctuating fortunes, Diệu Lan and her granddaughter Hương tell of survival and resilience, and the triumph of love and hope over conflict and loss. Based on the experiences of the author's family, this is an unforgettable novel told in beautiful, lyrical prose, with a unique perspective of twentieth century Vietnam.



MOTHER'S BOY

Gale, Patrick 395pp 2022

With the early death of his father, it is no surprise that Charles should share a deep bond with his mother. From his childhood in a small parochial town, to his stint in the Royal Navy in WWII as a coder, Laura is there in the background, devoted and supportive. She is well aware of the delicate path Charles must tread with his poetic leanings and clandestine relationships. Spanning both the first and second world wars and loosely based on the life of Cornish poet, Charles Causley, this is a captivating story sensitively and beautifully told.



"Beautifully written with excellent characters."

"A well-written story which portrays the atrocities the family lived through, without being depressing."

"It is so good reading a story of the Vietnam War — or American war — written from a Vietnamese point of view."

"This is not an easy read, and nor should it be."

BDS Reviewers

"This book is beautifully written and the story addictive and interesting."

"Gale writes characters gently and softly and suddenly you feel as if you know them all intimately."

"The author is genius. His writing is deceptively simple but full of knowledge and complexity."

BDS Reviewers

MOTION OF THE BODY THROUGH SPACE, THE

Shriver, Lionel 338pp 2020

In the yin and yang of a well-established marriage, Serenata and Remington are poised to swap places. Serenata, with a lifetime of pounding the pavement under her belt, now faces hanging up her running shoes for a bout of knee surgery. Remington's previous abhorrence of exercise is replaced with a born-again conversion to extreme sport, aided and abetted by his youthful personal trainer, Bambi. Forced into early retirement, Remington now has the time to devote to the demands of his new cult, and money too, courtesy of their retirement funds. Entertaining and provocative, this satirical story offers perceptive insights on not only ageing and the elite fitness industry, but other contentious issues of the day.

MOUSEPROOF KITCHEN, THE

Shah, Saira 369pp 2014

It's almost a cliché: English couple with a young baby buy a dilapidated farmhouse and up sticks to a new and enviable life in rural France. There's the dream, and there is the reality ... For Anna and Tobias, the dream is even more challenging as their daughter Freya is profoundly disabled. Determined to stick to the plan, they embark on life in the Languedoc with a supporting cast of eccentric characters and a ridiculous number of rodents. Although light in style and easy to read, this is a life-affirming story with satisfying and thought-provoking depth from an author writing from personal experience.

MOVING

Eclair, Jenny 388pp 2015

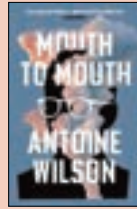
After more than half a century at her London address, artist and illustrator Edwina Spinner, is selling up. As she accompanies the real estate agent from room to room, there are a lifetime of memories to reflect on: her first husband Ollie, their twins Charlie and Rowena; her second husband Dickie and his son Lucas. Spanning from the 1960s to the present day, this bittersweet story with its multiple time frames and perspectives, offers a fresh take on a blended family complete with its secrets and betrayals, its triumphs and tragedies. An easy but intriguing and thought-provoking read.



MOUTH TO MOUTH

Wilson, Antoine 179pp 2022

Could it just be a tall tale, or did Jeff Cook really save art dealer Francis Arsenault's life? Jeff is keen to offload his story to an unnamed narrator, and it's a doozy. Jeff's connection to Francis starts when he saves him from drowning, but that's just the beginning. Keeping his good deed to himself, he becomes more than just curious about Francis, worming his way into his life, marrying his daughter, and wondering just what he did in saving the man... Deliciously disquieting, this short, sharp morality tale peels back the covers of the art world, raising questions about fate and destiny and just who is manipulating whom.



"The plot is sufficiently credible and concisely moved-along to make the book easy to read and hard to put down."

"Great writing style. Captures you into a 'would I have behaved differently' mode."

"The ending is brilliant."

"The story makes you question the characters in the book, and yourself."

BDS Reviewers

MR ALLBONES' FERRETS

Farrell, Fiona 217pp 2007

A young man out poaching. A beautiful maiden in a mysterious house. A perilous voyage to distant islands. All the ingredients of a highly coloured Victorian romance are played out in the context of the great colonial experiment. Exotic species travelled back to stock the collections of Europe while useful species were dispatched to found new colonies in the antipodes. From a factual base, Fiona Farrell spins a delicate, satirical fantasy about human folly and the perils of disturbing the subtle balance of nature.

MR ROSENBLUM'S LIST

Solomons, Natasha 311pp 2010

In 1937 when the Rosenblum family flee Germany they are given a pamphlet, *While you are in England: Helpful Information and Friendly Guidance for every Refugee*. And so begins Jack Rosenblum's list of what it takes to be a perfect English gentleman. Diligently working his way through the list he is stumped by his final goal of joining a golf club. Undaunted by rejection he sets out to build his own golf course in Dorset. This deceptively simple story deals with the big issues of cultural identity, assimilation and prejudice. A warm and entertaining read with serious undertones.

MRS COOK

Day, Marele 368pp 2002

Elizabeth Batts was married to Captain James Cook for 14 years with only an estimated four of those years spent together. Day uses a mix of research and documents, poetic licence and imagination to suggest what Elizabeth's life might have been during James's voyages, and then following his death. Her life is one of courage, hardship and survival.

MRS DALLOWAY

Woolf, Virginia 198pp 1925

It is a summer's day in London and Clarissa Dalloway, fashionable and wealthy society hostess, prepares for a party. Woolf captures the inner world of Mrs Dalloway and of those whose lives are interwoven with hers, including that of shell-shocked WWI veteran, Septimus Smith.

MRS JEWELL AND THE WRECK OF THE GENERAL GRANT

Sanders, Cristina 325pp 2022

The passengers and crew who set sail on the 'General Grant' in 1866 were only expecting a three-month voyage from Melbourne to London via Cape Horn, but disaster strikes and the ship founders on the subantarctic Auckland Islands with much loss of life. Among the fifteen survivors, rumours of bullion aboard the ship as well as the gold being carried by the passengers result in shifting allegiances and complex social dynamics. The only woman among the survivors, Mary Ann Jewell is the narrator for this historically grounded story of endurance, of the gruelling conditions faced by the castaways and just what they needed to do to survive.



"A wonderful NZ writer. This story is part of our history."

"An absorbing and well-written story."

"A flawless writing style. The author conveys the emotions very well."

"Despite the sadness of the loss of life, this is an amazing story."

BDS Reviewers

MUDBOUND

Jordan, Hillary 324pp 2008

The McAllan and Jackson families inhabit the same patch of southern soil, a cotton farm in the Mississippi Delta. White landowners and black share croppers are run of the mill but not so the friendship between Jamie McAllan and Ronsel Jackson returning home from World War Two. Narrated by the six main characters, this story is a page turner reminding us of what happens when prejudice and bigotry have their way.

MURDER AT MANSFIELD PARK

Shepherd, Lynn 343pp 2010



The much-loved and familiar names of Jane Austen's Mansfield Park are all present: Fanny Price, the Bertrams, the Norrisses, the Grants, the Crawfords. However, with a reshuffling of characters, personalities and plot and the addition of a body or two, this novel continues the magic of Mansfield Park, albeit with a twist. An engrossing and intriguing mystery worthy of Jane Austen aficionados or those yet to be converted.

MUSEUM OF MODERN LOVE

Rose, Heather 281pp 2016

Fulfilling a promise to his wife Lydia, film composer Arky Levin makes his way to New York's Museum of Modern Art and Marina Abramović's iconic performance work: one table, two chairs and the mingled gaze of the artist and participating members of the public over a 75 day period. A surprising catalyst for Arky's examination of his life, the exhibition is at the heart of this original and clever story and reimagining of the actual 2010 event. It provides a fascinating backdrop to pondering profound ideas of art and life.

MUSIC OF BEES, THE

Garvin, Eileen 320pp 2021

Apart from thousands of honeybees for company, Alice Holtzman is mired in loneliness having been unexpectedly widowed and not yet ready to move on. However, Alice's commitment to and expansion of her beekeeping enterprise proves to be transformative, including for the young men who are to help her on her property: teenager Jake and the slightly older Harry, both of whom are also struggling with the hands that fate has dealt them. Set in rural Oregon, this is a heart-warming and uplifting story of friendship, new beginnings and finding oneself, bound together by the fascinating and absorbing backdrop of beekeeping.



"Loved it! Best book of the year."

Christchurch 395

"Nice easy read with a happy ending. Likeable characters. Loved by all."

Auckland 339

"We all enjoyed this book. Easy, light reading. Love, compassion and community spirit. Learnt about bees too."

Invercargill 002

MUSIC SHOP, THE

Joyce, Rachel 354pp 2017



Whether it is classical or jazz, punk, the blues or heavy metal, record shop owner Frank Adair is a man with a special gift for matching people with music, but only with vinyl, mind, never with a new-fangled CD. But whether he is ready or not, change is in the air for Frank and the motley crew of neighbouring shop owners – Maud the tattoo artist, Mr Novak the baker, Father Anton seller of religious souvenirs and the rest. Making an appearance is the mysterious and charismatic Ilse Brauchmann – who doesn't even listen to music! – and to add insult to injury, developers salivating over the run-down shops of Unity Street. With its quirky characters and snapshot of 1980s England, this is a charming love story and a life-affirming celebration of music.

MY DARK VANESSA

Russell, Kate Elizabeth 369pp 2020

Vanessa Wye is convinced that her relationship with Jacob Stane was based on mutual love, even if she was only fifteen when it started and Jacob was her forty-two-year-old English teacher. Now, years down the track as the #MeToo movement gains momentum and Jacob is accused of sexual abuse by other former students, Vanessa is forced to revisit her experiences and make sense of what really happened. A riveting page-turner... dark... disturbing... provocative.

MY NAME IS LEON

de Waal, Kit 262pp 2016



Nine-year-old Leon has already mastered some important life lessons and knows how to look after his new baby brother Jake; someone has to, as their mother Carol is not able to adequately care for her sons. When the inevitable happens and Leon and Jake come to the attention of Social Services, Jake is promptly adopted while Leon remains in foster care. Set against the race riots of 1980s Britain, this is a moving, understated story, narrated by the endearing Leon, that compassionately examines a fractured family at the mercy of others.

MY NAME IS LUCY BARTON

Strout, Elizabeth 192pp 2016



Sequestered in a New York hospital bed, Lucy Barton's protracted stay is relieved by the unexpected arrival of her estranged mother. The five days she spends at the bedside encourage Lucy to reflect on her impoverished childhood in rural Illinois, and her adult life as a wife and mother and aspiring writer. Understated and poignant, this contemplative story, narrated by Lucy, examines the legacy of childhood and its impact on adult life as well as simply and tenderly revealing the complex relationship between a mother and a daughter.



MY NAME WAS JUDAS

Stead, CK 244pp 2006



Judas' name is synonymous with betrayal, but is that how he saw it himself? Forty years after the death of Jesus, Judas tells the story as he remembers it. Looking back on his childhood and youth, he recalls his friendship with Jesus; their schooling together; their families; the people who would go on to be disciples and followers; their journeys, and their dealings with the powers of Rome and the Temple, against the richly painted backdrop of ancient Palestine.

NAMES OF THINGS, THE

Wood, John Colman 261pp 2012



Reluctantly accompanying her husband as he studies a nomadic tribe, the anthropologist's wife does not want to be in north east Africa. But it is not until years later that the consequences of her acquiescence will become tragically apparent. So much so, that he must return to the wilderness of the desert to come to terms with what has happened. Elegantly written and thoughtfully conceived, this story is a sensitive exploration of love and grief that benefits from the authority the author, who is an anthropologist, brings to these subjects.

NAMESAKE, THE

Lahiri, Jhumpa 291pp 2004

Gogol is named after his father's favourite author. But, growing up in an Indian family in suburban America, the boy starts to detest the awkward name and itches to cast it off, along with the inherited values it represents. Determined to live a life far removed from that of his parents, Gogol sets off on his own path, only to discover that the search for identity depends on much more than a name.

NARROW ROAD TO THE DEEP NORTH

Flanagan, Richard 467pp 2013



Australian surgeon Dorrigo Evans is a flawed man, struggling with the guilt of his love affair with his uncle's young wife. But he is also a hero; in a World War Two POW camp on the Thai-Burma railway, he is striving to keep the men in his charge alive. They face the worst of conditions, and for those who will survive, the trauma will be forever present. Focusing on the lives of the Japanese and Korean guards as well as the Australian captives, this is an intense and challenging story that doesn't flinch from the brutality and violence of its setting.

NELLY DEAN

Case, Alison 484pp 2015



In this story of the great house Wuthering Heights, of Thrushcross Grange and the Earnslaw and Linton families, Mr Lockwood is once again the recipient of housekeeper Nelly Dean's narration; but this time round it is Nelly's story that is centre stage. A faithful companion to Emily Brontë's 1837 classic that encourages but does not require a reading of the original, this is a beautifully crafted and engaging page-turner that is easily accessible to the 21st century reader.

NEST, THE

Sweeney, Cynthia D'Aprix 400pp 2016

The trust fund that Leonard Plumb establishes to provide a modest nest-egg for his New York based adult children looms large in their future plans, especially since good management and a buoyant stock market have rendered it a substantial sum. That is, until the oldest son Leo blots his copy book and is rescued by his mother's unilateral raid of the nest. The fallout for the remaining siblings is ... character building. The question of whether Melody, Bea and Jack can move beyond their thwarted expectations is skilfully explored in this colourful and perceptive story of family dysfunction and ambition. Both thought-provoking and easy to read.

NEVER LET ME GO

Ishiguro, Kazuo 282pp 2005

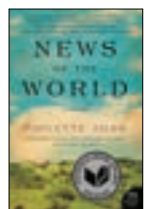


As a child, Kathy H attends Hailsham, a boarding school in the secluded English countryside. It is a place of rigid and mysterious rules. Now, at 31, Kathy has assumed the position for which she was trained long ago, and she has put the memories of her Hailsham days out of her mind. When she is thrown together with two of her old school friends, she begins to relive experiences, and her memories reveal that the ostensibly pastoral and pleasant Hailsham harboured dark and mysterious secrets.

NEWS OF THE WORLD

Jiles, Paulette 209pp 2016

It's not quite time for Captain Jefferson Kidd to hang up his saddle ... he may be getting on in years, but there are still plenty who will pay to hear him read the news of the world. However, it's not itinerant news-reading that is going to keep him on the road, but the request to escort Johanna Leonberger, a ten-year-old liberated captive of the Kiowa. Their 400-mile journey south will be through hostile territory and will culminate with a family faced with a child, a now stranger caught between two worlds. This convincingly rendered story of 1870s Texas, complete with appealing characters and an evocative landscape, brings to the fore the price of honour and the rewards of nurturing trust.



NEW WILDERNESS, THE

Cook, Diane 395pp 2020

In response to toxic pollution and overpopulation, the only hope for reversing the declining health of Bea's five-year-old daughter Agnes, is to join a group of volunteers taking part in an experiment to study how humans interact with nature. They are to live in the Wilderness State, the normally prohibited, last remaining untamed land, and are to follow the Manual and the edicts of the Rangers, but most importantly, leaving no trace of their existence on their surroundings. Provocative and unsettling, this well-researched story asks those difficult questions: what will a person do to survive and just what is our place in the natural world?



"This is a book that tugs your heart and makes you think. It's a ten from me."

"Well told story of an imagined world. Very moving."

"Wonderful description of the wilderness environment and the people in it."

"An epic book with many interesting ideas and themes."

BDS Reviewers

NIGHT GUEST, THE

McFarlane, Fiona 276pp 2013

Ruth Field is not so addled that she can't appreciate that the likelihood of a tiger prowling through her house is virtually nil. But the visit of a tiger is not the only disconcerting event, and the arrival of Frida Young at Ruth's isolated property on the New South Wales coast — supposedly sent from the government 'to help' — just adds to the confusion. Ruth might be able to recall her childhood in Fiji with more accuracy than she does the day of the week, but she is certain there is more going on than meets the eye. Suspenseful and engrossing, this is a cleverly nuanced portrayal of isolation and dependence, and the challenge of knowing who to trust.

NIGHTWOODS

Frazier, Charles 259pp 2011

The tranquility of Luce's reclusive life as caretaker of an abandoned lodge in the Appalachians is shattered with the arrival of her niece and nephew. Orphaned when their mother (Luce's sister) is murdered, they bring with them, not only their traumatic past, but in pursuit, Bud, their mother's killer. Engrossing and gripping, this is story-telling at its best: damaged characters, spectacular landscapes and the best and worst of human nature.

NIGHT SWIM, THE

Goldin, Megan 341pp 2020

Rachel Krall makes her living by producing true crime podcasts of current court cases, allowing her audience to imagine they are part of the jury. The small coastal town of Neopolis is the setting for Season 3 of the podcast, where the local golden boy is accused of raping the granddaughter of the police chief. And if that's not drama enough, someone desperately wants Rachel to investigate what happened to a young woman twenty-five years earlier ... especially when connections between the two cases come to light. Intriguing and thought-provoking, this mystery and courtroom thriller sensitively handles rape culture and the internecine conflicts of small-town USA.



"I loved this book and found it hard to put it down – it was intriguing and thought-provoking and a powerful read."

"The author handles the harsh topic of rape with sensitivity and honesty."

"This book is different – a legal thriller plus a mystery. I loved the courtroom drama and couldn't wait to find out what was going to happen next."

BDS Reviewers

NINTH CHILD, THE

Magnusson, Sally 321pp 2020

The 1850s Loch Katrine waterworks are set to solve Glasgow's freshwater woes. Enter Alexander Aird, appointed to the ambitious project to care for the many labourers undertaking the dangerous work. And accompanying the good doctor is his wife Isabel, expecting for the eighth time, but yet to have a successful pregnancy. In the beautiful Trossachs Issy's spirits begin to rise, but so too do otherworldly forces... Anchored with a bedrock of well-drawn characters and a strong sense of place, this enthralling story weaves a fascinating blend of science and superstition with its unique combination of historic public health and engineering feats, along with Scottish myths and legends.

NO GREAT MISCHIEF

MacLeod, Alistair 262pp 2001

Canadian writer MacLeod says: "In many ways [the book] is about the loss of a way of being." A tale that frequently switches from the folkloric past of a Celtic immigrant family forced from the Scottish Highlands in 1779 to that of the present narrator, Alexander MacDonald, a Nova Scotia descendant.

NOAH'S COMPASS

Tyler, Anne 277pp 2009

Liam Pennywell is untethered. At sixty, he has lost his job, downsizing to manage the change in his circumstances. In the search to regain his memory following an assault in his new home, he reflects on his life; of mistakes made and opportunities missed. As he reconnects with those around him, he is able to contemplate a different future. Well defined characters and the acute observations of domestic detail take the ordinariness of a life, transforming it into a story that is both poignant and fascinating.

NOISE OF TIME, THE

Barnes, Julian 184pp 2016

How does one survive as an artist under a dictatorship? Centred on three defining moments in Dimitri Shostakovich's life, this fictionalised biography of the Russian composer considers the nature of art and creativity under Soviet rule. Based around real events, it is an intimate and thoughtful novel closely observing the chilling effect of repression on one man's art and conscience.

NORMAL PEOPLE

Rooney, Sally 266pp 2018

Most people aspire to be 'normal' and Marianne Sheridan and Connell Waldron are no exception. Hailing from County Sligo, they come from the same west Ireland town, albeit from different sides of the track: Marianne's family are wealthy and employ Connell's mum as their cleaner. Spanning from their last year at high school through to the completion of their studies at Trinity College Dublin, this is the poignant account of their 'on-again, off-again' relationship as they wrestle with their metamorphosis into adulthood. With its astute social observations and psychological insights, this is a sensitively written love story illuminating the universal need for connection and the desire to be truly known.

NOT FORGETTING THE WHALE

Ironmonger, John 369pp 2015

When a computer programme he designs predicts the end of the world as we know it, Joe Haak leaves London in a panic. He eventually washes up on the shores of St Piran in Cornwall where, fortunately, he is able to persuade the close-knit community to heed his warning. In this hopeful post-apocalyptic story the author skilfully combines the theories of macroeconomics with the unpredictability of human nature producing a thoughtful, enjoyable tale. As for the whale? Well, there turns out to be a bit of a myth about whales in St Piran ...

NOW IS THE TIME

Bragg, Melvyn 357pp 2015

The Peasant's Revolt of 1381 bears all the hallmarks of contemporary headlines: taxes, property rights, violence and the abuse of power. Renegade priest John Ball and a former soldier Walter Tyler lead thousands of ordinary men and women to march on London where they are initially placated by the boy-king Richard II. This eerily plausible and sometimes shocking account of the most popular uprising in England, is impressively detailed and brings to life a much neglected episode of history.

NOTHING TO SEE HERE

Wilson, Kevin 254pp 2019

Lillian Breaker and Madison Roberts have history. Reaching back to their time together at an elite boarding school, Madison only has to click her fingers and Lillian will come running... and this time it is to be a nanny for Madison's problematic stepchildren, Bessie and Roland. The twins' tendency to spontaneously combust is an inconvenience for their father's political ambitions which are about to achieve fruition. Surprisingly believable, this is a delightfully quirky story of friendship, love and questionable parenting.

NUTSHELL, THE

McEwan, Ian 199pp 2016

The Bard may very well be turning over in his grave... or not. In this original re-imagining of Hamlet, instead of Denmark we are in a run-down London mansion and Trudy has betrayed her husband and is scheming with his brother Claude. And Hamlet? Offering a unique perspective on the world and events closer to home is Trudy's precocious unborn child, a narrator like no other. Swathed in Shakespearean undertones and teeming with cultural references, this is an intriguing and clever literary romp that remains loyal to the murder and deceit at its heart.

OFFICER AND A SPY, AN

Harris, Robert 479pp 2013

In what came to be known as the Dreyfuss Affair, condemned spy Alfred Dreyfuss is exiled from France for handing over secrets to the Germans. Although instrumental in bringing about his conviction, Army Officer Georges Picquart comes to believe he is innocent and attempts to see him exonerated. Impeccable research into this cause célèbre of the 1890s combined with a riveting plot produces a spellbinding thriller that brings to life this famous miscarriage of justice. [BIG READ]

OFFING, THE

Myers, Benjamin 272pp 2019



Young Robert Appleyard wants more from life than to end up with his father in a Durham coalmine, and with World War II now over, surely he can expect more? And just like that, with a swag on his back he heads off ... winding up on the North Yorkshire coast in the company of the delightfully eccentric Dulcie Piper. It is in their nascent friendship that Robert's horizons expand and Dulcie is able to reconcile with her past. This is an inspirational story of intergenerational friendship distinguished by its lyrical descriptions of the natural world, its wit and wisdom and its appreciation of the life changing power of arts and culture.

OLD FILTH

Gardam, Jane 260pp 2004

Sir Edward Feathers, known as Filth, an acronym for Failed in London, Try Hong Kong, is a retired international lawyer and judge. Recently widowed, he is left to contemplate his long marriage, the moral contradictions of his career, and the passionate hatred he harbours for his next-door neighbour. He keeps returning to the trauma of his childhood as a 'Raj orphan', one of the countless colonial children sent away from their parents to be educated back 'home' in England.

OLIVER TWIST

Dickens, Charles 414pp 1838



One of the great novels of social concern, depicting the world of poverty and crime in the work-houses of London. Colourful and entertaining. [SMALL FONT]

ON BEAUTY

Smith, Zadie 446pp 2005



In a 21st-century update of Howard's End, art historian Howard Belsey, a transplanted Englishman married to an African-American woman, returns to London to prevent his son from marrying the daughter of his academic rival. In the meantime, Belsey's other children, Zora and Levi, are each seeking the commitments and identities that will define their own lives. The result is a vivid portrait of marriage and family, and the conflict between family, and the political and the personal, as well as people's affinity for self-deception.

ON CANAAN'S SIDE

Barry, Sebastian 256pp 2012



Arriving in America at the end of WW1 with Irish history snapping at her heels, Lilly Bere has quite a story to tell. Along with her mensfolk, she must navigate life in a country that over the decades that follow will have its own wars to contend with. Beautifully narrated with poignant characters and its broad sweep of 20th century history, this fictional memoir is a book to savour.

ON CHESIL BEACH

McEwan, Ian 166pp 2007

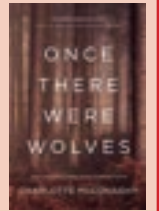


It is July 1962. Edward and Florence, young innocents married that morning, arrive at a hotel on the Dorset coast. At dinner, they struggle to suppress their private fears of the wedding night to come — but for different reasons. Edward wants sex, Florence is sure she doesn't. Locked in their inhibitions and unable to discuss their fears and needs, the situation is both miniature and enormous, dire and pathetic, tender and irrevocable.

ONCE THERE WERE WOLVES

McConaghy, Charlotte 256pp 2021

When biologist Inti Flynn arrives in the Scottish Highlands to lead a rewilding programme for grey wolves, she is accompanied by her twin sister Aggie, who needs her care and support. The establishment of the Cairngorm Wolf Project incurs a hostile reception, even more so when a local farmer is found dead, and it is inevitable the wolves will be blamed. However, Inti is determined to champion both the wolves and her traumatised twin, whatever the cost. Fascinating, fast-moving and morally complex, this literary eco-thriller also contains a mystery and a love story within its eloquent pages and rugged landscapes.



"Excellent storytelling, great twist at the end."

"I loved it and couldn't put it down."

"It's a very dense, complex and fast-moving plot."

"Wonderful characters. Inti is complex, fierce, marvellous."

BDS Reviewers

ONE DAY IN THE LIFE OF IVAN DENISOVICH

Solzhenitsyn, Aleksandr 143pp 1963

This old favourite in a new Penguin jacket shook Russia and the world when it first appeared. It provides a brutal and shattering glimpse of the fate of millions of Russians under Stalin. Reading this book, one enters a world of incarceration, brutality, manual labour, and freezing cold — and participates in the struggle of men to survive the terrible rigours of nature, and the inhumanity of the system that defines their conditions of life.

ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF SOLITUDE

Márquez, Gabriel García 432pp 1967

Epic story of a South American family in a town built in the jungle. A blend of political reality and magic realism.



ONCE UPON A RIVER

Setterfield, Diane 507pp 2018



What better setting for storytelling than the Swan Inn, and what better story than the appearance of an injured stranger carrying a drowned child, who then returns to life? The arrival of the little girl at the inn on the banks of the Thames galvanises the village: who is she and where has she come from? With its rich cast of characters, denizens of a society on the cusp of change, and with the great river ebbing and flowing in the background, this Victorian gothic tale considers the timeless mysteries of life and death.



"Enjoyed by all our group. Wonderful characters. Heart-warming story. Excellent story-telling."

Christchurch 051

"Everybody loved it!! A great mysterious book. Just wonderful."

Turangi 001

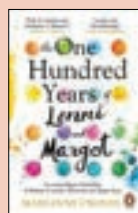
"General enjoyment of this cleverly written, multi-storyline novel. Strong, well-written female characters prompted good discussion. Highly recommended."

Rotorua 002

ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF LENNI AND MARGOT

Cronin, Marianne 382pp 2020

Between the two of them, teenager Lenni Petterson and octogenarian Margot Macrae have clocked up a hundred years of living. Patients of the Glasgow Princess Royal Hospital, their days are numbered, but not their determination to stave off the boredom and restrictions of hospital care. Wrangling her way into a new art therapy programme, Lenni teams up with Margot in a project to create one hundred artworks to tell the story of their lives. Revealed through the lives of its beautifully drawn characters, this tender and funny story is a celebration of friendship, loss and love.



"Fantastic book — very well worth reading."

"The writing is light and zips along. Despite a lot of hard topics being covered, the tone is warmth and happiness."

"Funny and tender and a real page turner."

"A lot of reminiscing which I usually dislike, but I loved it."

BDS Reviewers

ONE SPLIT SECOND

Bond, Caroline 359pp 2020

That's all it takes – just one split second – to upend the lives of the five families and their community. Life could and would never be the same again. It's all too easy to imagine: a party – a car full of teenagers on their way home – a moment's inattention – a brick wall. Viewed from multiple perspectives, this compelling story of an accident and its aftermath, thoughtfully examines the consequences of such a familiar and tragic event.



"A fascinating novel that keeps you glued to the pages."

"The book is realistic, educational and so gripping!"

"Despite the harrowing, raw emotions, it never becomes too graphic to read."

"The characters are incredibly 'real', they all felt absolutely believable."

"The ending is great — I was worried it might not live up to the rest of the book!"

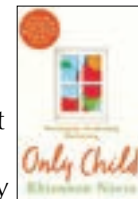
BDS Reviewers

ONLY CHILD

Navin, Rhiannon 367pp 2018



Six-year-old Zach Taylor has had far too much happen in his short life: he has experienced a school shooting that has taken his brother Andy, and now his parents are not themselves. It's bewildering and his parents' preoccupations in the aftermath of the tragedy leave Zach floundering, alone. But it is the naïve optimism and determination of the big-hearted child he is, to make things right, that has unexpected consequences. Presented through the unique perspective of an insightful young survivor, this is a powerful story of grief and recovery.



"Great insight into what a tragedy does to people. Upsetting but riveting and thought-provoking."

Timaru 020

"Fabulous! Everyone really enjoyed this beautifully written book."

Whitianga 003

"The book tugs at the heartstrings! Child narrator is very effective. Story is topical and believable."

Cromwell 004

ONLY WOMAN IN THE ROOM, THE

Benedict, Marie 247pp 2019

Introducing screen star... Hedy Lamarr. Before taking Hollywood by storm, she was the wife of an Austrian arms dealer and from her elevated place in Viennese society, privy to the plans of the Third Reich. Not only was she an actress and trophy wife but in direct contrast to the stereotype, a scientist and inventor as well. Fascinating and absorbing this is the fictionalised story of a real-life Hollywood icon remembered for her beauty but whose invention revolutionised modern communication.



"Fascinating. The author has a good writing style."

"I'd barely heard of Hedy Lamarr, but this book gave me an insight into a complex, intelligent, inventive and clever woman, determined to do her best for the world."

"The writing style was easy to read and absorbing."

"It gives an excellent portrait of Hitler and Mussolini between the wars."

BDS Reviewers

OPPORTUNITY

Grimshaw, Charlotte 286pp 2007

A collection of stories forming a series that can be read separately, but contributing to a unified whole. A man confronts death after an operation, a devout Christian encounters a man who hurt her long ago, a secretary uncovers her boss's secret shame. And in a house in Auckland, an elderly woman is writing the last book of her life, one which, she says, contains all of her crimes. Opportunity is "a novel with a large cast of characters where each story stands by itself, and at the same time, adds itself to the larger one". A celebration of the subtleties of human impulse.

ORCHARDIST, THE

Coplin, Amanda 426pp 2012

The rhythms of William Talmadge's isolated orchard are irrevocably altered by the arrival of two pregnant teenagers, sisters Della and Jane, on the run from a brothel. A gentle and reclusive man, William is determined to save the girls from the cruel hand that life has dealt them. But with an irate brothel owner hot on their heels, William's willingness to disrupt his ordered existence cannot prevent the approaching tragedy but rather transform it. From its evocative setting in early 20th Century Washington State through to its beautifully descriptive language, this is a captivating and haunting story of love, loss and what constitutes family.

ORHAN'S INHERITANCE

Ohanesian, Aline 333pp 2014

It comes as a shock to the Türkoglu family when patriarch Kemal leaves his Anatolian estate to an unknown woman on the other side of the world. Behind this bequest is a history that they know little about and it is up to the grandson Orhan to confront the elderly beneficiary in Los Angeles and ascertain her connection with the family. The ill-fated 1915 love story between a Christian Armenian and Muslim Turk that is eventually revealed, will have Orhan questioning his family legacy and his future. Told from different perspectives, this story, both romantic and tragic, tells of a country's painful history and its citizens who must reconcile with their past.

ORLANDO

Woolf, Virginia 206pp 1928

The hero lives through four centuries and many disguises. The story "stands history on its head". Readers would benefit from reading Portrait of a Marriage by Nigel Nicolson for some background on the Bloomsbury group of which Woolf was a member. [SMALL FONT]

ORYX AND CRAKE

Atwood, Margaret 436pp 2003

Pigs might not fly, but they are strangely altered. Earth has been left devastated by an ecological and scientific disaster, leaving in its wake a nightmarish world. The narrator, who calls himself Snowman, takes a journey back into his own past and back to the high-tech bubble dome, where the Paradise Project unfolded and the world came to grief. How did everything fall apart so quickly?

OTHER AMERICANS, THE

Lalami, Laila 301pp 2018

When her Moroccan migrant father, Dris, is killed in a hit-and-run accident, jazz musician Nora Guerraoui returns to her home town on the edge of the Mojave Desert. Yucca Valley is the very place she was so desperate to leave, but now for the foreseeable future, will be her home again while she seeks to understand the mystery around her father's death. Multiple narrators offer a variety of perspectives, from family members and Dris himself, through to the perpetrator and the detective investigating the case, all the while revealing the challenges of pursuing the American Dream in small town USA. As well as its thoughtful use of language and its credibly fallible characters, this absorbing story provides insightful commentary on the lives of immigrants.

OTHER HAND, THE

Cleave, Chris 374pp 2008

A dramatic encounter on a Nigerian beach has long-lasting ramifications for Little Bee, a Nigerian teenager, and a holidaying English family. From oil-related conflict in Nigeria to the treatment of refugees in Britain, this is a story of moral dilemmas and the collision of different world views. With its balance of humour and tragedy, it is both a heartrending and a satisfying contemporary novel that examines the way different people see the world. Also published as Little Bee.



OTHER SIDE OF THE WORLD, THE

Bishop, Stephanie 283pp 2015

Charlotte and Henry are set to discover if the grass really is greener on the other side of the world. Moving 'down under' to Perth will offer respite from the miserable English weather and a fresh start for a marriage beginning to be weighed down by young children and reluctant domesticity. But can relocation ever be the panacea it seems? Moving between 1960s England, Australia and India (Henry's country of birth) this haunting story unflinchingly explores issues of marriage, motherhood and identity as well as the universal need to belong ... somewhere.

OTHER SIDE OF BEAUTIFUL, THE

Lock, Kim 350pp 2021

When your house has burnt down, most people would agree it's a disaster, when you actually haven't been outside said house for two years, well... it's possible the universe is giving you a message, Mercy Blain. After Mercy has established she is decidedly unwelcome at her almost ex-husband Eugene's place, then it is time for her to embrace a road trip. Transportation is organised (a cult classic campervan), companionship guaranteed (Wasabi, her dachshund), and they are off into the wild blue yonder travelling from Adelaide to Darwin. Exploring issues of mental health with empathy and insight, this poignant and engaging story of self-discovery and adventure in the Australian outback, is quirky, heartfelt and hopeful.



"This is a really good read. I was sorry to finish it."

"Mercy is well described, and you can relate to her anxieties and thoughts."

"I enjoyed this book very much. The author has a very nice touch."

BDS Reviewers

OTHER SIDE OF THE BRIDGE, THE

Lawson, Mary 275pp 2006

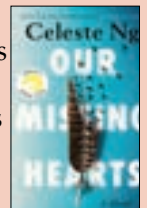
Set against the backdrop of northern Ontario's haunting landscapes, The Other Side of the Bridge opens with an unforgettable image of Arthur and Jake Dunn, two brothers whose jealousies will take them beyond the edge of reason, to a deadly point of no return. The sons of a farmer, growing up in the 1930s when a beautiful young woman named Laura moves into their community, she unwittingly propels their sibling rivalry to its breaking point.



OUR MISSING HEARTS

Ng, Celeste 335pp 2022

In a disturbingly imaginable future USA that vows to uphold 'American culture' through its draconian laws that restrict what can be read or viewed, 12-year-old Bird Gardener and his father know to lie low. Three years earlier, Bird's mother Margaret, a Chinese American poet regarded as a dissident, disappeared, but when Bird receives a mysterious note, he doesn't hesitate to go in search of her. Both heart-breaking and hopeful, and with its complex themes and lyrical writing, this is a cautionary tale of the importance of words and storytelling, the unbreakable bonds of family and the power of collective small actions. [SMALL FONT]



"Exquisite writing, immensely readable."

"Thank you for the opportunity to read this beautiful, powerful and disturbing book."

"My husband and I just LOVED this book, for the writing style, the characters and how they 'unfolded' and the futuristic theme."

BDS Reviewers

OUR SOULS AT NIGHT

Haruf, Kent 179pp 2015

Septuagenarians Addie Moore and Louis Waters set the tongues wagging when they embark on a loving friendship. What develops is as much a surprise to them as it is to the good citizens of Holt, Colorado, who it seems have some very traditional views of how Addie and Louis should be behaving at their age. With its gentle cadence and unadorned prose, this is a thoughtful and poignant story of our yearning to love and be loved and the challenges in achieving this universal need.

OWLS DO CRY

Frame, Janet 173pp 1961

Frame's first novel. The story of the loss of imagination and innocence in the bleak world of small-town New Zealand. Poignant literature.

PARIS LIBRARY, THE

Charles, Janet Skeslien 412pp 2020

When Odile Souchet is appointed as a librarian at the American Library in Paris, it is a dream come true. Opening its doors during WWI to serve US soldiers in France, the library has a renewed purpose as WWII descends and Odile and her colleagues must fight to fulfil the library's original motto, 'after the darkness of war, the light of books'. Decades later, Odile, now a widowed war bride living in rural Montana, sees in her teenage neighbour Lily, something of herself at the same age. Through the dual narratives of 1940s Paris and 1980s Montana, readers are immersed in Odile's life, and the hard wrought lessons of living under occupation. Incorporating historical figures from the American Library, and celebrating the power of books and libraries, this is an irresistible and thought-provoking story, and a particular delight for bibliophiles.

PAPER CAGE

Baragwanath, Tom 312pp 2022

Lorraine Henry may only be the records clerk for the Masterton police station, but she's a fount of knowledge about the 'ins' and 'outs' of the town. But now with two children missing, one of them her great-nephew Bradley, Lo has skin in the game and in conjunction with Justin Hayes, a Wellington detective, she becomes a vital cog in the investigation. With its descriptive writing, its strong sense of place and its sharp-eyed protagonist, this is a slow-burn thriller that skilfully exposes the dark underbelly of small-town New Zealand.

"A very different take on crime in a small town — enjoyed it immensely."

"While there is tragedy in the story, there's also lots of love around the characters involved."

"I really liked the main character. What a character!"

"You can't help but root for Lorraine. She is no superhero, flawed, aging, fond of a gin, yet she is so genuine, feisty, and fiercely loving. There's lots to like!"

BDS Reviewers

PARIS WIFE, THE

McLain, Paula 392pp 2010

1920s Jazz Age Paris; a glittering and golden city, home to Ernest Hemingway and his first bride Hayley. Amidst the energy and passion of the expatriate community with its cast of famous names (Fitzgerald, Stein, Pound and more), Ernest establishes himself as a literary force to be reckoned with. But all too soon domesticity and ambition are at odds and the rest, as they say, is history. Told from Hayley's viewpoint, this is an imagined version of real life events that delivers a love story set in an intoxicating time and place and portrays a marriage of an unlikely couple.

PARTY LINE, THE

Orr, Sue 249pp 2015

Gypsy Day 1972 heralds the arrival of sharemilker and widower Ian Baxter and his precocious 13-year-old daughter, to a farm on the Hauraki Plains. Gabrielle immediately strikes up a friendship with local Nickie Ward, and the girls in their innocence and outrage end up at odds with their community which seems determined to turn a blind eye to the trauma unfolding in its midst. This vivid, compelling portrait of New Zealand rural life is also a coming-of-age story recalling the morals and values of our not-so-distant past.

PASSAGE TO INDIA, A

Forster, EM 317pp 1924

Described as one of the best written novels in English in the 20th century. An early insight into difficult race relations. [SMALL FONT]

PAUA TOWER, THE

Atkinson, Coral 312pp 2006

Set in a central North Island town during the Depression, The Pua Tower explores the relationship of a group of people struggling to survive and make sense of a bitter time. It is the story of Vic Cowan, an unemployed activist, and Stella Morgan, the sweetheart who must save herself. It also tells of Jack Baldwin, the disabled bank manager who has visions, and Roland Crawford, the doubting clergyman. Faith is lost and found; corruption is rife and innocence destroyed, but through it all, love blossoms and hope endures.

PEACE LIKE A RIVER

Enger, Leif 311pp 2001

On occasion as an asthmatic, 11 year old Reuben Land may struggle to breathe, but he has never hesitated to believe in his father's ability to perform miracles. And it is a miracle the family needs: older brother Davy has escaped from jail and is on the run with the family in hot pursuit. Set in a wintery 1960s Mid-West, this story is an adventure that brings together family, faith and miracles and delivers a gripping and uplifting yarn.

PEACHES FOR MONSIEUR LE CURÉ 

Harris, Joanne 453pp 2012

The Rocher family are back in town, that is, the Lansequenet of Chocolat fame in the south west of France. Vianne and daughters Anouk and Rosette discover that some things have moved on. Not only is there now a well-established Moslem community on the other side of the river, but Father Francis, Vianne's old nemesis, is a changed man. Bursting with the charm of the French countryside and the intrigues of a village undergoing change, this is an enchanting story with a feel good factor, but with plenty to discuss.

PERFECTLY GOOD MAN, A 

Gale, Patrick 404pp 2012

An accident on the rugby field leaves 20 year old Lenny Barnes paralysed and desperate ... desperate enough to involve the local Anglican priest Barnaby Johnson. Barnaby is a man known in his Cornish parish for trying to do what is right, and once again he lives up to his reputation. But in the furore that follows, Barnaby's past, present and future are under the microscope. This is an engaging novel which treats its wide cast of characters generously as they wrestle with issues of faith, love and morality.

PERFECT 

Joyce, Rachel 361pp 2013

In theory it shouldn't matter that in 1972 two seconds were added to the world's atomic clocks. But Byron Hemmings can't help but observe a link between this event and the minor traffic accident involving his mother. With the major repercussions that result from this incident the Hemmings family are never going to be the same again. Related through the alternating voices and intertwined storylines of the adolescent Byron of the 1970s and Jim, a present day ex-psychiatric patient, this is a compelling examination of the cost of perfection. A moving and thought-provoking read.

PERFUME COLLECTOR, THE  

Tessaro, Kathleen 456pp 2013

The first time young Englishwoman Grace Munroe comes across the name Eva d'Orsay is in 1955 when she finds herself the beneficiary of her substantial fortune. Grace's quest to discover why she is to receive such an inheritance not only changes the course of her own life but reveals Eva's surprising and upwardly mobile story: from 1920s New York as a hotel maid, to Monte Carlo with all of its glitz and glamour, and on to the seductive realm of French perfumeries. With a multilayered plot and strong female characters this book delivers a heady story of satisfying emotional intensity amidst an intoxicating world of style and high fashion.

PERLA 

De Robertis, Carolina 276pp 2012

Argentina's 'Dirty War' of the 1970s and 80s is a war that most people know little about. So too for Perla Correa, daughter of a military family, who is cocooned from the realities of life in a country with questionable political regimes by her family's privileged position. However, Perla's search for the truth of her background reveals some shocking occurrences and sheds light on a tragic period of Argentinean history. Its basis in true events combined with the characteristic Latin American use of magic realism creates a compelling, harrowing yet fascinating story.

PICNIC AT HANGING ROCK

Lindsay, Joan 213pp 1967

On a lovely summers day in the year 1900, 19 girls from the Appleyard College for Young Ladies, accompanied by their teachers, set off for a days outing. After lunch, four girls go for a walk followed by a teacher - all but one go missing. An Australian "more-than-a-mystery" story of an innocent and happy outing and the mystery of what happened that sunny afternoon. [SMALL FONT]

PIECE OF THE WORLD, A 

Kline, Christina Baker 304pp 2017

No blank canvas for this story... instead, inspired by Andrew Wyeth's iconic painting, the eponymous Christina of 'Christina's World' is brought to vivid life in this extensively researched backstory for one of the 20th century's most well-known paintings. The fledgling artist meets Christina Olson of Cushing, Maine when he has started to ascend the ladder of artistic success and she is a mature woman anchored to the farmhouse - the only home she has ever known - by a progressive, debilitating illness. This is the story of an indomitable character, limited by health and circumstance, but given unexpected exposure through her special bond with a famous artist.

PIGEON ENGLISH 

Kelman, Stephen 263pp 2011

Fresh off the plane from Ghana, eleven year old Harrison Opuku [Harri] and his family have plenty to adjust to in England especially as their new home is in a gang-ridden London housing estate. Seen through Harri's eyes, this is an adventure in finding your place and fitting in. That is until Harri and his friends' efforts to find out how a local boy was murdered threaten the progress his family has made to survive in this alien environment. Often funny, this novel features an endearing protagonist and a poignant storyline that highlights the many challenges faced by migrants.

PLAGUE, THE

Camus, Albert 272pp 1947

Based on existentialist philosophy, this novel, set in Algeria, studies people's reactions to isolation during a plague.

PLAINSONG

Haruf, Kent 301pp 1999

Holt, Colorado. Population: nobody is counting. Tom Guthrie, local schoolteacher learning to manage without his wife and mother of his sons Ike and Bobby; Maggie Jones helping teenager Victoria Roubideaux find refuge in the home of confirmed bachelors and cattle farmers Raymond and Harold McPherson; ordinary people going about their ordinary lives. However, poetic evocations of landscape and weather ensure this beautifully rendered story of quintessential small town America is far from ordinary. As simple and as unadorned as its title suggests, it is a quiet celebration of the power of community and the presence of grace. [SMALL FONT]



"Loved it. Eager to read the next two in the trilogy."

Thames 003

"The simplest of stories told so beautifully."

Auckland 218

"Brilliantly written, simple but elegant.
Richly depicted characters."

Methven 001

"We all enjoyed it. The writing is so descriptive,
we could picture the people and places described."

Ashburton 004

PLEASE, MR EINSTEIN

Carrière, Jean-Claude 185pp 2007

It is the early 21st century, and a young, nameless student, intent on learning more about Albert Einstein, finds her way into a mysterious office that houses Einstein himself — full of generosity and the desire to make his ideas plain. Having covered the basics of relativity, the student soon presses Einstein to examine the morality of his theories and his responsibility for the creation of nuclear weapons: could the world after Hiroshima and Nagasaki truly be a better place?

PLUMB

Gee, Maurice 272pp 1978

First volume about the Plumb family. Plumb is a minister whose disenchantment with the Church, and involvement with socialism, leads to his becoming a conscientious objector, and, subsequently, imprisonment. [SMALL FONT]



PLUM RAINS

Romano-Lax, Andromeda 389pp 2018

When a prototype self-learning robot, Hiro, is introduced into the Tokyo household where Filipina nurse Angelica Navarone cares for nonagenarian Sayako Hou, their lives are irrevocably changed. It is 2029, and in a country with an ageing population, a critically low birth rate and the prospect of intelligent empathic robots, future employment for Angelica and others like her, is called into question. As Sayako happily bonds with Hiro, she is finally ready to reveal long-held family secrets, which will also impact on Angelica's prospects. This compelling and original story offers readers opportunities to contemplate the possible future of our world through its insightful depiction of imperial legacies and future technologies, personified through Sayako and Angelica's lives.

POISON BED, THE

Fremantle, E.C. 403pp 2018



Who is telling the truth? Frances or her husband Robert? Confined to their separate accommodations in the Tower of London, they both certainly have time enough to contemplate their supposed involvement in the murder of courtier Sir Thomas Overbury. A power couple of the court of King James I, the Carrs are up to their privileged necks in the political shenanigans of the day. Ambition, corruption, intrigue; it's all here in the many twists and turns of this vividly imagined story of the real events of 1615.

POISONWOOD BIBLE, THE

Kingsolver, Barbara 614pp 1999



Kingsolver waited thirty years to write this book, having experienced the Belgian Congo as a child. In 1959, Baptist missionary, Nathan Price, sets off for the Congo with his wife, four daughters, and Betty Crocker cake mixes. They are woefully unprepared for the isolation, climate, and political upheaval as the Congolese seek independence from Belgium. [BIG READ]

POSSIBLE LIFE, A

Faulks, Sebastian 294pp 2012

Subtitled a novel in five parts, this book transports the reader to different settings and time periods while encountering diverse characters. Whether it is Geoffrey Talbot in World War Two, Billy Webb in a Victorian workhouse, Elena Duranti, a 2029 neuroscientist, Jeanne a servant from 19th century France, or Anya King, a 1970s singer/songwriter, each story is beautifully rendered and can stand alone. However the intriguing connections between stories, the most notable being love and loss bring the work to a complete and satisfying whole.



POTIKI

Grace, Patricia 185pp 1986



Insight into a Maori community when it is threatened by Pakeha development. Award-winning novel.

POWER, THE

Alderman, Naomi 339pp 2017

When teenage girls discover that their bodies are capable of producing a deadly electrical charge, one minute it is the status quo, the next minute, revolution. Recorded as a history of the first ten years that follow the changing order, the chilling events are chronicled through the experiences of Roxy, daughter of a London gangster; Allie, an abused foster child; Margot an ambitious American politician; and Tunde, a Nigerian photojournalist documenting the events for posterity. Fast-paced and provocative, this cleverly subversive story of changing gender dynamics speculates on the nature of power and just what might happen if women were in charge.

PRAYERS FOR THE STOLEN

Clement, Jennifer 222pp 2014



The odds are stacked against Ladydi Garcia Martinez, her young friends and their mothers who live in the mountains inland from Acapulco, along with the snakes, scorpions and the poppies. With their husbands and fathers having escaped across the border, the only men in their lives are the drug gangsters who arrive in their SUVs to steal the girls. Working on the premise that ‘the best thing to be in Mexico is an ugly girl’, Ladydi and her friends’ survival depends on their efforts to disguise their gender. Despite their plight, this is a darkly comic story of an unjust war, both profound and inspiring and with unforgettable characters.

PRESIDENT’S HAT, THE

Laurain, Antoine 208pp 2013

When Daniel Mercier’s eyes alight on an abandoned black felt hat in a Paris restaurant, it’s not just any old hat; it belongs to none other than President François Mitterrand. And that’s not all: surprising things happen to wearers of the hat, so discovers Daniel and the next temporary custodian, and the next ... Entertaining and charmingly nostalgic, this story of destiny is a delightfully whimsical Gallic adventure. Translated from the French.

PRETTY BABY

Kubica, Mary 378pp 2015

Heidi Wood’s well-meaning intervention, offering refuge to teenager Willow and her baby Ruby from the streets of Chicago, invites the observation that ‘no good turn goes unpunished.’ As the arrangement shifts from temporary to permanent, the events that unfold will have a profound effect on everyone in the household, including Heidi’s husband and daughter. With its multiple narrators,

underlying misfortunes and unexpected twists and turns, this tautly plotted psychological thriller is both riveting and moving. [SMALL FONT]

PRIDE AND PREJUDICE

Austen, Jane 327pp 1813



The novel relates the story of the Bennet family, and contains many examples of Austen’s wisdom and sharp observation.

PROFESSOR CHANDRA FOLLOWS HIS BLISS

Balasubramanyam, Rajeev 272pp 2019



Finding one’s bliss, let alone following it, can be quite a challenge, and that is the case for Cambridge professor, P.R. Chandrasekhar. Chandra’s failure to be awarded a Nobel prize in economics (yet again), and an unfortunate altercation with a bike, make him a reluctant late starter to such a quest. California is his destination, where with his estranged family’s blessing, he submits to a course in self-awareness at the famous Esalen Institute, a first step on the road to enlightenment... An amusing, insightful and gently satirical story that reminds us that it is never too late to re-evaluate the important things in one’s life.

PROMISE OF HAPPINESS, THE

Cartwright, Justin 306pp 2004



The five members of the Judd family, reeling from a series of personal and professional blows, have each retreated into a private world. But the impending release of eldest daughter Juliet, an art historian incarcerated in an upstate New York prison for helping to sell stolen Tiffany windows, sets in motion the plot — and the family.

PUSH, THE

Audrain, Ashley 303pp 2021

In the great genetic lottery of life, Blythe Connor inherited a maternal history of abuse, neglect and abandonment. She intends breaking the cycle when she has children, but when Violet is born, she seems ... different, and it becomes even more apparent when baby number two, Sam, is born. But if Blythe’s husband and father to the children doesn’t believe it, why would anyone else? Maybe Blythe has good reason to doubt her ability to mother. Immersive and perturbing, this is a thought-provoking examination of the nature versus nurture debate and the weighty societal expectations of motherhood.



“I loved the writing style. I was immersed in this story, I needed to keep reading to find out what was going to happen next.”

“The book is a compulsive read and I found it unputdownable although my stomach would be turning.”

BDS Reviewers

QUEENIE

Carty-Williams, Candice 387pp 2019



If one's name determines one's destiny then Queenie Jenkins should be strong and brave, but that couldn't be further from the truth. As a young well-educated woman of colour in London, she should be living the dream, but the vicissitudes of 21st century living, especially the racism she encounters on a daily basis, are dragging her down. Poignant, honest, and ultimately uplifting, this is a thoughtful story of an irrepressible character finding her way up from rock bottom and claiming her place in the world.

QUIET AMERICAN, THE

Greene, Graham 212pp 1955



One of Greene's lighter novels. Set in Vietnam in the 1950s, it is the story of a young, idealistic and quiet American called Pyle who is employed in the Economic Aid Mission. He is sent to Vietnam to promote democracy – but is it possible to intervene in another culture to solve their problems? Could we often be the cause of their problems?

QUIET SPECTACULAR, THE

Fearnley, Laurence 304pp 2016



Anyone who is writing a book with the title 'The Dangerous Book for Menopausal Women', is worth a second look – and school librarian Loretta most certainly is. Primed for change, she is drawn to a hut in a wetlands, as are Chance, a teenager in a combative relationship with her overbearing mother, and Riva, who, following a dramatically intentional change in her life, is restoring the wetlands. Each is seeking a way to move forward with their lives, and achieve their 'quiet spectaculars.' With its beautiful descriptions of the natural world and finely drawn empathetic characters, this contemporary New Zealand story celebrates the power of friendship and the satisfaction of dealing with life's challenges.

RADIO GIRLS

Stratford, Sarah-Jane 384pp 2016



Just in the nick of time, almost down-and-out Maisie Musgrave is appointed as a secretary at the newly established British Broadcasting Corporation, the BBC. These are exciting times, the 1920s, and the advent of the new technology of radio coincides with new opportunities for women. Under the mentorship of her boss Hilda Matheson, Maisie is able to aspire to a career, even as political forces continue to conspire against such lofty ambition. Explicitly based on many real events and people, this is a fascinating story of the early days of radio and the changing world tuning into its airwaves.

RAISED FROM THE GROUND

Saramago, José 387pp 1980

The Mau Tempo family hail from southern Portugal. Peasants denied the privilege of land ownership, the family suffer generations of poverty and toil, abused by those with power and money. From the formation of the Republic through the two world wars and the rise of communism, this story chronicles the events that frame the Mau Tempo's relentless struggle and political awakening. Lyrical writing and the authenticity of this semi-biographical novel offer a thought-provoking read, enhanced by its relevance to the changing political landscape of contemporary Europe. Translated from the Portuguese.

RAISING WRECKER

Wood, Summer 290pp 2011

When Wrecker's mother goes to prison, he is three, an angry and damaged little boy living up to his name. It takes a village to raise a child and for Wrecker this ends up being the commune of Bow Farm in Humboldt County, Northern California. Flower power, hippies, misfits and all, this is a heart-warming story of quirky characters and who and what makes a family.

REACH

Fearnley, Laurence 287pp 2014



An artist, a vet and a deep sea diver. In this unlikeliest of vocational juxtapositions, Quinn is totally focused on her up and coming exhibition, her partner Marcus is tentatively re-establishing a relationship with his estranged daughter, and Callum? Well, Callum is there in his badly parked house truck pondering the great love of his life: the sea. As they contemplate the 'what next' of their lives, each must weigh up the risks and rewards of their choices. With its tantalisingly familiar New Zealand coastal setting and its hard to relinquish, well realised characters, this is an assured contemporary novel.

REDHEAD BY THE SIDE OF THE ROAD

Tyler, Anne 178pp 2020



Micah Mortimer, a.k.a. the 'Tech Hermit', is a man with meticulous routines that propel him through his steady but uneventful life. It takes the prospect of his 'woman' friend Cassie's potential eviction from her accommodation to disturb his equilibrium. And just to further knock him off balance, a teenager turns up on his doorstep, suggesting that Micah is his father. Tender, satisfying and finely tuned, this is an insightful story of the human condition enacted through its late-blooming protagonist.



RELUCTANT FUNDAMENTALIST, THE

Hamid, Mohsin 184pp 2007

At the table sit two men: a young Pakistani named Changez and an American. Only Changez speaks, and he relates his story, beginning with his days at Princeton, his success as a financial analyst and his budding romance with a fellow Princetonian. Then come the attacks of 11 September and over the next few months, the innocence of his ambition is shadowed by his experience – and by his altered understanding of his Pakistani past. As his identity fractures under the strain of conflicting impulses he returns to his homeland, and the complexity of his new life.

REMARKABLE CREATURES

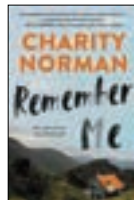
Chevalier, Tracy 352pp 2009

Set in England in the early 19th Century, this is the story of remarkable creatures: Mary Anning and Elizabeth Philpot, passionate fossil collectors; and the fossils themselves, significant signposts in the developing understanding of evolution. Based on real characters and scientific events, this gently paced story allows the reader to painlessly absorb an interesting history lesson.

REMEMBER ME (2022)

Norman, Charity 320pp 2022

Emily Kirkland’s return to New Zealand to care for her father Felix, who has developed dementia, has some unexpected consequences. She is able to deepen their previously distant relationship, but distressingly he seems emotionally caught up with a tragic event from twenty five years earlier when neighbour and friend Leah Parata went missing in the bush and was never found. Just what was it about Leah’s disappearance that could be causing Felix — a rural GP — so much angst? Set in the shadows of the Ruahine Ranges, this multi-layered story weaves a small-town mystery with an empathetic and insightful understanding of dementia.



"We all enjoyed this very readable, gripping and insightful book about a subject that, sadly, is close to all our hearts. Probably one of our favourites — we'll definitely be looking for more from this author."

Richmond 010

"Everyone enjoyed the book. Very impressed with the author."

Dunedin 118

"We all enjoyed this book. Challenging, wonderfully descriptive, clever plot, and educational."

Ohope 001

REMEMBER ME (2007)

Hansen, Derek 390pp 2007

When a 12-year old boy writes an essay and inadvertently uncovers a wartime secret, he unleashes a chain of events which rips a close community apart, turning neighbour against neighbour, friend against friend. It is Auckland 1956. While the country has been spared the destruction which ravaged Europe and Asia, beneath the surface bitter memories and old enmities run deep. The war may be over but, as the boy discovers, it is far from done with.

REPORT, THE

Kane, Jessica Francis 235pp 2010

As the local magistrate it is Laurence Dunne’s responsibility in 1943 to complete an inquiry into the worst civilian disaster of World War Two: the Bethnal Green tube disaster. Thirty years later, his decisions are under the spotlight. Based on a real event, this novel alternates between the two periods examining the fraught search for blame and the issue of truth for a grieving community. Compelling and thought provoking.

REPUTATION

Vaughan, Sarah 470pp 2022

The crux of the matter: why has tabloid journalist Mike Stokes been found at the bottom of the stairs in the home of MP Emma Webster? Seeing as Mike and Emma had successfully collaborated on promoting legislation to protect the victims of revenge porn, it’s hard to understand what could have happened, especially when Emma is subsequently charged with murder. Her family and her career will be under the legal spotlight but so too will be her reputation, that elusive attribute built over a lifetime. Gripping and confronting, this English story is a page-turner, highlighting the abuse and misogyny peddled on social media, the power of the mainstream media to create, shape and influence reputation and the challenges faced by women who are in the public eye.



"A fast moving, gripping book and a quick read."

"This story clearly demonstrates the dangers of social media and other concerns of modern times."

"Information is dealt out a little at a time, so the reader keeps wanting to know more."

"I found the book slow to begin with. It becomes gripping after the journalist’s death."

BDS Reviewers

REQUIEM

Itani, Frances 317pp 2011

Loyal citizens one minute, enemy aliens the next, Bin Okuma and his Japanese-Canadian family are interned during World War II. Decades later and recently widowed, Bin, now a celebrated artist, returns to British Columbia, revisiting the memories of this period of his childhood and attempting to lay to rest the traumas of dislocation and injustice, including his being given away for adoption. Distinguished by its delicate and unsentimental approach, this story explores a difficult episode of Canadian history, while reflecting on the challenges of loss and reconciliation.

RESTLESS

Boyd, William 325pp 2006

When Ruth Gilmartin learns the true identity and the WWII profession of her ageing mother, Sally, she is understandably surprised. Sally, née Eva Delectorskaya, a Russian migrant living in Paris in 1939, was recruited as a spy by the head of a secretive propaganda group called British Security Coordination, a covert branch of British Intelligence created to coax America into the Second World War. Ruth's mother was eventually betrayed, and forced to flee to England and live under an assumed identity. Ruth is swept into a dangerous game: finding her mother's betrayer before it's too late. Historical thriller.

RETURN TO HARIKOA BAY

Marshall, Owen 302pp 2022

A story a day could very well keep the doctor away... short and perfectly formed, the 33 stories in this collection are a tonic, distilling the essence of life in New Zealand. In these thoughtful vignettes, the wide variety of relatable people, the recognisable landscapes, and the author's ability to fully inhabit each of the characters, ensures this is a book to savour.



"Anyone who appreciates good writing will appreciate this book."

"This is high-calibre writing."

"I loved the stories. Marshall is an excellent short-story writer."

BDS Reviewers

RETURN OF THE DANCING MASTER, THE

Mankell, Henning 406pp 2003

Swedish police officer Stefan Lindman is engaged on all fronts. He has just been diagnosed with cancer, and a former colleague, Herbert Molin, has been found brutally murdered. Deciding to investigate the murder while having to face up to his own mortality, Stefan must contend with no witnesses, no apparent motive, and a crime scene with bloody footprints that mimic the steps of a tango. As chilling as its Scandinavian setting, this intricately choreographed novel is an engaging contemporary mystery that examines the lingering legacy of Nazism.

REUNION, THE

Van Der Vlugt, Simone 295pp 2008

Memory is a funny thing... Sabine Kroese is experiencing flashbacks from nine years earlier when her former best friend disappeared. What did happen that day, and why is she starting to remember now? As the fragments of memory slowly coalesce, Sabine is intent on discovering the truth. Set in the Netherlands, this is a fast-paced psychological thriller that captures the reader's attention with its strong plot and interesting examination of the nature of memory.

REVOLVER

Sedgwick, Marcus 220pp 2009

Confronted by a stranger, Sig and his sister Anna are held ransom in their isolated cabin. Hidden away is their father's Colt revolver, offering them the possibility of deliverance... With its moral dilemmas played out in the desolate surroundings of the Arctic Circle and gold rush fever, this is a story of surprising tension and elegant writing; a short read of deceptive simplicity.

RICH MAN ROAD

Glamuzina, Ann 251pp 2015

Sister Olga Mastrovio and Sister Pualele Sina Auva'a initially appear to have little in common beyond their membership of the same religious order. Scratching below the surface however, reveals many shared experiences even though Olga migrated to New Zealand, decades earlier than Pualele's arrival from Samoa for an illegal family adoption. Recognising their similarities, Olga records her story, and it is following her death that her cathartic journal (narrating her family's experiences fleeing Dalmatia at the end of World War Two), helps Pualele examine her own life. Sensitively written, this multi-layered story bears witness to the experiences of migrants in their journey towards a new home in New Zealand, a nation of migrants.

RISING MAN, A

Mulherjee, Abir 284pp 2016

Fresh from the trenches of WW1, Captain Sam Wyndham, Calcutta police force's newest recruit, is assigned an important case: the murder of a senior civil servant, a brutal killing that delivers a warning to the British to leave India. In conjunction with his Indian assistant Sergeant 'Surrender-not' Banerjee, Sam embarks on an investigation into the dark underbelly of the Raj where it seems the much-feted British fair play is in short supply. Authentic and entertaining, this is a gripping whodunnit bristling with wry humour and the colonial tensions of 20th century Anglo-Indian history.

RISK

Stead, CK 267pp 2012



When Auckland lawyer Sam Nola arrives in London in 2002, the world is his oyster. Working for a merchant bank his financial future seems assured, a daughter from a youthful liaison makes contact, all in all, life is looking pretty rosy. That is, until subprime mortgages rear their ugly heads and things start hotting up in Iraq. An absorbing read portraying the dishonesty and excesses at work in the world of international finance and politics in a turbulent decade.

ROAD, THE

McCarthy, Cormac 307pp 2006



Unfolding in a terrifying post-apocalypse future, The Road traces the odyssey of a father and his young son to the coast through a desolate landscape. The father dimly remembers the world as it was and occasionally dreams of it; the son has never known anything else. In order to live, they must keep moving amid a shadowy and dangerous landscape. The relationship between father and son represents all that is good in a universe where conventional notions of good and evil have been extinguished. Their love for each other, and their sheer endurance, are symbols of hope.

ROAD ENDS

Lawson, Mary 311pp 2013



In this return to the fictional northern Ontario town of Struan, the Cartwright family is under scrutiny. When Megan, the only girl of the large brood flits the nest, the household begins to implode. Narrated by Megan, older brother Tom and father Edward, this is the story of the unravelling of a dysfunctional family, its ups and downs and the tension between seeking independence and accepting responsibility. With its vivid backdrop of the 1900s Ontario silver rush, life in provincial Struan and the swinging London of the 1960s, this is a compelling and heart-rending read of what makes us who we are.

ROAD HOME, THE

Tremain, Rose 365pp 2007

Lev is on his way to Britain to seek work, so that he can send money back to Eastern Europe to support his mother and small daughter. He struggles with the mysterious rituals of "Englishness", and the fashions and fads of the London scene. We see the road Lev travels through Lev's eyes, and we share his dilemmas: the intimacy of his friendships, old and new; his joys and sufferings; his aspirations, and his hopes of finding his way home, wherever home may be.

ROAD TO URBINO, THE

Tearne, Roma 338pp 2012



One Tuscan summer, Renaissance artist Piero della Francesca's paintings draw together three disparate men; Lyndon Rasangium (Ras), Charles Boyer and Alex Benson. The works of art set in play events that will dramatically impact on their lives and those of the people they love, as well as highlighting the plight of the Tamil people. Moving between Sri Lanka, Italy and England, this beautifully crafted story weaves together a complex plot that gradually reveals why Ras is in custody awaiting trial, while inviting the reader to ponder the experience of civil war, immigration and identity and the seductive power of art.

ROOM

Donoghue, Emma 401pp 2010

Ma and Jack's world is limited physically to a space 11 foot square, but unlimited by imagination that transforms each and every facet of their existence. Jack is turning five and Ma realises that their world needs to expand. Although this is the story of their forced confinement and eventual escape, it is ultimately testimony to a profound relationship that not only makes it possible for them to survive the unthinkable but rise above it. Narrated by Jack, this is a powerful and moving novel which will have you pacing out 11 square feet and asking yourself what if this had been me or someone I loved?

ROOM WITH A VIEW, A

Forster, EM 256pp 1908



A classic tale of romantic intrigue. A charming young English woman, Lucy Honeychurch, finds her "undeveloped heart is awakened by her experiences in Italy, and by her encounter with the unconventional George Emerson".

ROSIE PROJECT, THE

Simsion, Graeme 295pp 2013



At first glance, Professor Don Tillman and Rosie Jarman are unlikely to be regarded as the romantic couple of the decade. Don, a geneticist blissfully unaware he is on the autistic spectrum, initiates *The Wife Project*, (featuring a 16 page questionnaire), in order to find his perfect mate. Rosie on the other hand, is more interested in finding out the identity of her biological father and who better to assist her with this than an expert in the field of genetics. What transpires is a highly enjoyable and refreshing caper that reflects on the universal desire for love and understanding.

ROUND HOUSE, THE

Erdrich, Louise 338pp 2012

Joe is thirteen when his mother was assaulted on the North Dakota Chippewa reservation where they lived. Even though his father was a tribal judge, conflicting jurisdictions meant the rule of law was of little use. Grappling with his mother's withdrawal and the perpetrator roaming free, Joe and his friends set out in the pursuit of their own brand of justice, with shocking consequences. Juggling indigenous culture, a coming of age story and a whodunnit, this is an engrossing and fascinating insight into reservation life.

RULES FOR OLD MEN WAITING

Pouncey, Peter 208pp 2006

The eighty-year-old Scotsman, Robert MacIver, a retired historian and recent widower, is holed up in his ramshackle house on Cape Cod, awaiting the end of his life. While he waits, he devises a set of rules to impose order on his last days. The most important rule is to "tell a story to the end". Woven into his memories of love, loss, and rugby, is a wartime tale of MacIver's invention that helps him work through his rage, regret, and grief.

RULES OF CIVILITY

Towles, Amor 392pp 2011

From its opening in a Greenwich Village jazz bar on New Year's Eve 1937, to a photo exhibition of the Museum of Modern Art in 1966, this is a story of New York: chance encounters, dazzling possibilities and a society in transition. At its heart is the ambitious and upwardly mobile Katy Kontent, daughter of Russian immigrants and ready for all that the city offers. With links to George Washington's 'Rules of Civility & Decent Behaviour in Company and Conversation', it is a witty and stylish observation of New York society, the randomness of chance and the off-hand decisions that shape our lives.

RUN

Patchett, Ann 295pp 2007



Bernard Doyle has nurtured his sons — brothers adopted twenty years earlier — since the death of his wife, Bernadette. One snowy evening, the middle son, Tip, is pushed out of the way of an on-coming vehicle by a woman, herself hit and badly injured. She turns out to be the boys' birth mother and who's been watching the boys for years, along with her 11 year-old daughter, Kenya. The drama of a single day is given an unreal quality by the snow that curtails normal activity, as the characters struggle with their circumstances.

RUNNING THE RIFT

Benaron, Naomi 360pp 2011

Jean Patrick Nkuba was born to run. He has his sights set on becoming an Olympic champion and his athletic prowess will be his saving grace when it comes to surviving the oncoming catastrophe. For Jean Patrick is a Tutsi, and his country is on the brink of tragedy. Sensitive written, this novel presents a powerful coming of age story in its recounting of a nation and its citizens in bloody tumult while offering a tender and buoyant tribute to the people of Rwanda. [SMALL FONT]

SACRED ART OF STEALING, THE

Brookmyre, Christopher 410pp 2002



The Sacred Art of Stealing is a satirical crime novel. The plot centres around the relationships between a likeable thief, Zal Innez, and Angelique d'Xavia, the Asian-Scottish detective whose job it is to catch him. The crime is a bank robbery, and the thieves are smart. Typical Brookmyre black humour and frequent use of strong language, as well as hilarious observations and remarks.

SALMON FISHING IN THE YEMEN

Torday, Paul 330pp 2007



Why does Mr Alfred Jones feel as though something is missing in his life? He has many reasons to be content. His job as a fisheries scientist is satisfactory and he has just celebrated his twentieth wedding anniversary. When he is asked to help create a salmon river in the highlands of the Yemen, Fred rejects the idea as absurd. But the proposal catches the eye of several senior British politicians. And so Fred finds himself forced to figure out how to fly ten thousand salmon to a desert country — and to persuade them to swim there.



SALT TO THE SEA

Sepetys, Ruta 378pp 2016

East Prussia, winter 1945. In a region chaotic with displaced persons, three young people’s lives intersect as they flee to the coast ahead of the advancing Red Army. Laden with the burdens of what they have had to endure to survive the war, each is desperate to reach the ship that will evacuate them to safety. But for Joanna, a Lithuanian nurse, Emilia, a pregnant Polish teenager and Florian, a Prussian art restorer, that prospect is tempered with an understanding that the danger is not yet over and deliverance is uncertain. Distinguished by its plausible characters and its meticulous research, this is a gripping page-turner with all-age appeal that was inspired by the little-known but worst disaster in maritime history.

SARAH THORNHILL

Grenville, Kate 304pp 2012

Following in the footsteps of the earlier story of the Thornhill family introduced in *The Secret River*, this novel focuses on the youngest daughter. Sarah is a spirited heroine with a strong sense of justice shaping her life as she falls in love, marries another and takes responsibility for righting the wrongs of her family’s dark legacy. With its evocative images of landscape and its engaging characters, this is an unforgettable story of colonial Australia including a brief foray across the Tasman. A satisfying stand-alone.

SARAH’S KEY

De Rosnay, Tatiana 294pp 2008

Paris, July 1942. Sarah, a 10 year old girl, is taken with her parents by the French police as they go door to door arresting Jewish families in the middle of the night. Desperate to protect her younger brother, Sarah locks him in a bedroom cupboard – their secret hiding place – and promises to come back for him as soon as they are released. Sixty years later, Sarah’s story intertwines with that of Julia Jarmond, a journalist investigating the round-up. *Sarah’s Key* is an emotionally gripping story of two families forever linked to, and haunted by one of the darkest days in France’s past. [SMALL FONT]

SATURDAYS AT NOON

Marks, Rachel 412pp 2020

It’s a date – every Saturday for 13 weeks – reluctant or otherwise. But when Jake, an at-home dad meets Emily at their first session of the anger management course, it is fair to say it is dislike at first sight. However, for Jake’s six-year-old son Alfie, it is just the opposite. He and Emily strike up an instant rapport that will end up changing the course of all their lives. From autism and anger, to alcoholism and abuse, this thought-provoking story sensitively handles these challenging issues with compassion and humour.



SAVING MISSY

Morrey, Beth 367pp 2020

Missy Carmichael needs saving from herself. Prickly and stubborn, she has long since pushed away friends and family and now at 79, she has resigned herself to her lonely existence. An unexpected meeting on a walk in the park offers her the chance to change all of that – but only if she is prepared to embrace the challenge of engaging with life again. Set in London and with a rich and diverse range of characters, this is a poignant story with surprising depth that reminds us of the joy of friendship and the importance of connection.

SEA OF TRANQUILITY

Mandel, Emily St John 255pp 2022

In 2401, Gaspary-Jacques Roberts, a detective from the Time Institute is tasked with investigating an unexpected phenomenon experienced by a handful of people, reaching back to 1912. From a forest in British Columbia to an airship terminal in Oklahoma City centuries later, there is a mystery to be solved – an anomaly in time. Clever, elegant and rich with metaphysical speculation, this is a compelling story of our world, past, present and future, of human nature, pandemics, moon colonies and front and centre, the nature of time.



“Imaginative, cleverly done and well-written.”

“Compulsive read with heaps to discuss.”

“It was incredibly easy and quick to read but the subject matter felt rich and personal.”

“An elegant, easy-to-read writing style.”

BDS Reviewers

SEALWOMAN'S GIFT, THE

Magnusson, Sally 364pp 2018

When pirates raid the Icelandic coast in 1627, 400 people are taken and sold into slavery in Algiers. Among their number are a pastor and his family, and it is through the experiences of Ásta, the pastor’s wife, that this dramatic event of dislocation and forced assimilation is brought to vivid life. Separated from her husband, and then her children, Ásta survives her plight by consoling and cajoling those around her with the sagas and folk tales from home while being exposed to the storytelling traditions of her captors. Compelling and memorable, this fascinating reimagining of a real event in Icelandic history, reflects impeccable research and attests to the power of storytelling in all its guises.

SEASON OF THE JEW, THE

Shadbolt, Maurice 489pp 1986



Historical novel set in Hawkes Bay. About Te Kooti, the 19th-century Maori leader.

SECOND CHANCES

Norman, Charity 396pp 2012



"Finn fell." Such simple little words to start a story, such simple words that belie the truth behind the event. Five-year-old Finn's fall from the first floor verandah of his family's Hawke's Bay home is shocking in its unexpectedness and a signal that all is not well in the McNamara household. Recently emigrated from the UK, expectations are being exceeded all round, except that is, for Sacha, and that's just teenagers for you ... isn't it? This thought-provoking novel delves into every parent's worst nightmare with recognisable characters and setting, events that ring true, and a courageous exploration of the social issues that we face in our homes and communities.

SECOND CHILD

Bond, Caroline 313pp 2018

For the Rudak household – parents Sarah and Phil and children James and Lauren – a diagnosis that Lauren will be severely disabled is life-changing enough, but over the years, they adjust and manage. That is, until another discovery, so innocently revealed by a blood test, rocks the very foundation of their family. With its impossible choices and disquieting revelations, this gripping drama sensitively explores the complex bonds that create and sustain a family.

SECRET CHORD, THE

Brooks, Geraldine 302pp 2015



From shepherd to soldier to king, David of the bible's Old Testament was also a poet and harpist, as well as an adulterer and despot. Narrated by the prophet Natan, this powerful re-imagining of biblical history and David's part in it, vividly transports the reader into the Israel of 3000 years ago. Capturing the essence of this morally conflicted and flawed hero, it is a dramatic story of action and discord, bound up in faith and religion.

SECRET LIFE OF BEES, THE

Monk Kidd, Sue 374pp 2001



Set in 1960s southern USA, Lily, a motherless white teenager, lives with her embittered father, but is raised by her black housekeeper, Rosaleen. Following a racist incident, Lily and Rosaleen become fugitives from justice, finding refuge in the home of three bee-keeping sisters. It is in this unique community that Lily comes to terms with her life and the death and loss of her mother.

SECRET DIARY OF HENDRIK GROEN, 83 1/4 YEARS OLD

Groen, Hendrik 368pp 2016



What could Hendrik Groen, ensconced in his Amsterdam rest home, have to write about? Quite a lot it turns out ... and even more so when he and his friends form the 'Old-but-not-yet-dead Club'. High jinks ensue. And that's the point – just because your 'best before' date has passed and your 'use by' date is looming, it doesn't mean you have to take it sitting down (unless of course, you are in a suitable chair). Entertaining and moving, this is a story where the politics of ageing are sensitively explored through the acerbic insights and subversive humour of its true-to-life characters and the circumstances that befall them.

SECRET RIVER, THE

Grenville, Kate 334pp 2005



William Thornhill is an illiterate bargeman driven to steal to survive hard times in London. When his death sentence is commuted to extradition to New South Wales, he and his family again find themselves struggling to make ends meet. But, as he transforms himself into a trader, he realises that the British are not the first to make New South Wales their home, and the delicate co-existence with the Aboriginal population dissolves into violence.

SECRETS OF STRANGERS, THE

Norman, Charity 337pp 2020



If they'd known what was in store for them, they would have been happy to forgo their daily fix and avoid the Tuckbox Café in Balham, London, at all cost. But in the randomness of everyday life, five strangers do not have this foresight, and it is their bad luck to be taken hostage by a seemingly crazed gunman who has just shot the café owner. In the tense hours that follow as the hostages and the police negotiators attempt to make sense of the situation and prevent it from escalating, their lives are slowly laid bare. Compassionate and compelling, this is a hostage drama with heart that will have you, the reader, also experiencing Stockholm Syndrome.

SECRETS WE KEPT, THE

Prescott, Lara 480pp 2020



The power of the written word is not easily dismissed, and in the case of Boris Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago*, this influence is on vivid display. Inspired by the true Cold War events surrounding this banned Russian novel, this is the story of the women and men involved in its gestation, publication and use as a political weapon by the CIA. Spies! Smuggling! Seduction! Secrecy! This is a fascinating and fast-paced saga of literary history.



SEE WHAT I HAVE DONE 

Schmidt, Sara 342pp 2017

'Lizzie Borden took an axe and gave her mother forty whacks. When she saw what she had done, she gave her father forty-one.' We've all heard of the notorious Lizzie, but what really did happen in the Borden household on August 4th 1892? There are plenty of others who were part of the story: Lizzie's sister Emma, Bridget the maid, Uncle John... and someone who knows more than they are letting on. A vivid reimagining of the events around the famous unsolved Massachusetts crime, this book is gritty and compelling as it exposes this dysfunctional family to the light of day.

SEE YOU IN SEPTEMBER 

Norman, Charity 424pp 2017

It starts off so innocently... a group of friendly and helpful people, an idyllic valley near Rotorua, a chance to take stock. Before she knows it, young Englishwoman Cassy Howell's plans for a short holiday in New Zealand have been ditched and she opts to stay permanently, especially now that she has her unborn child to consider. The Gethsemane community is everything she could have ever wanted, but over time their leader Justin's claims that they are in the 'Last Days' raise all sorts of questions – just where will his faith take them all? Fast-paced and gripping, this is an exciting story of a community in thrall to its charismatic leader.

SENSE OF AN ENDING, THE 

Barnes, Julian 150pp 2011

Tony Webster is considering the fickle nature of memory; now retired, he is pondering the course of his life. When a lawyer's letter arrives out of the blue, he is transported back 40 years to when he and his coterie of friends were callow youths, and he'd had his first girlfriend, Veronica. Prompted by the unexpected inheritance from Veronica's mother, Tony examines these memories, uncertain of their veracity. A clever and thought-provoking read awash with philosophical musings, tempered with English reserve.

SEPTEMBERS OF SHIRAZ, THE

Sofer, Dalia 338pp 2007

Caught in the aftermath of the Iranian revolution, the wealthy and privileged Amin family fall foul of the revolutionary guard. Isaac, the father, is imprisoned and the effect on the family is calamitous. Not only is this a story of a Jewish family surviving a turbulent world, it is also a delicate exploration of the universal themes of love and identity, materialism and privilege. A compelling and multi-layered read.

SET MY HEART TO FIVE

Stephenson, Simon 448pp 2020

You'll be pleased to know that the future of dentistry is in safe hands. It is 2054 and the world has moved on – New Zealand and North Korea are no more – but bots now tend to one's dental needs. Jared is one such bot and has a dental practice in Michigan, but when a glitch in his system means he is facing a compulsory wiping, he has certain feelings about this possibility, illegal feelings. In fact, feelings subversive enough that Jared needs to go on the run. Thought-provoking and entertaining, Jared, with his unique view of the world, is a superb raconteur for this satirical coming-of-age story that examines what it means to be human while light heartedly endorsing the possibilities of artificial intelligence.

SEVEN DAYS OF US 

Hornak, Francesca 376pp 2017

The prospect of a week cooped up together at Weyfield Hall over the Christmas period garners a mixture of reactions from the Birch family. Emma is thrilled that they will all be together, Andrew less so as he has an inkling an indiscretion from the past is about to make an appearance. Olivia, the reluctantly present eldest daughter is the cause for the enforced quarantine, having returned from treating an Ebola-like epidemic in Africa. Younger sister Phoebe is recently engaged to the toffish George and will be deprived of his company. Let the fun begin! With its potent mix of expectations, resentments and secrets galore, this is a warm and thoughtful set piece with impressive character development and comedic timing.

SHADES OF GREY

Fforde, Jasper 432pp 2010

Imagine a society where your place in the social hierarchy is determined by your ability to perceive colour. We see this world through the eyes of Eddie Russet, a 19 year old, sent to the Outer Fringes as punishment for his innocently subversive ideas about queuing. His journey of political enlightenment begins when he meets Jane, a lowly Grey. Combining elements of romance, mystery, suspense and comedy with original ideas and quirky wordplay, this story is a bemusing yet enthralling adventure in an Orwellian world.

SHADOW OF THE WIND, THE 

Zafón, Carlos Ruiz 536pp 2004

Daniel, the son of a bookseller, is taken by his father to a secret place 'The Cemetery of Forgotten Books'. He is invited to select a book, with the promise that he will be its protector for his lifetime. Thus begins a journey starting in Barcelona in 1945, that combines several genres; gothic, mystery, romance and thriller, to create a powerful and enthralling story. [BIG READ]

SHELTER

Greenslade, Frances 376pp 2010



Two sisters. One mother missing in action. Abandoned as young teenagers, Maggie and Jenny struggle to understand the mysterious disappearance of their previously kind and caring mother. Set in British Columbia in the 1960s and 70s, this is a multi-faceted story that peels back the complex layers of family relationships especially our connection to our mothers.

SHEPHERD'S HUT, THE

Winton, Tim 267pp 2018



Jaxie Clackton is on the move from his West Australian outback town. Time is up for him in Monkton and even though he is only fifteen, hanging around is sure to get him blamed for his father's accidental death. The only place he wants to be now, is with his cousin Lee, but to reach her he will have to cross the saltlands. It is here in the desert that Jaxie meets disgraced priest Fintan MacGillis offering the hand of friendship, along with some other less favourably disposed characters protecting their patch. Gritty and powerful, this fast-paced story has a lot going on – not just Jaxie's brutal journey of self-discovery, nor survival in an unforgiving landscape, but a masterful examination of masculinity and its place in the world.

SHORT HISTORY OF TRACTORS IN UKRAINIAN, A

Lewycka, Marina 336pp 2006



When two estranged sisters discover that their elderly father, a Ukrainian war refugee and expert on tractors, is planning to marry a young Ukrainian woman, they put aside their differences, and embark on a spirited campaign to stop him. But as the hostilities mount, old family secrets come falling out, including the most deeply buried one of all. In the meantime, oblivious to it all, their father carries on with the great work of his dotage — a grand history of the tractor.

SHOT

Quigley, Sarah 250pp 2003



Hit by a wayward bullet while revisiting her childhood neighbourhood for a donut, Lena's life changes physically and emotionally. Leaving behind her relationship and career as a stand-up comedian, she heads for Alaska. When Lena meets a mysterious tracker and a speechless child, she discovers that loss can sometimes be gain.

SHTUM

Lester, Jem 313pp 2016

It is crunch time for the Jewell family. Emma and Ben have a battle ahead of them persuading their local authority that their profoundly autistic 10 year-old-son Jonah, would benefit from being in a special residential facility. Their strategic decision to separate in the best interests of Jonah's case has unexpected consequences. Ben and Jonah move in with Ben's father Georg, and there's suddenly more to resolve than just the dilemma of Jonah's future. A thought-provoking darkly comic story of a family in crisis, who need to be everything but shtum, written by an author informed by personal experience.

SHOULD WE STAY OR SHOULD WE GO

Shriver, Lionel 266pp 2021

The pact that Kay and Cyril Wilkinson make to lead their best lives and then end it all/ commit suicide when they turn eighty and eighty-one respectively, always seemed so sensible and Kay's 80th birthday a long way off. But now it's 2020, the time is nigh and they are faced with the dilemma: should we stay or should we go? Presented through twelve thoughtful and entertaining scenarios, readers accompany Kay and Cyril through these alternate futures all woven through with the familiar challenges of contemporary living, whether it be coronavirus or climate change.



"A very original story by a 5-star writer — loved it."

"Very well-written. It makes the reader think about how and when they would like their life to end."

"I found the 12 choices all different and highly entertaining. Those in these same circumstances may not find it quite so funny!"

BDS Reviewers

SHUGGIE BAIN

Stuart, Douglas 448pp 2020

You can say what you like about young Shuggie being different and not fitting in, but there's no denying the fact that he loves his mother and is loyal to her through thick and thin. Life in the Thatcher era hasn't been easy for Agnes Bain – three children with absent fathers, no money to speak of and the lure of the demon drink. Poverty, addiction, abuse ... the grim realities of gentle Shuggie's Glaswegian childhood that he is doing his best to survive. Raw and powerful, this is an unflinching coming-of-age story of love and brokenness, written with empathy and expressed through its well developed characters.



SIDDHARTHA

Hesse, Herman 119pp 1922



A lyrical novel about a young Indian's search for truth among Eastern religions and other wisdom. Translated from German.

SIGNATURE OF ALL THINGS, THE

Gilbert, Elizabeth 580pp 2013



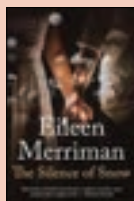
In the 1800s, a period not known for its investment in women, what sets Alma Whittaker apart from other young women her age is the exceptional education she receives. With a father who has made his fortune from his knowledge of plants, Alma's prospects favour the botanical more than the marital, but it is her pursuit of knowledge (particularly through the study of mosses), that will give her the opportunity to aspire to achieve both. In a story that circles the globe and is rich with larger-than-life characters, Alma is a woman of the Age of Enlightenment, grappling with a changing world but courageous enough as a contemporary of Darwin to postulate her own theory of evolution. An interesting and engaging story from a bygone era with a heroine fit for the challenge. [BIG READ]

SILENCE OF SNOW, THE

Merriman, Eileen 342pp 2020



Both anaesthetist Rory McBride and newly qualified doctor Jodi Waterstone are doing their utmost to have control over their lives. For Jodi it is managing the impossible workload whereas for Rory it is dealing with the unrelenting distress of a procedure gone wrong that is being investigated by the Medical Council. There is some consolation in their fledgling relationship, but for Rory, self-medication is the answer ... until it is not. Credible and thought-provoking, this contemporary New Zealand story throws light on a medical system demanding one's all, and more.



"A well-written and well-told story."

"Initially I thought the book was going to be a high-class soap opera romance, but it's definitely not a soap opera."

"When the climax comes, there is an urgency to it, which with the aftermath, made the book unputdownable for me."

"Written with a light touch on some very heavy topics."

BDS Reviewers

SILAS MARNER

Eliot, George 190pp 1861



Once in her childhood, George Eliot saw a linen weaver. Years later, she built this "legendary tale" on the memory. About a lonely man whose life is transformed by someone else's child who becomes his own. [SMALL FONT]

SILENCE OF BONAVENTURE ARROW, THE

Leganski, Rita 378pp 2012

Young Bonadventure Arrow has been bestowed a most unusual gift: his hearing is otherworldly, allowing him to hear such things as flowers growing, hearts beating and even the feelings of spirits, including those of his father, shot to death before Bonadventure was born. But there is more to this gift than mere listening; working in conjunction with Creole housekeeper Trinidad Prefontaine, Bonadventure is able to provide solace to those who are close to him and avert further tragedy in a family brimming with secrets. This is a truly original story of 1950s New Orleans, absolutely enchanting and uplifting, woven with magic realism, the transcendence of love and the power of healing.



"One person didn't finish the book, one didn't relate to it but everyone else absolutely loved it. The storyline, the quality of the writing, the gentle mystique."

Paraparaumu 005

"Unexpectedly loved by all of the group. Most unusual book and unusual for our group. A fascinating tale."

Wanaka 008

"Half the group loved the book, but half thought it too fanciful. Great discussion though!"

Christchurch 099

SINGLE THREAD, A

Chevalier, Tracy 400pp 2020



With the loss of both her brother and fiancé in WWI, Violet Speedwell is considered to be a 'surplus woman'. Her existence is bleak but in a bid for independence she moves to Winchester. Drawn to the community surrounding the Cathedral, Violet's life becomes entwined with those of the embroiderers and bell ringers. Set at a gentle pace this is an appealing story of social history that captures the detail of everyday life with clarity and compassion.

SISTER

Lupton, Rosamund 358pp 2010

The Hemming sisters have always had a powerful bond, so much so that when Tess is considered to have committed suicide, Beatrice refuses to accept this explanation for her disappearance. As Beatrice unravels what has happened to Tess, the old wounds of the family's medical history are reopened. Cleverly narrated in a series of letters that Beatrice writes to her missing sister, this is a remarkable and compelling story of sibling connection, medical misadventure and a search for truth. Easy to read, hard to put down and an ending that will leave you wondering.

SIX SUSPECTS

Swarup, Vikas 575pp 2008

The son of a politician is shot dead at a party as he celebrates his acquittal from a murder charge. Enter a journalist determined to find the killer. With the options narrowed down to the 'six suspects' who were present at the party all toting guns, Arun Advan investigates their lives and possible motivations and in the process exposes the disparities and complexities of the society they live in. With its vivid characters and captivating plot, this whodunnit has the added attraction of also presenting a social commentary of contemporary India. [BIG READ]

SIXTEEN TREES OF THE SOMME, THE

Mytting, Lars 480pp 2017

When Edvard Hirifjell is orphaned as a young boy in 1971, his grandfather steps into the breach and raises Edvard. Now, two decades later with Sverre's death, Edvard is primed and ready to embrace the mystery of his family history, particularly the circumstances of his parents' deaths. His quest, complete with puzzles and clues, will take him from his home in Norway to the Shetlands and the battlefields of WW1, ultimately delivering an unusual inheritance. Spanning a century and intricately woven through with a love of wood, this is a complex story of family, divided loyalties, and a search for truth.

SIXTY SECONDS

Blackadder, Jesse 366pp 2017

Sixty seconds, that's all it takes to shatter the Brennan family. Finn and Bridget and their sons Jarrah and Toby are still settling in after their move from Hobart to balmy Murwillumbah when tragedy strikes. In the aftermath, the recriminations and the police and media attention seem unbearable ... but there is hope and there will be forgiveness. Inspired by the author's own family experience, this is a compelling and sensitively written story of a family confronting their worst nightmare, and finding a way forward.



SLAUGHTERHOUSE 5

Vonnegut, Kurt 143pp 1970

Prisoner of war, optometrist, time-traveller - these are the life roles of Billy Pilgrim, hero of this miraculously moving, bitter and funny story of innocence faced with apocalypse. Slaughterhouse 5 is one of the world's great anti-war books. Centring on the infamous fire-bombing of Dresden in the Second World War, Billy Pilgrim's odyssey through time reflects the journey of our own fractured lives as we search for meaning in what we are afraid to know.

SKYLARK

Patrick, Jenny 325pp 2012



Roll up, roll up! Take your seat and let the show begin. We are here to be entertained by Miss Lily Alouette, artiste extraordinaire, originally from France and latterly from the Antipodes. This is the story of her life: orphaned on the Otago goldfields, member of a travelling circus troupe and pursuer of a career on the stage. From its presentation as a music hall playbill to its rich cast of characters, this is an imaginative and entertaining novel. Incorporating true events and real people, it presents both an unconventional life and a unique perspective of colonial times.

SLEEPWALKER'S GUIDE TO DANCING, THE

Jacob, Mira 498pp 2014

Tamil Nadu, India and Albuquerque, New Mexico may only be separated by plane journey, but they are worlds apart for the Eapen family, brain surgeon Thomas, wife Kamala and children Akhil and Amina, who are pursuing the American dream. Of course their new life of freedom and opportunity is not without its own challenges and just like any other family they will have their own dark times to contend with. Spanning three decades and told from Amina's perspective this is a complex family saga. With its sharp dialogue and likeable characters, including the warm supporting cast of the Christian Indian community, this absorbing story perfectly captures the migrant experience and the messy business of family life.

SLUMDOG MILLIONAIRE

Swarup, Vikas 318pp 2005



Eighteen-year old Ram has just got twelve questions correct on a TV quiz show to win a cool one billion rupees. Following the order of the 12 questions on the show, Ram tells us which amazing episode in his life taught him the answer to the question. From orphanages to brothels, gangsters to beggar-masters and into the homes of Bollywood's rich and famous, Slumdog Millionaire brims with the comedy, tragedy, joy and pathos of modern India.



SMALL GREAT THINGS

Picoult, Jodi 480pp 2016

Ruth Jefferson, an African American labour and delivery nurse, faces a dreadful dilemma — follow the hospital's ruling that she is not to care for the child of white supremacists or throw caution to the wind and intervene when the baby stops breathing. This no-win situation leads to Ruth's appearance in court relying on a white lawyer who is convinced arguing racism will not keep her out of prison. Powerful and compelling, and narrated from three different viewpoints, this is a courageous story confronting racism and white privilege in 21st century America.

SMALL HOLES IN THE SILENCE

Grace, Patricia 214pp 2006

This is a collection of short stories highlighting a variety of urban, rural, New Zealand, overseas, tribal, and contemporary themes. The world Patricia Grace depicts, is an often stark and unsentimental place in which people struggle against ageing, rejection, violence, and betrayal. Grace's sympathy for the underdog and the view of the outsider is a constant thread drawing the stories together.

SMALL ISLAND

Levy, Andrea 534pp 2004

The book focuses on an immigrant Jamaican couple and an English couple in post-war Britain. Gilbert and Hortense rent a room in a house owned by Queenie and the absent Bernard, and confront the growing prejudice towards coloured immigrants on the part of many "Mother Country" residents. A comedy of errors occurs when Bernard, presumed dead, returns to find "Coloureds" in his home, and his wife producing a baby, which is certainly not his. [BIG READ]

SNOW FLOWER AND THE SECRET FAN

See, Lisa 340pp 2007

In 1903 80 year old Lily looks back on her life anchored by her childhood 'laotong', or arranged lifelong friendship with her friend Snow Flower. Throughout their lives they communicate in 'nu shu', a secret language used exclusively by the women of Hunan Province — they write of their mutual devotion on a fan they pass between each other while confined to the upstairs women's chamber in their homes. Although the 'laotong' bonds endure it is a misunderstood message in 'nu shu' that ultimately tears them apart.

SNOWLEG

Shakespeare, Nicholas 387pp 2005

When Peter Hithersay discovers that his father is not the Englishman his mother married, but an East German political dissident with whom she had a brief affair in the sixties, he abandons Winchester for Leipzig in search of his past. There, he meets a young woman and falls in love. Their romance ends when his scheme to smuggle her out of the country goes awry and he returns to England. Nineteen years later, when the two Germanys are reunited, Peter goes back to look for the woman he has never stopped loving. [SMALL FONT]

SOLITUDE OF PRIME NUMBERS, THE

Giordano, Paolo 348pp 2009

Alice and Mattia are two lonely children who undergo life changing childhood trauma. The impact of these experiences and the bond they develop as teenagers spills over into their adult lives. A disturbing yet compelling story of friendship and emotional suffering.

SOMETHING TO LIVE FOR

Roper, Richard 344pp 2019

It wouldn't be everyone's cup of tea — working for the local council managing the funeral arrangements for those who die alone — but it suits loner Andrew Smith. Not that his colleagues think of him as a loner — following an awkward moment at the job interview, it was a case of needs must, and now he is saddled with a fictitious wife and children. But his life, fictitious or otherwise, is about to change with the arrival of a new co-worker, Peggy Green. Quirky and poignant, this life-affirming story deftly juggles the challenges of loneliness, social isolation and the need for connection, with dark humour and warmth.



"A clever book. Very well written and covering some dark topics with humour. Made us all think a bit more about loneliness amongst friends and neighbours."

Auckland 071

"Our favourite book of the year. So many themes dealt with, such as loneliness, death, deceit, romance, but all done with a sense of humour."

Matamata 006

"A good read — but not high literature. Covers the themes of loneliness and death very well. We all yearn to be seen and heard, noticed and valued."

Auckland 360

SOMEONE KNOWS MY NAME

Hill, Lawrence 534pp 2008

Aminata is twelve when she is kidnapped by slave traders from a village in Africa. Decades later, now an old woman, she recounts the story of her life. It is an epic journey encompassing three continents, plantation life, the Revolutionary War, a return to Africa and culminates in London with Aminata testifying to the Parliamentary Committee on the Slave Trade. With its historically accurate details and cast of vivid characters, this saga is a deeply moving exposé of slavery and the struggle for its abolition. [BIG READ]

SON-IN-LAW, THE

Norman, Charity 374pp 2012



There's no going back to how things used to be. Joseph Scott and his children and their maternal grandparents (Hannah and Frederick Wilde), know this only too well for they have lost Zoe, beloved wife, mother and daughter. But now there's a battle to be fought. The stakes are high with the custody of the children in dispute. Featuring fully realised characters and compassionate storytelling amidst the fraught dynamics of a family in crisis, this is a well balanced story that tackles the challenges of mental illness, divided loyalties and human fallibility.

SONATA FOR MIRIAM

Olsson, Linda 272pp 2008



To survive the devastating loss of his daughter, composer Adam Anker sets out to discover the background to his own life. Moving between Waiheke Island, Krakow and Sweden, Adam seeks to understand his heritage and its influence on his life. This is a story about grief and healing and the need to confront the past in order to make sense of the present and in turn, face the future.

SONG COLLECTOR, THE

Solomons, Natasha 383pp 2015

It takes the obnoxious antics of composer Harry Fox-Talbot's young grandson Robin to set Fox on the road to recovery. Recently widowed, he has been languishing, bereft without his wife Edie. But Robin, it turns out, is a musical prodigy and as his talent emerges, so too does Fox's interest in life. He starts composing again and is finally able to confront the long-standing family schism that began decades earlier when Edie was first introduced to the Fox-Talbot clan. Threaded with wry humour and with a passion for music at its core, this gently written story of love, betrayal and yearning will captivate you to its very last note.

SONG FOR ISSY BRADLEY, A

Bray, Carys 397pp 2014

A staunch Mormon family, the Bradleys, are about to have their faith sorely tested. For parents Ian and Claire, teenagers Zippy and Alma and youngster Jacob, the unimaginable happens when four year old Isobel is stricken with meningitis. In the resulting mêlée they each grapple with faith, doubt and the yearning for a miracle. In this poignant and insightful story of a family undone but seeking a way forward, readers are guaranteed fiction that never strays into sentimentality but is punctuated with moments of unexpected humour.

SONG OF ACHILLES, THE

Miller, Madeline 352pp 2012



The classic tale of Achilles and Patroclus, this exhilarating retelling breathes life into the world of Homer's Iliad. Recounted from Patroclus' perspective, we accompany the friends through their childhoods, to court life and finally to the siege of Troy. Legendary characters, gods making their presence felt and prophecies to fulfil combine to create a compelling and enjoyable story for both the classicist revisiting the familiar tale or a newcomer to Homer.

SORROW AND BLISS

Mason, Meg 341pp 2020



What on earth is the matter with her? From childhood through to adulthood, Martha is renowned for her spikiness. To be honest, even though there is wit and charm, she is just plain difficult. Even her husband Patrick, who has loved her since he was fourteen, can't seem to make her happy. Narrated by Martha and laced with a vein of dark humour, this is a poignant story with clever writing that sensitively handles the complex realities of mental illness, from the sorrow to the bliss and everything in between.

SOUND OF ONE HAND CLAPPING, THE

Flanagan, Richard 425pp 1997



It is 1954, in a construction camp for a hydroelectric dam in the remote Tasmanian highlands, where Bojan Buloh had brought his family to start a new life away from Slovenia, the privations of war and refugee settlements. One night Bojan's wife walks off into a blizzard, never to return — leaving Bojan to drink too much to quieten his ghosts and to care for their three year-old daughter Sonja alone. Thirty-five years later, Sonja returns to Tasmania and a father haunted by memories of the European war and other, more recent horrors.



SOUND OF THINGS FALLING, THE

Vasquez, Juan Gabriel 298pp 2012

Antonio Yammara is a young law professor in the 1990s when he meets the shadowy Ricardo Laverde. But it is not destined to be a long-lived friendship - Ricardo is killed in a drive-by shooting on the streets of Bogota. In his obsession with finding out more about his friend's mysterious past, Antonio unearths the story of Ricardo's family back to the 1960s and in doing so, lays bare Colombia's troubled association with drugs and the subsequent cost to the nation and its citizens. A literary thriller distinguished by memorable characters and superb writing.

SPACE BETWEEN US, THE

Umrigar, Thrity 321pp 2006

Set in Mumbai, this is a novel of two women and their families: Sera and her maid Bhima whose relationship is longstanding and cordial. However when Sera pays for Bhima's granddaughter's education, a series of events are set in play that threaten the well-being of both families, exposing the class conflicts and injustices underpinning their lives. This is not only a vivid social commentary of India, but an examination of the universal tension between friendship and family loyalty.

SPARE ROOM, THE

Garner, Helen 195pp 2008

Helen lovingly prepares her spare room for her friend Nicola who is coming to stay for the next three weeks, while Nicola undergoes treatment she believes will cure her advanced cancer. Helen becomes her nurse, her servant, her guardian angel and her stony judge. The Spare Room is an unforgettable story about what happens to a friendship when the chips are down.

SPARROW, THE

Russell, Mary Doria 502pp 1997

The first of two books about an ambitious Jesuit mission to the distant world of Rakhat in 2059. Father Emilio Sandoz returns to Earth forty years later with his faith completely shattered. Although the society they experience is alien, it is the human issues — faith, love and the role of God in human affairs — that drive the story. [BIG READ]

SPY WHO CAME IN FROM THE COLD, THE

Le Carré, John 240pp 1963

The author, John Le Carré, once worked for British Intelligence and used his knowledge to write about the British agent, Alec Leamas, who longs to come in from the cold but is given one last scary assignment.



ST AGNES' STAND

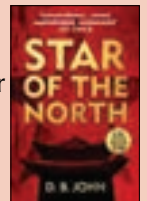
Eidson, Thomas 201pp 1994

An injured outlaw — heading for freedom in California — stumbles across the trapped survivors of an apache ambush: three nuns and seven orphaned children. Sister St Agnes, a resourceful woman, is convinced that Nat Swanson is sent by God to rescue them. Set in the mid-19th century.

STAR OF THE NORTH, THE

John, D.B. 438pp 2018

Buckle up for a white-knuckle ride where truth appears to be stranger than fiction. Inspired by real events, this suspenseful thriller moves between the USA and North Korea following twin sisters, one who mysteriously disappears from a South Korean island and the other recruited by the CIA to discover her whereabouts. From its complex, chilling plot to its fascinating and sobering details about life in North Korea, this is a thought-provoking and revelatory read zeroing in on the Hermit Kingdom.



"A very fast-paced, exciting thriller. I read it quickly and could not put it down. Excellent book for all."

"The main characters are very believable and I was very moved by the plight of those caught in the regime's web."

"It's much more than a thriller. It's a detailed examination of North Korea and the brutal regime that controls it."

"Loved the book but admit to skimming over some details of the most brutal torture and deprivation."

BDS Reviewers



STARTED EARLY, TOOK MY DOG

Atkinson, Kate 350pp 2010

From its intriguing title to the re-appearance of the reputable private investigator Jackson Brodie, this story is classic Atkinson territory. Revolving around children — whether abducted, adopted or abused, this story gives full reign to its likeable characters, resolving its intricate plots with flair. A clever and entertaining read.



STATE OF WONDER

Patchett, Ann 353pp 2011

In an exotic corner of the Brazilian Rio Negro, a reclusive scientist, Dr Annick Swenson is developing a miracle fertility drug. Marina Singh, a pharmaceutical researcher is sent by the drug company to make contact with her and determine why another colleague had died in the jungle. Both a thriller and a thought-provoking morality tale, it is a powerful and spell-binding story exploring human nature amidst the beauty and dangers of the Amazon.

STARTUP WIFE, THE

Anam, Tahmima 294pp 2021

Asha Ray, computer scientist extraordinaire and Cyrus Jones, creator of alternative rituals for the non-religious are quite the dynamic duo, and when Asha creates an algorithm that allows Cyrus' rituals to be available via an app, then the sky is the limit. Newly married and partners from the onset, their lives begin to change when Cyrus is thrust into the limelight and Asha finds herself pushed into the shadows. Smart and funny, this quirky satire marries gender politics, the world of tech start-ups and the lure of the spiritual in a thought-provoking and entertaining story.



"Easy to read, it gripped me straight away."

"A modern-day love story with an ending that was realistic rather than fantasy. A good read."

"Cyrus was one of the most memorable characters in any book I have read recently."

"A totally original story."

BDS Reviewers

STATION ELEVEN

Mandel, Emily St John 333pp 2014

Who would have thought it would all fall apart so quickly? One minute, it's life as per usual then literally overnight it's lights out. Moving between their pre-pandemic lives and their post-pandemic realities, this story focuses on a disparate group of people connected to Arthur Leander who is performing King Lear on the night the Georgia Flu hits North America. Centre stage, twenty years on, is the Travelling Symphony, a troupe of musicians and actors who tour the remaining pockets of population performing Shakespearean works and classical music. Both calm and convincing, this elegantly written novel is the rarest of beasts, a dystopian story of hope that reminds us what is best about our world.

STAY WITH ME

Adébáyò, Ayòbámi 296pp 2017

The world should be their oyster: Yejide and Akin are a modern young couple, university educated, prosperous and happily married. But alas, when the expected children fail to materialise, drastic steps will need to be taken. Against the political chaos of 1980s Nigeria, Yejide and Akin must manage the turmoil of their own lives – the pressure of traditional societal expectations and the price they are prepared to pay for children. This is an emotionally powerful story of hope and despair and the sacrifices we make for family.

STILL ALICE

Genova, Lisa 292pp 2009

At fifty, Alice Howland has it all – a happy marriage, adult children and a successful career as a Harvard Professor. But Alice and her family are at the beginning of a devastating journey; she is diagnosed with early-onset Alzheimer's disease. Related from Alice's perspective, this is a story that sensitively chronicles the loss and confusion that follows such a diagnosis, as well as deftly interweaving factual material. A poignant book that challenges the reader with questions of our worth and identity when our memories and intellect are no more.

STILL LIFE

Winman, Sarah 436pp 2021

It is the unlikeliest of connections – Ulysses Temper, a young British soldier and Evelyn Skinner, a sixty-four-year-old art historian – and in the unlikeliest of meeting places – the wine cellar of a Tuscan villa that is being bombed towards the end of WWII. But it is a connection that has a profound effect on Ulysses in the decades ahead as he and his friends and family create a new life in Florence, far from London's East End. Celebrating beauty, love and art, this satisfying story of Ulysses and Evelyn's intertwined lives is brimming with beautifully drawn characters living life to the full.



"I loved everything about this book. The characters so beautifully drawn, the love and friendship, the descriptions of Florence and the art works, the food, the music, the joy."

"Delightful, charming and heart-warming, and thankfully not too sweet."

"The characters make the reader smile, laugh and even cry."

BDS Reviewers

STILL LIFE WITH MONKEY

Weber, Katharine 286pp 2018

Everyone needs a helping hand at some stage in their life, but how would it be if that hand was simian? That is the dilemma confronting architect Duncan Wheeler who has been severely paralysed in a car accident. Enter stage right – Ottoline, a capuchin monkey trained as a service animal, and a startling addition to a household reeling from the grief of curtailed dreams and adjusting to the challenges of a new future. But will this be enough for Duncan? From its finely drawn characters to its examination of what makes life worth living, this is an engaging and uplifting read.

STORY OF A NEW ZEALAND RIVER, THE

Mander, Jane 318pp 1920



An Englishwoman, Alice Roland, marries a “colonial” and goes to live in Kaipara. Together with her children, boxes, mattresses and piano, she is punted up river to the ‘appalling isolation’ of their new home, ‘a small house against a splendid wall of bush’ in the kauri forest at Pukekaroro. She is joining her husband there, a reunion that is far from warm, but this remote place is to mark Alice’s long and steady growth towards shared love, a new awareness of life and a sense of personal liberation.

STORY OF BEAUTIFUL GIRL, THE

Simon, Rachel 340pp 2011



In 1960s Pennsylvania, the only way inmates Linnie and Homan can ensure Linnie’s unborn child is not incarcerated in ‘The School for the Incurable and the Feebleminded’, is to flee. While Linnie finds herself back in the institution, Homan escapes and baby Julia is raised far from the reach of the authorities. As societal attitudes begin to change, freedoms are granted and life for the residents with disabilities starts to improve, but where are Homan and Julia? An insightful examination of institutional care and the unenviable decisions made on behalf of others. An uplifting and rewarding read.

STORYTELLER, THE

Picoult, Jodi 460pp 2013



When Sage Singer befriends nonagenarian Josef Weber, he asks a favour of her. But there is nothing simple about this favour; Josef was a Nazi officer in a concentration camp and is now seeking absolution. Sage’s family are Jewish, and in a wry twist of coincidence, there exists a previous connection: Minka, Sage’s grandmother, was incarcerated in Auschwitz. With its different perspectives on the taxing questions of justice and mercy, redemption and forgiveness, this is a gripping story that leaves the reader pondering the moral choices that Sage, Minka and Josef have had to face.

STRAYS, THE

Bitto, Emily 252pp 2014



As the only child of conventional parents, Lily is drawn to the flamboyant lifestyle of her best friend Eva’s family. The Trenthams were avant-garde artists, hosts of a bohemian community who actively rejected the conservatism of 1930s Melbourne. Now 40 years later as they come together for a retrospective exhibition, Lily examines the events of the past when Evan and Helene Trentham’s spectacular neglect of their children set in motion dramatic events whose repercussions are still being felt. Loosely based on Melbourne’s Heide Circle artists’ colony, this is a beautifully crafted award-winning novel of substance that chronicles the rise and fall of a family and the price to be paid for the creative life.

SUCH A FUN AGE

Reid, Kiley 320pp 2020

There’s a perfectly plausible explanation as to why Emira Tucker has three-year-old Briar with her in an upscale Philadelphia supermarket late on a Saturday night. However, the store’s security guard is having none of it because Emira is black and Briar is white. Emira, the well-educated young woman that she is, is a babysitter for the Chamberlain family, Peter a news anchor, and Alix, a feminist blogger. Following the ‘incident’, which just happened to get recorded by a bystander, life is about to get interesting in ways that none of them could possibly have imagined. Clever and thought-provoking, this is a nuanced examination of race and privilege in the here and now.

SUMMER LIES

Schlink, Bernhard 240pp 2013

Whisking the reader between Europe and USA, this collection of seven short stories contemplates love and loss, truth and deceit. With scenarios that are believable and characters that grapple with the very same questions that challenge us in our relationships, these stories are both thoughtful and thought-provoking.

SURVIVAL GAME

Singer, Nicky 355pp 2018

If it’s a game then there is not much fun to be had - fourteen-year-old Mhairi Bain is a survivor, going it alone, not too many questions asked. She is on the move, just like so many desperate others but at least she has a (supposedly) achievable destination: make her way from where her parents were killed in Africa, to her grandmother’s distant home on the Scottish Isle of Arran. But easier said than done; it’s checkpoint after checkpoint, obstacle after obstacle, including a young boy who may just save Mhairi as much as she rescues him. Both powerful and easy to read, this is a compelling and thought-provoking story portraying an easily imagined future where climate change and mass migration rule the world.

SWALLOWS OF KABUL, THE

Khadra, Yasmina 195pp 2005



Set in Kabul under the rule of the Taliban, this novel takes readers into the lives of two couples: Mohsen who comes from a family of wealthy shopkeepers whom the Taliban have destroyed, and Zunaira, his beautiful wife, once a brilliant teacher who is now no longer allowed to leave home without escort or covering her face. Intersecting their world is Atiq, a prison keeper who has sincerely adopted the Taliban ideology and struggles to keep his faith, and his wife, Musarrat who once rescued Atiq, and is now dying of sickness and despair. The lives of all four protagonists move irrevocably towards their destinies.

SWEET SORROW

Nicholls, David 392pp 2020

It is 1997 and Charlie Lewis has just finished school but the world is not yet his oyster. If only his family hadn't broken up, he hadn't failed his exams and he hadn't been so stupid as to jeopardise his part-time job. Remembering this momentous summer from twenty years down the track, Charlie recalls his changing fortune when he met the glorious Fran Fisher and in pursuit of her was lured into an amateur production of Romeo and Juliet. Insightful and endearing, this is an amusing coming-of-age story that deftly conveys the universal experience of first love, with a little Shakespeare on the side.



"A very good coming of age novel. The awkwardness of being a teenager and experiencing a romantic relationship is very well done."

"A very readable book with humour and insight and I marvel at how the writer can get inside the mind of a confused 16-year-old boy so well."

"You become invested in Charlie, despite many of the hopeless and foolish decisions he makes."

BDS Reviewers

SYDNEY BRIDGE UPSIDE DOWN

Ballantyne, David 277pp 1968



Harry lives in Calliope Bay, on the edge of the world. His mother has gone to the city, perhaps just for the summer, perhaps longer. But while Harry wonders when she'll be back he is free to explore the forbidden and dangerous meat works. When his beautiful older cousin Caroline arrives, Harry is torn between childish games and his desire to protect her from the attentions of Wiggins the butcher, with terrible consequences. A great, untamed New Zealand classic, Sydney Bridge Upside Down is a coming-of-age story, a disquieting family tragedy and a sinister gothic thriller.

TAKE MY HAND

Perkins-Valdez, Dolen 352pp 2022

Fresh from nursing school, Civil Townsend is excited to be working for the Montgomery Family Planning Clinic, with some of her earliest duties requiring her to administer a still experimental drug. Even more startling to her is to discover that some of the intended recipients of the birth control injections are innocent children – Erica and India are only eleven and thirteen, and worse is to come when Civil challenges what is being meted out to them by a health system supposedly there to help them. Inspired by real-life events of the 1970s, this is a powerful story both horrifying and hopeful, that wrestles with reproductive injustice, medical ethics and racism.



"I cannot recommend this book highly enough! It is wonderful, powerful, sobering, horrifying, hopeful."

"I found the writing a bit clunky, but it's an amazing story."

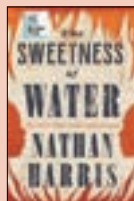
"It's heart-breaking that this book is based on real events — and unbelievable that it's set in 1973!"

BDS Reviewers

SWEETNESS OF WATER, THE

Harris, Nathan 356pp 2021

When George Walker offers recently emancipated brothers Landry and Prentiss work on his land, he surely stirs up a hornet's nest in the nearby town of Old Ox, where everybody has an opinion about the fate of freed slaves. The return from the Civil War of two Confederate soldiers in a forbidden relationship, precipitates a series of events that leave few in this Georgian community unscathed. Powerful and engaging, this is a lyrical story of the American South with its unforgettable characters exposed to the best and worst of humanity.



"The writing is quality with many almost poetic touches."

"How is it possible for a debut novel to be so beautifully written and so engaging and memorable?"

"The character portrayal is outstanding. I loved this book so much I read it twice."

BDS Reviewers

TAKING TOM MURRAY HOME

Slee, Tim 304pp 2019



Tom has had enough. Rather than hand over the farm to the bank, he'd prefer to burn it to the ground. Unfortunately, he dies in the resulting blaze and now his family – Dawn and the twins, Jenny and Jack – want to take him back to Melbourne where he was born. But a horse + cart + coffin = a slow, slow journey from rural Victoria to the Big Smoke. Along the way there will be plenty of time to draw attention to the plight of farmers, plenty of time for trouble to find them too, dogging the progress of their eclectic procession. Told from Jack's fresh perspective, this is an entertaining and thought-provoking read that highlights the tough realities of Australian rural life and affirms the power of community standing together.



TALKING ABOUT O'DWYER

Stead, CK 219pp 1999



A soldier of the Maori Battalion in World War II-Crete, is killed in action. A 'makutu' curse is placed on Officer Donovan O'Dwyer by the dead soldier's family, and he lives under its spell for half of his life.

TALKING HEADS

Bennett, Alan 266pp 2007

A collection of 12 of Alan Bennett's monologues originally filmed by BBC Television. At once darkly comic, tragically poignant and wonderfully uplifting, "Talking Heads" is widely regarded as a modern classic.

TALLY STICK, THE

Nixon, Carl 450pp 2019



Given the lushness of West Coast vegetation, it is no surprise to hear that back in 1978 when the Chamberlain family – John, Julia and their four children - were in an accident, their car was never recovered. So how on earth was it possible that in 2010 the remains of one of the children were found, with evidence that Maurice had lived for four years after the crash. How was this possible and where was the rest of the family? And why was Maurice in possession of a tally stick, indicating that he owed a debt? Told from multiple viewpoints, this evocative story of adaptation and identity is so believable that it will have you wondering if in fact these events did occur.



TATTOOIST OF AUSCHWITZ, THE

Morris, Heather 270pp 2018



The tattooing of identification numbers may be a routine procedure on entry into a concentration camp but for Lale Sokolov and Gita Furman it holds more significance: it brings them together for the first time, giving them a fresh determination to survive whatever is in store for them. Faced with the horrors of Auschwitz, they must decide what they are prepared to do to ensure their future. Based on the personal recollections of a Holocaust survivor, this is an unforgettable story of hope and love in the most challenging of circumstances.

TENDER IS THE NIGHT

Fitzgerald, F Scott 326pp 1934



Continuing the portrait of society begun in The Great Gatsby. This novel has different characters and can be read separately. It tells of the disillusion that often follows the Bohemian life.

TEARS OF DARK WATER, THE

Addison, Corban 482pp 2015

We've all heard about Somali pirates, but it is father and son Daniel and Quentin Parker's misfortune to sail right into their clutches on the African leg of their around-the-world voyage. Daniel, needing time out from his floundering marriage and Quentin, from his litany of troubling behaviour, come up against someone with nothing to lose - twenty year old Ismail Ibrahim, bent on avenging the destruction of his own family. From the FBI negotiator called in to manage the crisis, through to the US Navy's involvement, nothing is as it seems. Told from multiple viewpoints, this is an engrossing and insightful thriller that illuminates the contemporary issues of international relations, especially those of Somalia, and offers a glimmer of possibility for future justice and reconciliation.

TERMS & CONDITIONS

Glancy, Robert 205pp 2013

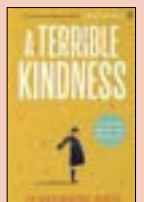


Corporate lawyer Frank Shaw's advice would be to always read the fine print. As he recovers his memory following a car accident, examining the 'terms and conditions' of his current circumstances brings his own life into clearer focus. It's not a pretty sight, but surely it's never too late to negotiate a new life contract, one that has an eye on the big picture as well as the small print. Both clever and profound, this is an entertaining story of footnotes, second chances and self-discovery. [SMALL FONT]

TERRIBLE KINDNESS, A

Wroe, Jo Browning 377pp 2022

William Lavery's life has headed down a different track from what is expected. A talented singer, it is presumed that this is where his future lies. However, at the tender age of nineteen, he instead qualifies as an embalmer. In what becomes a defining moment in his life, he volunteers to attend a colliery collapse in a Welsh village where there are multiple fatalities. Affected by his experience, William is forced to face up to previous trauma and reclaim his life. Based around the 1966 Aberfan disaster, this is a moving but ultimately hopeful story of love, grief and forgiveness.



"I recommend this book to all readers. Informative and interesting."

"This is a book that I keep thinking about and have recommended to several friends."

"Initially I didn't think I would like this book because of the topics covered, but it draws you in. Recommended to all."

BDS Reviewers

TESTAMENTS, THE

Atwood, Margaret 448pp 2020

For the purposes of the 13th Symposium of Gilead Studies, what better way to lay out the inner workings of the dystopian society than the testimony of three women who have risked their lives to reveal its truths: Agnes Jemima who was raised to embrace all facets of the regime, the infamous Aunt Lydia, and last but not least, Daisy, who was smuggled across the border as a child. In this return to the Republic of Gilead, fifteen years have passed since the events of *The Handmaid's Tale* and Offred's escape to an uncertain future, but the misogyny, the duplicity and oppression have continued. Gripping and fast paced, this suspenseful story with its intriguing characters and weighty moral quandaries, offers a welcome glimmer of hope for the future of the women of Gilead.

THING ABOUT DECEMBER, THE

Ryan, Donal 205pp 2013

Johnsey Cunliffe is an unworldly lad, ill equipped for the cut and thrust of daily life. There are challenges enough for him in the small Irish village where he lives and these only multiply once his parents pass away and the property developers fix their sights on his farm. Played out over a year, this is a moving story of vulnerability and isolation that examines the clash of traditional and contemporary values to produce a compelling and insightful portrayal of Irish rural life.

THING AROUND YOUR NECK, THE

Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi 218pp 2009

These twelve short stories explore what it means to be Nigerian today — whether in Nigeria, or living in the West. Each story stands on its own with a powerful message imparted through a range of clearly drawn characters, young and old, male and female. Not only do these dazzling stories provide insights to an African culture but also involve the reader in examining universally human experiences such as loneliness, homesickness, alienation, prescribed gender roles and seeking a better life. [SMALL FONT]

THIRTEEN MOONS

Frazier, Charles 422pp 2006

As a very old man, Will Cooper narrates his own story, beginning with his days as an orphaned, literate "bound boy" who is dispatched to run a trading post at the edge of the Cherokee Nation. Thrust into a frontier society where everything is uncertain, he places his allegiance on the side of the embattled Cherokees, and his love in the hands of an elusive young woman he won in a card game.

THINGS YOU SAVE IN A FIRE

Center, Katherine 320pp 2020

When firefighter Cassie Hanwell reluctantly moves from Texas to Massachusetts, she knows that it is not going to be plain sailing. She has always successfully managed the challenges of working in a male-dominated field, but the men at her new fire station are not kindly disposed to her appointment. But the die is cast and Cassie will not be backing down, even when she has to compete with a golden-boy rookie for the one permanent position available. From its laugh out loud moments and nail-biting dramas to its blood pressure threatening sexism, this story with love at its heart also offers an insightful examination of some of the challenges women face and reinforces the importance of being true to oneself.

THIRTEENTH TALE, THE

Setterfield, Diane 408pp 2006

Margaret Lea, an antiquarian bookseller and sometime biographer of obscure writers, receives a letter from Vida Winter, "the world's most famous living author". Vida has always invented pasts for herself in interviews, but now, on her death-bed, she has decided to tell the truth, and has chosen Margaret to write her story. Living at Vida's country estate, Margaret finds herself spellbound by the tale of Vida's childhood some seventy years earlier. But is it really the truth? And will Vida live to finish the story?

THIS GREEN AND PLEASANT LAND

Malik, Ayisha 464pp 2020

It is hard to refuse a deathbed wish and Bilal Hasham isn't the first to struggle with complying. His mother's request will put Bilal on a collision course with his friends and family, and his neighbours in the south coast village of Babbel's End. Honouring Sakeen's last wish – to build a mosque in the village – will really set the cat among the pigeons, exposing the fault lines of racism and intolerance that sit beneath the surface of this quintessentially English community. Both entertaining and provocative, this multifaceted story of faith and identity thoughtfully reveals the changing face of Britain while holding up a mirror to one's own prejudices.

THIS MORTAL BOY

Kidman, Fiona 284pp 2018

The hope of a better life, that's what Irishman Albert Black was seeking when he stepped on New Zealand shores, not the prospect of the gallows after a casual altercation at an Auckland milk bar. It's 1955 and unfortunately for young 'Paddy', New Zealand has the moral bit between its teeth, and the death penalty still on its books. Compelling and convincing, this is both a compassionate recounting of a young man's short life and the thoughtful examination of a dark episode in New Zealand history.

THOUGHTS AND HAPPENINGS OF WILFRED PRICE, PURVEYOR OF SUPERIOR FUNERALS, THE

Jones, Wendy 263pp 2012

The title says it all! The story, set in the 1920s, follows Wilfred, an innocent chap, as he plies his trade in the Welsh village of Narbeth. When he becomes smitten with Grace, the local doctor's daughter, all that follows reflects the narrow minded morality of the era and the cost of keeping up appearances. Gently told and with its gradual build-up of tension, this is a thought-provoking read reminding us of the importance of living with truth and honour.

THOUSAND YEARS OF GOOD PRAYERS, A

Li, Yiyun 219pp 2005

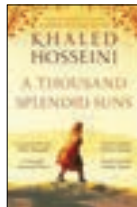
This collection of stories explores the ravages of the Cultural Revolution on modern Chinese, both in China and America. Yiyun Li illuminates how mythology, politics, history, and culture intersect with personality to create fate. From the bustling heart of Beijing, to a fastfood restaurant in Chicago, and to the barren expanse of Inner Mongolia, the stories reveal worlds both foreign and familiar.



THOUSAND SPLENDID SUNS, A

Hosseini, Khaled 372pp 2007

Against the backdrop of war-torn Afghanistan, Mariam was forced to marry forty-year-old Rasheed when she was only fifteen years old. Then, eighteen years later, her still childless husband angrily takes an even younger wife. Hosseini renders the story of Mariam and her "sister/daughter", Laila, with persuasive detail and consummate humanity. Their abject situation leaves them no emotional space for idle philosophising; their resistance is from the very core of their being.



"Amazing, well-written. great descriptions of some heart-wrenching times. Thankful to be born in NZ. A must-read."

Auckland 270

"A great read from a great storyteller.

The historical/political setting and fate of women in Afghanistan was especially interesting."

Wanaka 009

"Confronting and harrowing but still loved for the vivid portrayal of life in Afghanistan."

Auckland 063

"Fantastic read. Highly recommended."

Te Awamutu 004

THREAD, THE

Hislop, Victoria 455pp 2011

When offered the chance to spend their remaining years with their UK-based family, Katerina and Dimitri Komninos cannot contemplate such a possibility as their lives are irrevocably linked with Thessaloniki, their home in Northern Greece. This is their story played out amidst the momentous events of the 20th Century. From fire and earthquake to war and persecution, this is a compelling saga of hardship, love and loyalty and a city with a turbulent history.

THREAD OF GRACE, A

Russell, Mary Doria 430pp 2005

In 1943, Claudette Blum and her father are among thousands of Jewish refugees fleeing over the Alps towards Italy to find safety. Although the Italians have split with Hitler, the Nazis seize control and the country becomes a battleground. Using oral and written histories, Russell tells the little-known story of those who sought refuge in Italy during the final phase of World War II, and of those who risked all to help them.

THREE SOULS

Chang, Janie 468pp 2013

To achieve reincarnation, Song Leiyin must atone for the wrongs of her short life. With her three souls, yin, yang and hun, Leiyin examines her life, that of a privileged young woman in early 20th century China in a time of political upheaval and social change. Keen to be educated, Leiyin was thwarted by tradition and familial duty and pays a heavy price for her rebellion. With its unique narration and cultural insights, this is an intriguing story inspired by the author's family history.



THREE VIEWS OF CRYSTAL WATER

Govier, Katherine 417pp 2005

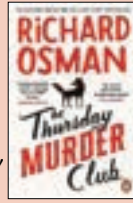
Motherless at the age of six, Vera is left in the care of her grandfather, who spends long periods away at sea. When teenage Vera is taken by her grandfather's mistress to a small island in Japan, she finds comfort after years of loneliness. The women of the island take her in and she learns to dive for pearls. But Vera is an outsider, and when war is declared in Europe, she must go home to Vancouver. Vera never forgets her island life and to regain the passion and joy that she once knew, she must return to Japan, to the one place where she truly belonged.

THURSDAY MURDER CLUB, THE

Osman, Richard 377pp 2021



So much for lazy days dozing in the sun! The Jigsaw Room at Coppers Chase is being put to good use by the Thursday Murder Club: Elizabeth (something to do with espionage), Joyce (a former nurse), Ibrahim (a psychiatrist), and Ron (a trade unionist through and through) are testing their mettle with cold cases, abruptly upgraded to an active case involving their very own retirement village. With the strategic (but unofficial) inclusion of the ambitious P. C. Donna De Freitas to the mix, they are ready to put their formidable nous and experience to excellent use. Fast-paced, clever and so very British, this is a highly entertaining story with murder and mirth cheek by jowl.



"Witty, clever, quirky, fast moving. Also sad, haunting and poignant."

"A wonderful book that I thoroughly enjoyed and highly recommend."

"I loved the fun and humour. It's very easy to read."

"This is a light thriller, but told with great humour and warmth and with understanding for older people's foibles."

BDS Reviewers

TIGER'S WIFE, THE

Obrecht, Téa 352pp 2011

When her grandfather dies in mysterious circumstances, Natalia disassembles his life and the special relationship they shared. Having followed in his footsteps and trained as a doctor, Natalia had embraced the rational approach of medical science, only now to find it in conflict with the mythical stories she uncovers as she seeks to make sense of his life. Moving between the past and present of their troubled Balkan homeland, this is a story imbued with magic realism and rich with the fairy tales and superstitions of Eastern Europe.

TOBACCONIST, THE

Seethaler, Robert 234pp 2016

Franz Huchel is a wide-eyed seventeen-year-old when he arrives in Vienna to start an apprenticeship with a tobacconist, courtesy of his mother who remains back in their mountain village. Everything is new to him, not least being the prospect of romance with a Bohemian girl, and the friendship of one Sigmund Freud. But it is 1937, dark clouds are rolling in, and momentous change is afoot. Set against the backdrop of the rise of Nazism in Austria, this is a tender coming-of-age story that moves its protagonist from innocence to sober understanding, with a light touch and a wry humour.

TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD

Lee, Harper 290pp 1960



The lawyer's story, as told by his daughter, portrays the best and worst of life in the US South during the Depression. It tells of Atticus' attempt to defend a black man accused of the rape of a white girl in the Deep South. An American classic and Pulitzer Prize winner.

TO THE SEA

Crutchley, Nikki 309pp 2021



Iluka, coastal paradise and home to a family living as nature intended... but just how idyllic is this isolated patch of Aotearoa? Narrated by both Hurley's granddaughter Ana and her mother Anahita, this is the story of a family in thrall to Hurley's utopian vision and what must happen to keep it safe. However, when an outsider visits their artist's retreat, the mystery of 'Iluka' begins to unravel. Gripping, darkly atmospheric and a disturbing testimony to family loyalty.



"Throughout the novel there is an undercurrent of danger so the tension continues to build."

"I was delighted to find another Kiwi author who writes a good novel."

"The story builds skilfully to its climax, with unexpected twists and turns along the way."

BDS Reviewers

TOBY'S ROOM

Barker, Pat 264pp 2012

When Elinor Brooke's beloved brother Toby is killed on the Western Front, the presence of an unposted letter in his personal effects sets her on a determined path to find out what really happened to him. Her search for answers plays out against an even more urgent quest that is engaging those around her: how to restore the lives of soldiers with horrific facial injuries. Featuring the Bloomsbury Set and the Slade School of Art, this is a story that chronicles the pioneering of facial reconstruction and plastic surgery while considering the personal and societal costs of war. Meticulous research and the inclusion of notable historical figures such as New Zealander Sir Harold Gillies and artist Henry Tonks, support the credentials of an author already well known for her powerful accounts of the Great War.



TOLSTOY ESTATE, THE

Conte, Steven 452pp 2019



When a German medical unit establish a field hospital in Leo Tolstoy's former country estate, army surgeon Paul Bauer meets Russian writer and custodian of the estate, Katerina Trubetzkaya. It is 1941 and a brutal Russian winter and an ignominious retreat are on their way... Threaded through with the Tolstoy classic War and Peace, and with a close attention to detail, this captivating book is a story to savour as it balances the horrors of war with the universal power of literature.



"We all decided this beautifully written book was definitely the best we read this year. Carefully crafted, wonderfully detailed characters. We just loved it. A joy to read."

Wellington 041

"Best book ever read in the BDS most people felt. Wonderfully constructed and written. Great discussion."

Christchurch 064

"The group enjoyed the book. The characters were well-drawn and the description of surgery in the field hospital was very vivid. Recommended."

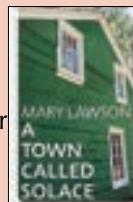
Wellington 001

TOWN CALLED SOLACE, A

Lawson, Mary 288pp 2021



In the remote northern Ontario town of Solace, three disparate people are brought together in 1972 by events in the past colliding with the present. The chief instigator is Elizabeth, nearing the end of her life and heading off to hospital; her young neighbour Clara who is to care for Elizabeth's cat; and Liam, a sudden and, in Clara's eyes, unwelcome addition to the neighbourhood. Authentic and tender, this emotionally satisfying story imbues the quiet challenges of daily life with depth and meaning.



"Another lovely Mary Lawson book. The reader is drawn into the story and cares about the lives of the characters."

"Easy to read and well-crafted."

"The mundane, unremarkable, daily happenings of a small remote town are told lovingly."

"The element of mystery is well-sustained throughout."

BDS Reviewers

TOWARDS ANOTHER SUMMER

Frame, Janet 206pp 2007



A previously unpublished novel in which Janet Frame explores themes of travel and return, homesickness and belonging. Grace is a migratory bird, longing for her own place in the world, if she can only decide where it is. She is struggling to establish her identity as a writer but first she must learn to be comfortable in her own skins. Written in 1963, this work is a precursor to An Angel at My Table, the autobiography Janet Frame wrote 20 years later.

TRAITOR

Daisley, Stephen 295pp 2010



This is an extraordinary New Zealand story: from the shores of Gallipoli and the horrors of the Western Front, then home to rural New Zealand. At its heart is David Monroe; soldier, pacifist, conscientious objector, stretcher-bearer, shepherd. The strong characterisation, sparse writing style and taut plot combine to create a beautiful yet tragic story of war and love.

TRICKING OF FREYA, THE

Sunley, Christina 370pp 2009

This is the story of Freya Morris, daughter of sober and responsible Anna, niece of the wild and unpredictable Birdie, and granddaughter of the revered poet Olafur. Olafur and his wife fled Iceland to Canada after the massive volcano eruption of 1875. As a result, Freya grows up with her mother in Connecticut, and her extended family in the Icelandic community of Gimli, Canada. A series of events leaves Freya with a sense of shame and loss: a freak accident, Freya's kidnapping, a return to Iceland, and the accidental discovery of a long-hidden family secret. Freya's story deftly weaves in Iceland's history, landscape, mythology and literary heritage.

TROUBLE WITH FIRE, THE

Kidman, Fiona 304pp 2010



Linked by the common thread of fire, whether that of passion or the more commonplace variety these eleven stories consider the lives of ordinary people. With its distinctively New Zealand flavour, this collection provides finely drawn characters and situations that chronicle changes in society, especially for women, from our colonial past to the present day.

TROUBLE WITH GOATS AND SHEEP, THE

Cannon, Joanna 453pp 2016



All is not as it seems on The Avenue. John Creasey's new wife Margaret has gone AWOL and neighbourhood sleuths 10-year-olds Grace and Tilly decide to go looking for her. Their door-to-door search is a reminder to this close-knit community that Margaret has been the recipient of many a confidence, and that her disappearance may expose these secrets. This engaging

and perceptive story is a nostalgic immersion in 1970s English suburbia, simply narrated by the delightful Grace and Tilly and their adult neighbours, and a reminder of the personal and societal cost of secrecy.

TRUE HISTORY OF THE KELLY GANG

Carey, Peter 401pp 2001

Ned Kelly, the legendary Australian bush outlaw, headed a gang whose mythic two years on the run ended in a shootout with the police at a pub in Glenrowan, June 1880. Being the only survivor, Kelly was tried and hanged, aged twenty-six years. Kelly narrates his own "history", driven, as he claims, to becoming an outlaw because of the harassment of both him and his family by corrupt police. [SMALL FONT]

TU

Grace, Patricia 287pp 2004

Tu tells the story of Te-Hokowhitu-a-Tu, one of three sons from the same family who go to war, but the only son to return. When his young niece and nephew come to him to find out what really happened, Tu decides to hand over his diary which records his wartime experiences, and the life of his family in 1940s Wellington. Grace has drawn from the accounts of her father and other relatives, creating an authentic and moving story.

TULIP FEVER

Moggach, Deborah 259pp 1999

The rich texture of 17th-century Amsterdam — the golden age of painting, religious toleration, and feverish tulip speculation — offers a backdrop to the drama of a doomed love triangle. Colour plates of Dutch paintings are an added feature.

TURN OF THE KEY, THE

Ware, Ruth 368pp 2019

The Elincourt family and Heatherbrae House, a beautiful mansion in the Scottish Highlands, have not lived up to expectations for Rowan Cain and her four predecessors. The live-in nanny job with Bill, Sandra and their daughters should be as amazing as it initially appears, but that is before reality sinks in: Rowan is under constant surveillance, the children are less-than-angelic, the parents are AWOL more often than not, and the 'smart' house isn't so smart after all. Writing to a prospective lawyer from her prison cell, Rowan recounts her experiences with the family that led to her being accused of a murder she claims she didn't commit. With a nod to the Henry James classic, *The Turn of the Screw*, this is a hard-to-put-down haunted house thriller, delightfully atmospheric and bristling with menace.

TURN OF THE SCREW, THE

James, Henry 296pp 1898

A psychological novel and a ghost story in which the spirits of children reappear to haunt a governess. Or do they? [SMALL FONT]

TWINS, THE

Sarginson, Saskia 339pp 2013

Viola and Isolte. Michael and John. Two sets of identical twins bound by a momentous Suffolk summer spent together when they were children. Now adults, the tragic consequences that flow from an innocent mistake they made continue to reverberate throughout their lives. For life to be worth living, they must do as all who wish to live fulfilled lives must do: confront their past and accept what really happened. With credible characters and its deep understanding of twin ship, this is a compassionate story that explores the consequences of childhood trauma and the very special challenges of being a twin.

UNDER THE VISIBLE LIFE

Echlin, Kim 348pp 2015

Although from completely different backgrounds, gifted musicians and friends Katherine Goodnow and Mahsa Weaver have much in common: both come from mixed-race parentage, both have lives constrained by cultural expectations, and both find solace and escape through music. Just like the improvisational jazz that brings them together, they are used to making the most of what is at hand, and relishing the moment. Moving between Karachi, Montreal and New York, and spanning from the 1940s to the 1980s, this is a compelling and poignant story vibrating with the transformative power of music, love and friendship and ultimately the need to fight for one's dreams.

UNDERGROUND RAILROAD, THE

Whitehead, Colson 366pp 2016

Cora and fellow slave Caesar flee their cotton plantation in Georgia, hanging on to the hope and knowledge that there are brave souls who will risk their own lives to get them to freedom. It is not just an underground railway of routes and safe houses but a literal subterranean bricks and mortar network moving people away from the abhorrent realities of slavery in the antebellum South. Cora's journey north is harrowing as she experiences, state by state, inventive solutions to the 'negro problem'. Referencing today's political and social attitudes, and with its vignettes of alternate history, this is a powerful, genre-bending story of America and its past.

UNIVERSE VERSUS ALEX WOODS, THE

Extence, Gavin 408pp 2013

In Alex Wood's short life, there have been two major life-altering events, and it's hard to say which will have the most effect: being hit on the head by a meteorite when he was ten, or, as a teenager, meeting his elderly reclusive neighbour Isaac Peterson while trying to evade the latest crop of school bullies. The unlikely friendship that develops gives Alex the sounding board he needs to sort out his philosophy on life ... and death. Astrophysics and neurology feature in this reckoning, as do God, Kurt Vonnegut and the vexed issue of assisted suicide. This warm and engaging story is rich with humour, moral conflicts and intriguing characters tackling the important things of life ... and death.

UNNECESSARY WOMAN, AN

Alameddine, Rabih 291pp 2014

As the New Year rolls around, Aaliya opens the first page of a new book ready to begin her annual project. Living alone in her Beirut apartment she certainly has the time and opportunity to undertake this task, but inclination is her most powerful motivator. She may have survived an arranged marriage and a civil war but her *raison d'être* revolves around the world's great literature. And what better way to engage with it than translating it into classical Arabic. This is a story rich with literary wealth and the internal monologue of a prickly but compelling narrator confiding her unconventional story and who is about to have change forced upon her whether she likes it or not.

UNLIKELY PILGRIMAGE OF HAROLD FRY, THE

Joyce, Rachel 296pp 2012

When Harold Fry leaves the house to post a card to Queenie, a former colleague who is in a hospice, he has no intention of bypassing the postbox and hand delivering the message. But this is exactly what happens; hundreds of kilometres later, Harold has walked from Devon to Berwick-upon-Tweed. This is not just a journey of weary muscles and blistered heels for Harold, but an opportunity for him to examine the twists and turns of his life, prompted in his introspection by the people he meets along the way. An insightful and heart-warming read.

UNSHELTERED

Kingsolver, Barbara 544pp 2018

Willa Knox's family is in crisis: she has lost her job, her father-in-law who lives with them is dying, her son Zeke is suddenly thrust into the role of a single parent and their home is falling down around them. Clutching for straws, Willa investigates the history of their home, hoping that the local historical preservation society will come to their aid. Her research reveals a town from more than a century earlier, populated with kindred spirits, especially botanist Mary Treat and Thatcher Greenwood, a school teacher who controversially embraced Charles Darwin's theories.

Moving between the Vineland, New Jersey of 1871 and 2016, this is a thought-provoking and expertly observed story of two families weathering the storms of social upheaval in a world where all the rules have changed.

UP FROM THE BLUE

Henderson, Susan 320pp 2010

Tillie Harris' family are different. Their home life is chaotic; her father is a no-nonsense US colonel, her brother is following in his footsteps and behaving like a good little soldier, and her emotionally fragile mother mysteriously disappears when Tillie is eight. It is only years later, when Tillie gives birth to her own child, that she is reconciled with her past. Tillie narrates this poignant and haunting struggle of a broken family doing its best to keep its secrets behind closed doors.

VANISHING HALF, THE

Bennett, Britt 366pp 2020

Mallard, Louisiana, is an enigma – the townsfolk are people of colour but are pale enough to pass as white. It is not until identical twins Desiree and Stella Vignes move away as sixteen-year-olds, that their disparate futures emerge. Stella is upwardly mobile and is white-passing, while Desiree embraces her black heritage. However, it is only when their respective daughters meet, one black, one white, that the twins are reunited. Engaging and easy to read, this is a fascinating story covering the 1950s-1990s, that examines race and identity through a unique lens.

VARIOUS PETS ALIVE AND DEAD

Lewycka, Marina 388pp 2012

Clara, Serge and Oolie Anna (Ulyana) are the adult children of Marcus and Doro, ex-commune dwellers from way back. Clara strives for order, Serge for money and Oolie Anna for the right to live on her own. From communes to capitalism, chaos to conformity, the times are a changing, and so too are the dynamics of this intriguing family. This story is a humorous and witty exploration of contemporary values with a particular emphasis on the financial underpinnings of Western society.

VELVETEEN DAUGHTER, THE

Huber, Laurel Davis 384pp 2017

Margery Williams is remembered as the author of one of the most beloved of children's books, *The Velveteen Rabbit*, but rarely as the mother of child prodigy artist Pamela Bianco. From an early age Pamela mixes with the luminaries of the art world in Europe and New York, but there is a price to pay for her genius and Margery's support will prove to be an integral component of her life. Based on extensive research, this beautifully crafted novel set in the early 20th century touches base with many of the writers and artists of the time and lays bare the true story of an extraordinary family.

VERNON GOD LITTLE

Pierre, DBC 288pp 2003



Teenager Vernon Gregory Little narrates the story of his life after the Columbine-style slaughter of a group of students at his high school. When Vernon finds himself blamed for the killings, his small Texas town is blanketed under a media siege. This book contains an absurd mix of all that's wrong in American (Western) society. The book does contain bad language, but there is also clever, biting wit.

VERY PRIVATE GENTLEMAN, A

Booth, Martin 288pp 2005

As suggested by its title, this story involves a gentleman who really values his privacy. He has good reason to; his passion for painting rare butterflies disguises his true occupation of producing designer guns for assassins. As he makes plans to retire, his past is set to catch up with him, shattering the peace of the Italian village that he has made his home. With a likeable anti-hero, clever build-up of tension and its beautiful descriptions of the countryside, this well-crafted novel with challenge and delight the reader with its deceptions and moral conundrums. Also published as *The American*.

VISIT FROM THE GOON SQUAD, A

Egan, Jennifer 351pp 2010



Bennie Salazar, an aging music producer and Sasha, his troubled employee are at the centre of a coterie of characters revolving around the New York music industry. Told from multiple points of view and shifting time frames, it captures and examines modern America in all its glory and dysfunction. Both sad and funny, it is a perceptive and rewarding read highlighting the influence of music and technology in our lives.

WAITING ROOMS, THE

Smith, Eve 379pp 2020



When the world's medical fraternity's worst fears come to pass, and a global antibiotic crisis emerges, only those under seventy have access to the limited supply of new antibiotics. For everyone else with an infection, it is off to the Waiting Rooms, the hospitals where you don't get to leave through the front door. Through her work as a nurse, Kate Connelly is often put at risk, but it is not until she starts to search for her birth mother that she and her family are put in serious danger. And it all goes back to the start of the Crisis, twenty years earlier, and what people did and didn't do to avert disaster... Emotionally engaging and convincing, this is a page-turning thriller of uncomfortable but thought-provoking prescience.

WAKING LIONS

Gundar-Gosden, Ayelet 409pp 2016

'O, what a tangled web we weave when first we practise to deceive!' Dr Eitan Green's behaviour showcases the veracity of these famous words; one minute he is driving home from work on a moonlit desert road, the next minute there is a hit-and-run incident that will impact on every facet of his life. From his relationship with his police officer wife Liat to his involvement with Sikrit, an Eritrean widow, and her underground clinic for illegal migrants, Eitan is brought face-to-face with his own fallibility. This is a powerful, fast-paced story of contemporary Israel, with exhilarating twists and turns generating moral dilemmas for its complex characters and reinforcing the unpredictable nature of human behaviour.

WARLIGHT

Ondaatje, Michael 270pp 2018

Warlight, the obscured light of war-time blackouts, is the perfect description for the murky post-war that world that siblings Nathaniel and Rachel find themselves in. Left in London in 1945 by their parents, the pair are in the care of a mysterious man they call 'The Moth' and his support crew of shadowy characters. It is not until years later that Nathaniel is able to sift through the puzzling experiences of their adolescence and contemplate the covert nature of the activities they were part of. Intriguingly, nothing is as it seems in this multi-layered, beautifully crafted story.

VIRGIN AND THE WHALE, THE

Nixon, Carl 262pp 2013



As well as a nurse, Elizabeth Whitman is a storyteller. While she and her son Jack wait for news of their husband and father who is missing in action, Elizabeth invents the exotic adventures of the Balloonist. The stories spill over into her work, especially when she is asked to care for a returned soldier who has no memory. In this delightfully quixotic tale set in a thinly disguised Christchurch of the WWI era, the role of memory and the nature of reality jostle for attention along with the creative power of stories. An uplifting and whimsical read that may or may not be true ...



"Unanimous enjoyment of this book. Everyone enjoyed the story enormously."

Alexandra 011

"All loved this book. Its story within a story was very clever. A wonderful story beautifully written."

Masterton 005

"Mixed reviews. A heated discussion about fiction versus fact. Some loved it, but some felt it was two improbable stories. Insightful regarding mental illness and treatment."

Papamoa 003



WATER FOR ELEPHANTS 

Gruen, Sara 335pp 2006

This is the story of a travelling circus in America during the Depression. After Jacob Jankowski's parents die in a tragic car accident, the bank repossesses their home, which had been mortgaged to finance Jacob's veterinary studies. Jacob has to terminate his studies. Dejected, he jumps on a train carrying the "Benzini Brothers' Most Spectacular Show on Earth", and is hired because of his veterinary skills. The novel, told in flashback by nonagenarian Jacob Jankowski, holds many complex layers — adventure, love, history, suspense, and a surprise ending.

WE ARE ALL COMPLETELY BESIDE OURSELVES 

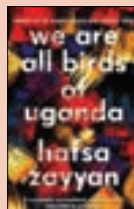
Fowler, Karen Joy 330pp 2013

When Rosemary was just five, back in Bloomingdale, Indiana, the Cooke family began to implode. Now, almost two decades on, it is time for Rosemary to retrace her steps and understand how her sister Fern could have disappeared and why her brother Lowell is also among the missing. Most important of all will be the question that could be asked of her parents: How could they? Featuring serious ethical conundrums, a unique sibling dynamic and a dramatic revelation or two, this is an irresistible and moving story of an extraordinary family. [SMALL FONT]

WE ARE ALL BIRDS OF UGANDA

Zayyan, Hafsa 359pp 2021

An aspiring young lawyer in present-day London, Sameer Saeed, is about to receive payback for all of his hard work and ambition. The world should be his oyster, but just as his grandfather Hasan experienced in Uganda culminating in expulsion in 1972 under Idi Amin's regime, British colonisation has a long reach and prejudice is dangerous and disruptive. Moving between Uganda and London, Sameer and Hasan's dual narrative thoughtfully explores identity and belonging and the challenges of finding one's place in the world.



"Great book. I loved it. It was thought-provoking and interesting. A great one to discuss and enjoyable to read."

"The writing is very descriptive and is beautiful."

"A complex mix of generations, lifestyles and attitudes. It makes the reader think about the experiences of Asian immigrants."

BDS Reviewers

WE ARE CALLED TO RISE

McBride, Laura 379pp 2014

Beyond the glamour and glitz of Las Vegas, real life can be hard and the jackpot elusive. For eight year old Bashkim, an Albanian migrant, a split-second decision means nothing is going to be the same ever again. In this collision of lives, much is at stake and the real question is: will everyone - returned soldiers, police officers, judges, social workers and foster carers – be able to put his best interests first? This is a powerful contemporary story sensitively written which examines how we behave and how we can behave when the chips are down. A satisfying and thought-provoking read.

WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT KEVIN

Shriver, Lionel 468pp 2003

Narrated in the form of letters to her estranged husband, Eva Katchadourian writes of their son who has committed the most talked-about crime of the decade — a school shooting reminiscent of Columbine. From the start, she was ambivalent about motherhood and never sure if she really wanted a child. Eva fears that her dislike for her own son may have been the cause of his chilling shooting-spree. Now, two years later, it is time for her to come to terms with marriage, career, family, and parenthood.

WE NEVER ASKED FOR WINGS 

Diffenbaugh, Vanessa 294pp 2015

Letty Espinosa thought she had struck an excellent bargain: she earned the money and her parents looked after the children. A perfect bargain really, that is until Maria Elena and Enrique deemed it time to return to Mexico. Left alone with her children for the first time in her life, Letty must choose between her default parenting style – benign neglect – and one that offers her vulnerable children a better future. From motherhood to illegal immigration and the allure of the American Dream, this heart-warming story with its likeable characters and promise of redemption, is a satisfying and optimistic read.

WEARING PAPER DRESSES 

Brinsden, Anne 371pp 2019

City girl Elise is like a fish-out-of-water when she and husband Bill and daughters Marjorie and Ruby move from Melbourne to Bill's childhood home in the Mallee in Northern Victoria. Red sand, short stubby trees, no shade, a sunburnt land with no place for the glamorous and sophisticated Elise. As the reality of life in the Mallee bites and Elise becomes increasingly fragile, the family struggles to meet the challenges of outback life. Evocative of time and place, this is a memorable and illuminating story of 1950s rural Australia.

WHAT COULD BE SAVED

Scharz, Liese O'Halloran 448pp 2021

The Preston family's stint in Bangkok ends abruptly in 1972 when they return home to the States after eight-year-old Philip disappears. For parents Robert and Genevieve, and sisters Beatrice and Laura, life can never be the same again. When Philip resurfaces forty-seven years later, there are many questions to be answered and secrets to be divulged. Suspenseful and enthralling, this story examines what follows when the worst has happened, made memorable by its sensitive portrayal of the power and complexity of sibling connection. [SMALL FONT]



"I really enjoyed this read. It's so well told."

"The tension and suspense builds up. It's very well done."

"Beautiful writing and impressive metaphors."

"While I enjoyed the book very much, I did find it emotionally draining, I became so caught up with it."

BDS Reviewers

WHAT IS THE WHAT

Eggers, Dave 475pp 2006

The heartrending story of Valentino Achak Deng who was chased from his village in southern Sudan by rebel invaders when he was six years old. He, along with thousands of other boys, made the dangerous and painful journey walking across Sudan into Ethiopia where he spent a decade in refugee camps. He was eventually resettled in the United States where as a 41 year old, he narrates his story. [SMALL FONT]

WHEN ALL IS SAID

Griffin, Anne 264pp 2019

The stage is set for a walk down Memory Lane...Irish octogenarian Maurice Hannigan is propping up the bar of the Rainford House Hotel, County Meath, all ready to spill the beans. In the course of the evening there will be five toasts, one for each of the most important people in his life. There will be tales of success and failure, guilt and regret and of course, of love and loss, cleverly woven through with the recurring presence of a valuable gold coin. With its distinctive Irish voice and its endearing characters, this is a story of a long life laid bare, played out against the backdrop of rural Ireland.

WHEN GOD WAS A RABBIT

Winman, Sarah 324pp 2011

'God' happens to be Elly Portman's rabbit, given to her when her family is going through a difficult time. Told in two parts, the 1970s and the 1990s, this is a story centred around the Portmans, Elly and her brother Joe and parents Kate and Alfie. This is life in all its fullness examining family and friendship and the pain of growing up. Its eccentric and endearing characters guarantee an easy and refreshing read with an intriguing hint of the unconventional.

WHEN WE WERE VIKINGS

MacDonald, Andrew D. 323pp 2020

Twenty-one-year-old Zelda, who lives with her older brother and caregiver Gert, is upfront with the fact that she has fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. However, Zelda is not going to let any label limit her ambitions – she wants to be 'legendary', as legendary as the heroes and heroines of the Viking world she is so fascinated with. As it turns out, there will be many opportunities for Zelda to be the stuff of legends as she and Gert navigate the tricky currents of their circumstances and her growing independence. With its unique narrator and its compassionate exploration of the issues facing cognitively impaired adults, this is an exhilarating and heart-warming coming-of-age story.

WHERE THE REKOHU BONE SINGS

Makereti, Tina 270pp 2014

From the 19th century invasion of Rēkohu (Chatham Islands) through to contemporary Aotearoa, this is the story of a truly New Zealand family: Moriori, Māori, and Pākehā. In order to have a life together, Mere and Iraia with their irreconcilable difference in status, must leave their home and start afresh in Wellington. Twins Lula and Bigs, born a century later with their Māori and Pākehā heritage will have their own demons to grapple with, and binding them all together, an ancestral voice. Bringing to light the history of Rēkohu and the challenge of cultural identity, this is a unique and satisfying read.

WHITE TIGER, THE

Adiga, Aravind 321pp 2008

Discover the raw underbelly of India, as revealed by Balram Halwai, an entrepreneur from Bangalore, once a servant in a poor village. Writing to the Premier of China on the eve of his official visit to India, Balram shares his story, believing there is plenty Premier Jiabo can learn from him. Moving from the Darkness, (the rural hinterland) to the Light (the modern cities), Balram exposes the shackles of the caste system and the endemic violence, poverty and corruption of the world's largest democracy. Written with sardonic humour, this is an engrossing portrait of modern India and its harsh truths of injustice and power.

WHITE WOMAN ON A GREEN BICYCLE, THE

Roffey, Monique 439pp 2009

English newlyweds George and Sabina Harwood, starting married life in 1950s Trinidad, hit their first snag: George loves the place, Sabine does not. The marriage survives, but what follows is fifty years of endurance and adjustment to life as expatriates. Their story is played out amidst the tropical splendour where racial tension, poverty and corruption rear their ugly heads, revealing the political history and growth of a nation moving beyond its colonial past.

WIDE SARGASSO SEA

Rhys, Jean 151pp 1966

Born into an oppressive, colonialist society, Creole heiress, Antoinette Cosway, meets a young Englishman who is drawn to her innocent sensuality and beauty. After their marriage, the rumours begin, poisoning her husband against her. Caught between his demands and her own precarious sense of belonging, Antoinette is driven towards madness. [SMALL FONT]

WIDOW, THE

Barton, Fiona 390pp 2016

No-one is mourning the death of Glen Taylor, least of all his widow Jean; she considers herself well rid of 'all of his nonsense'. She did her time standing by her man when he was accused of the abduction of a toddler, but now he is out of the picture, she is free to step out from behind his shadow and reveal ... nobody knows just what she will reveal, how much she knows and just what she should have known. Giving voice to the experience of a spouse in the orbit of an evil-doer, this intriguing psychological thriller with its clever use of multiple narrators is gripping from beginning to end as the real Jean is slowly unveiled.

WIDOWS OF MALABAR HILL, THE

Massey, Sujata 381pp 2018

Perveen Mistry, one of India's first female lawyers, knows from personal experience the importance of the legal code in safeguarding women's rights, especially after marriage. Working for her father's law firm, Perveen becomes involved in executing the will of a wealthy Muslim businessman whose three widows live in strict isolation. When there is some doubt that the household's appointed guardian has the widows' best interests at heart, Perveen is drawn into an intriguing mystery, one that will put lives at risk. Engaging and original, this multifaceted story of 1920s Bombay is rich with period detail and the religious and cultural practices of the day.

WINTER IN MADRID

Sansom, CJ 548pp 2006

September 1940, the Spanish Civil War is over and Madrid lies in ruins while the Germans continue their march through Europe. Into this uncertain world comes Harry Brett, a privileged young man, traumatised by his experience in Dunkirk, and now a reluctant spy for the British Secret Service. He is sent to gain the confidence of Sandy Forsyth, an old school friend turned shadowy Madrid businessman and Brett finds himself surrounded by memories and involved in a dangerous game. [SMALL FONT]

WINTER TIME

Fearnley, Laurence 295pp 2022

Following the death of his younger brother Eddie, Roland March returns to their family home in the heart of the Mackenzie country to act as the executor of Eddie's will. Befitting the sorrow of the occasion, it is cold, cold, cold and for Roland fresh from his 'wholefood and health store life' in Sydney, it's as if nothing has changed. Once again there is plenty that needs explaining and once again he is at odds with the people around him. Wonderfully evocative and only to be read when rugged up, this is an intriguing story with a setting worthy of its superbly-drawn characters.



"The book was hard to put down as you wanted to find out what happened next — and it was surprising in the direction it didn't go!"

"Mysteries abound. Some of these are resolved, but it's the buildup getting there that adds tension and interest."

"It kept my attention throughout and gave me such a strong impression of life in the McKenzie in winter."

BDS Reviewers

WISDOM OF SALLY RED SHOES, THE

Hogan, Ruth 329pp 2018

Masha may have lost her son Gabriel twelve years earlier, but she still hasn't really returned to the land of the living. Enter two delightful eccentrics – Kitty Muriel and Sally Red Shoes – courtesy of the local Victorian cemetery and lido, bringing with them the possibility of light at the end of the tunnel. And there is always the unexpected...Alice, mother to Mattie will also play her part. A sensitively written story of grief and recovery, leavened with whimsy and enriched by the unlikeliest of friendships.

WISH CHILD, THE

Chidgey, Catherine 377pp 2016



The Heilmanns in Berlin and the Kronings tending their land near Leipzig, two loyal families working hard and accepting the Führer's assurances of eventual victory. It is through their respective children, Sieglinde and Erich that the domestic detail of life under the Third Reich is revealed, innocent eyes capturing the ascent of a dream and the failure of a monstrous regime. Poignant and insightful, this is a remarkable story, aided by its mysterious narrator, revealing ordinary citizens believing until they could no longer. and asking the question - why did no-one ask questions?.

WISH YOU WERE HERE

Swift, Graham 336pp 2010



The Luxtons have been Devon farmers for generations but the changing face of the English countryside has put paid to that. Jack (and his wife Ellie) now manage a caravan park on the Isle of Wight. When his younger brother Tom is killed while fighting in Iraq, it is crisis time for Jack, a gentle man haunted by his past and the tragedies his family have suffered. Beautifully crafted and with a subtle build-up of tension, this is the story of an ordinary man confronting grief and loss.

WITNESS THE NIGHT

Desai, Kishwar 242pp 2010



What really happened that night? Found alive in the smouldering ruins of her family home, a young teenager is the sole survivor. Accused of mass-murder, she is championed by a spirited and unconventional social worker. Set in the Punjab, this is a complex whodunnit revealing the prejudice and misfortune that epitomises the fate of being female in a tradition entrenched society.

WOLF BORDER

Hall, Sarah 432pp 2015

When zoologist Rachel Caine takes on the job of reintroducing grey wolves into the Earl of Annerdale's estate in Cumbria, it's a chance to kill two birds with one stone. Not only will she be able to continue working with the animals she is so passionate about, it's also a chance for her to return home to England and reassess her life. With Scottish independence flexing its muscles just over the border and the controversy ignited by rewilding of the wolves, there is plenty happening to accompany Rachel on her own journey of self-discovery. From environmental advocacy to personal transition, this is a novel of beautifully described landscapes, vivid characters and contemporary Britain.

WOLF HALL

Mantel, Hilary 653pp 2009



Moving from the backstreets of London to the court of Henry VIII, Thomas Cromwell was a self-made man. In this epic work, immersed in the brutal world of the Tudors, the author presents an entirely different perspective on this powerful courtier and his place in English history. Rich in political and religious intrigue, and with its large cast of familiar characters, Wolf Hall offers an absorbing and original experience of Tudor England. [BIG READ]

WOMAN IS NO MAN, A

Rum, Etaf 337pp 2019

Is history to repeat itself? Isra Hadid entered into an arranged marriage at seventeen, being unceremoniously dispatched from Palestine to live in Brooklyn, New York. Years later, it is her daughter's turn. Eighteen-year-old Deya is just as reluctant to be deprived of freedom and further education. The years have passed, but just how much has really changed? Moving between Palestine in 1990 and 2009 Brooklyn, this is an emotionally charged story of duty-bound lives dictated by cultural expectation and the dark, complex secrets of a migrant community trying to preserve its traditions at all cost.

WONDER, THE

Donoghue, Emma 347pp 2016



A wonder or a hoax? Eleven-year-old Anna O'Donnell has supposedly not eaten for months. Lib Wright, a 'Nightingale' nurse fresh from the Crimea, has been employed by the parish, along with a nun, to monitor the veracity of the claim. Athlone is an impoverished Irish village, a place where faith and superstition are practised hand-in-hand, and Anna's welfare is a hotbed of conflicted interest. What possible effect could a lone Englishwoman working with 'scientific nursing principles' have on a family and a community who believe in miracles? This is an intriguing story, an atmospheric mystery, true to the period and rich with the trappings of faith.

WORLD BENEATH, THE

Kennedy, Cate 342pp 2009



A hiking trip into the Tasmanian wilderness is intended to be a journey of both discovery and rediscovery for Rick. This is the chance for him to connect with his estranged daughter Sophie and to revisit the beautiful landscape where he met her mother twenty five years earlier when they were protesting against the building of a dam. It is in this majestic but unforgiving environment that past choices are questioned and future paths determined. With its vivid portrayal of both landscape and characters, this is a riveting and insightful examination of family.



WRITERS' FESTIVAL, THE

Johnson, Stephanie 369pp 2016



The date is set, books have been written and read, programmes printed, invitations issued, tickets available and judges ready and waiting ... let the countdown begin. It may involve readers, writers and books, but this is event management with a capital E. From the festival director Rae, the dissident Chinese writer Liu Wah and gay Indian novelist Ardash through to conflicted judge Gareth and Merle, a novelist staging a comeback, this is a behind-the-scenes exposé of what really happens when the literati come to town. Rife with censorship and pseudonyms, conflicts of interest and sponsorship, this entertaining New Zealand novel from a seasoned insider will have you recalling festivals past, and enthusiastically lining up for the next one.

WUTHERING HEIGHTS

Brontë, Emily 373pp 1847



Story of three generations of two contrasting families, the Earnshaws and the Lintons, and of the passionate love of Catherine and Heathcliff.

YEAR WITHOUT SUMMER, THE

Glasfurd, Guinevere 392pp 2020



With the 1815 eruption of Mount Tambora in Indonesia, the global climate is disrupted and the year that follows is without a summer. The far-reaching effects of the temporary climate change play out with profound consequences, both personal and political, and are traced through the lives of six unconnected global citizens – some invented, some adapted and others familiar (artist John Constable and writer Mary Shelley). This is an unforgettable story of the largest volcanic eruption in recorded history, passionately rendered and a powerful reminder of the aftermath of climate breakdown in an unfair world.

YELLOW BIRDS, THE

Powers, Kevin 226pp 2012

'A yellow bird, with a yellow bill, was perched upon my windowsill', goes the US Army marching cadence which dictates the beat for its soldiers. John Bartle (21) and Daniel Murphy (18), are about to be deployed to Iraq, but being taught a marching rhythm is one thing, and knowing what they will face in combat is another; personal experience will soon reveal the harrowing nature of what is expected of them. Both poetic and disturbing, this is a remarkable story of friendship, loss and the unflinching realities of war written by an author who himself is a veteran of the Iraq conflict.

YIELD, THE

Winch, Tara June 312pp 2019

When August Gondiwindi returns home from London to Massacre Plains for her grandfather Albert's funeral, it is to be faced with even more trauma: the family is

about to be evicted from their ancestral land by a mining corporation. Although it will be up to August to prove their title to the land, Albert's legacy – a written record of the history and language of the Wiradjuri people – will be crucial to their fight. Narrated by three different voices – August, Albert and the Reverend Greenleaf, a nineteenth century Lutheran missionary – this is the story of a land and its people, of a culture dispossessed. Bearing witness to both intergenerational trauma and hope, this is a powerful and thought-provoking story written by an indigenous Australian author.

YOUR HOUSE WILL PAY

Cha, Steph 299pp 2019

It is hard to see at first glance, how the families of Grace Park and Shawn Matthews have any connection. Grace is the daughter of Korean migrants and Shawn is from the African-American community. Certainly, they all live in Los Angeles but their association harks back to the early 1990s and the simmering tensions of a city bristling with racial animosity. Moving between these earlier events and a drive-by shooting in 2019, the enduring trauma of the Park and Matthews families plays out with all of its moral complexity. Harbours family secrets and revenge, but also with the possibility of forgiveness, this is a gripping and thoughtful story that has real life parallels.

Z: A NOVEL OF ZELDA FITZGERALD

Fowler, Therese Anne 375pp 2013

'Behind every successful man there stands a woman', so the saying goes. In this instance, it is Zelda, wife of the legendary Scott who is emerging into the limelight. This is her story: her romance and marriage to the aspiring writer, and the high flying self-destructive life they lead to the full. It is glamour, it is tragedy, it is a time for breaking the rules and Zelda breaks them all. With glimpses of the famous celebrities of the day, through to the nuts and bolts of the literary world they inhabit, this is a captivating and entertaining novel of the Jazz Age that gives voice to an intriguing and complex woman struggling to establish her own distinct identity. [SMALL FONT]

ZOLI

McCann, Colum 279pp 2007



The story of the Slovakian Roma from World War II through the establishment of the Communist bloc, and that of Zoli Novotna whose character is loosely based on the Romany poet, Papusza. As 1930s fascism spreads over Czechoslovakia, Zoli and her grandfather flee to join a clan of fellow Romani harpists. She learns to read and write, later becoming involved with poet Martin Stransk. Her poems are promoted by Martin as the harbinger of a new Gypsy literature. The Communist government, however, appropriates Zoli's work for its project to assimilate the Roma.

ABOMINATIONS

Shriver, Lionel 304pp 2022

Dinner party etiquette would suggest diners not discuss money, religion or politics. Iconoclastic author Lionel Shriver would suggest no such restriction, any time, any place. In these 35 essays, speeches and op-eds, the subject matter is many and varied from cancel culture, #MeToo and freedom of speech through to cultural appropriation in literature. Provocative, confrontational but imbued with clarity of argument, this book is a political correctness free-zone that is as fascinating as it is divisive.



"Refreshingly honest and thought-provoking."

"These essays challenged some of my opinions."

"What a discussion this book should engender!"

"Not everyone will agree with her opinions — and she has strong opinions!"

BDS Reviewers

ACCIDENTAL TEACHER, THE

Heath, Tim 291pp 2021

Tim Heath's decision to go to teachers' college may have been pragmatic – they paid an allowance – but once there he was bitten by the education bug and clocked up more than forty years at the chalk face. Big schools, small schools, urban and rural schools, a stint in Samoa, and more with the Correspondence School, Tim has been there and done that. Encapsulated by the subtitle, 'the joys, ambitions, ideals, stuff-ups and heartaches of a teaching life', this open and honest memoir brings together the professional and private lives of a thoughtful and passionate New Zealand educator.



"One of the more enjoyable NZ books that I've read — very interesting and enjoyable."

"The author is self-effacing and often funny. The situations and stories he writes about are poignant and his frustration with himself and bureaucracy is evident."

"Because it's set in New Zealand, his experiences will resonate with most readers."

BDS Reviewers

ACROSS MANY MOUNTAINS

Brauen, Yangzom 336pp 2011

This multigenerational saga relates the lives of a Tibetan family prior to the Chinese invasion in the 1950s, to the present day. Recounted by the granddaughter Yangzom, this is the story of her grandmother Kunsang, a Buddhist nun who with her family fled from Tibet to India when the Chinese arrived; her mother Sonam who marries a Swiss national after being brought up as a refugee in India; and Yangzom's own life in Switzerland and New York. From displacement to assimilation, from cultural conflict to acceptance, this book records the challenges these women faced adjusting to changing circumstances while preserving their Tibetan heritage.

AFTER THE TAMPA

Nazari, Abbas 363pp 2021

When the Nazari family left Taliban-dominated Afghanistan seeking a better life in 2001, it would have been impossible to foresee the dangerous journey that would eventuate, culminating in rescue from the Norwegian freighter, the Tampa, and resettlement in Christchurch. Life in the Garden City would also be eventful over time, not only with the challenges faced by all refugees but the earthquakes and mosque shootings as well. Combining an ongoing examination of Afghanistan and the global system of refugee management with the inspiring story of a resilient family, this is a remarkable memoir notable for its hope, determination and achievement.



"Oh my goodness, what an amazing book! We all loved it and were so moved by the story."

Greytown 001

"This book was loved by all our members and caused much discussion regarding the hardships faced."

Auckland 150

"It was easy to read this amazing story. Full of admiration for all the courage, perseverance and preparedness shown by the family."

Christchurch 001

"Loved it. Very educational story."

Oamaru 005

"Everyone thought it was a wonderful heroic story of the plight of the Tampa survivors."

Christchurch 145

AFRICAN LOVE STORY, AN

Sheldrick, Daphne 334pp 2012

Born and bred in Kenya, Daphne Sheldrick is an inspiring ambassador for the wildlife and endangered animals of the continent she calls home. Entwined with her personal story is that of the important and ground breaking conservation and wildlife protection work carried out by Daphne and her wildlife warden husbands. This warm and captivating memoir reels in the reader with its fascinating information about animals large and small, but in particular, Daphne's unique contribution to wildlife preservation: the hand rearing of orphaned elephants and black rhinos. [SMALL FONT]

AGAMEMNON'S KISS

Clendinnen, Inga 230pp 2006

This collection of nineteen essays encompasses a diverse range of subjects. From history to race relations, from the craft of writing to those of a more personal nature, Clendinnen's observations and reflections are topical and thought provoking. Written over a number of years, each essay is elegantly crafted and impeccably delivered.

AGE OF THE WARRIOR, THE

Fisk, Robert 522pp 2008

A selection from Robert Fisk's Saturday columns from the Independent from 1998 to 2007. Fisk is best known for his insightful, witty and always outspoken articles on international politics and war-torn recent history. These 'Comment' articles cover a wide array of topics, from his soldier grandfather; to handwriting; to the Titanic — and of course President Bush; terrorism; and Iraq. [BIG READ]

ALL BLACKS DON'T CRY

Kirwan, John 223pp 2010



Aptly subtitled, A Story of Hope, this is the account of All Black John Kirwan's experience of depression. Written in a simple no-nonsense style, it chronicles the challenges he faced and overcame with the help of his family and friends. With its responsible observations and insights, this book provides useful information and advice that demystifies this debilitating disease and offers hope to those who suffer from it. A courageous and inspirational read.

ALL YOU CAN EVER KNOW

Chung, Nicole 222pp 2018

Born to Korean immigrant parents, Nicole Chung was adopted as a baby by a white Christian family and raised as the only person of colour in their small Oregon town. After years of not feeling she belonged and then becoming pregnant for the first time, she realised it was time to find out more about her birth family and the

circumstances of her adoption, not only for herself, but for her future children too. Engaging and thoughtful, this memoir is a candid examination of the challenges of interracial adoption and the undeniable importance of knowing where you come from.

AMMONITES AND LEAPING FISH

Lively, Penelope 234pp 2013



Take one life lived out over eight decades, choose six objects of personal significance, narrow down a lifetime of reading to a handful of books, generally reflect on memory, identity and your life and times, and you have a powerful formula with which to examine a life well lived. In this delightfully idiosyncratic memoir, Penelope Lively does just this. Written through the lens of age and experience, this book is a perceptive and scintillating read from a much loved writer.

AMSTERDAM

Shorto, Russell 404pp 2014

With its prominent red light district and freely available recreational drugs, Amsterdam's reputation as a hotspot of Western liberalism is well known, but what about those stolid burghers of yore? This book reveals the history behind Amsterdam's transformation from marshy swampland to sophisticated city and everything in between. Whether you are an intending traveller or a European history enthusiast, this book ticks all the boxes with its comprehensive facts and anecdotes and its examination of the events, people and ideas that created Amsterdam and continue to influence its evolution today.

ANIMAL, VEGETABLE, MIRACLE

Kingsolver, Barbara 370pp 2007



Kingsolver describes her family's adventure from suburban Arizona to rural Appalachia as they attempt to live on a locally produced diet. Eager to prove for themselves that a local diet is not just better for the economy and environment, but also better on the table, Animal, Vegetable, Miracle follows the family through the first year of their experiment. [SMALL FONT]

ARCANUM, THE

Gleeson, Janet 266pp 1998



The 18th-century alchemist, Johann Bottger, was held captive by Augustus II of Saxon until he fortuitously discovered the arcanum (or secret formula) for porcelain. Recently introduced from the Orient, "white gold" was quickly becoming the symbol of power, prestige and good taste in Europe. An investigation into the development of European porcelain and the founding of the Meissen works in Dresden that combines science, adventure and industrial espionage.

ARSONIST, THE

Hooper, Chloe 245pp 2018

Black Saturday will be remembered for the tragic loss of life that resulted from Victoria's catastrophic bush fires on February 7th, 2009. The question on everybody's lips was 'how did this happen?' Chloe Hooper brings together information about the nature of bush fires along with the details of the investigation into one of the deliberately lit fires and the subsequent prosecution. The outcome — a detailed and well-balanced examination of what took place as well as an objective understanding of the man who contributed to the devastation. A compelling and comprehensive read.

ART OF TRAVEL, THE

De Botton, Alain 261pp 2002

De Botton writes an alternative travelogue. His companions are writers, artists and philosophers, such as Gustave Flaubert, Edward Hopper, Charles Baudelaire, William Wordsworth, Vincent van Gogh and John Ruskin who give focus and direction to his journeys. A philosophical investigation into the motivations for travel.

ART OF WAITING, THE

Boggs, Belle 242pp 2016

'Write about something you know' is common advice for writers and American Belle Boggs follows this to the letter. Bringing her own experience to this wide-ranging exploration of infertility and motherhood ensures a thoughtful as well as factual account of this challenging issue. Drawing on sociology, psychology and literature as well as medical research, this is a memoir with a difference: an accessible, empathetic examination of child-bearing in the 21st century, from the personal to the public, and everything between.

ASK THAT MOUNTAIN

Scott, Dick 216pp 1975

An account of the 19th-century Maori-European struggles at Parihaka in Taranaki, and the doctrine of passive resistance preached by Te Whiti and Tohu. The book is illuminated by oral history passed on to the author.

AT HOME: A SHORT HISTORY OF PRIVATE LIFE

Bryson, Bill 700pp 2010

Join Bill Bryson as he meanders from room to room in his Norfolk rectory reflecting on the history of each room and its contents. From bedbugs and dining etiquette, to sewerage and the advent of electricity, the fabric of daily life past and present is brought into focus. With its meticulous research, insatiable curiosity and engaging humour, 'At Home' delivers a fascinating social history of domestic life leaving no corner unexplored or dust mite undisturbed [BIG READ]

ASTRONAUT'S GUIDE TO LIFE ON EARTH, AN

Hadfield, Chris 311pp 2013

The maxim 'prepare for the worst and enjoy every moment of it' has served Canadian Chris Hadfield well in his chosen career. Inspired to become an astronaut after watching Neil Armstrong's televised moon landing as a 9 year old, he has gone on to achieve his dream, participating in several NASA missions, most recently as Commander of the International Space Station. In this behind-the-scenes exposé of the life of an astronaut, Hadfield weaves his personal reflections with the fascinating details of space travel to create an engaging, inspiring and unforgettable memoir. The ultimate in armchair travel!

BAD BLOOD

Carreyrou, John 339pp 2018

'If at first you don't succeed, try, try again'... in the case of Elizabeth Holmes' biotech startup, it was more a case of 'lie, lie again'. When the teenage Stanford dropout first launched her company Theranos, with its revolutionary blood testing system in 2003, the world was her oyster, propelling her to become Silicon Valley's first female billionaire entrepreneur. Even while the technology failed to deliver over the next decade, the hype continued and the coverups began. A compelling exposé of potentially life-threatening corporate fraud, this is a notable example of investigative journalism and a mesmerising story of the power and seduction of greed and ambition. [SMALL FONT]



"Well researched and a fascinating commentary."

Gisborne 003

"This was a fascinating read — and it was all true — how could this have happened?"

Taihape 002

"We loved this book, our best for 2022. Unbelievable, she got away with such huge deceit."

Christchurch 468

"Really enjoyed this book. A great example of good journalism."

Stewart Island 001

"Enthralled and appalled!"

Wellington 012

BABYLON'S ARK

Anthony, Lawrence 245pp 2007



When South African conservationist Lawrence Anthony arrives in Baghdad during the Iraq War determined to rescue the animals from the city's zoo, the situation is dire. Fortunately with help from unexpected quarters, and against all the odds, his unrelenting efforts pay off. From bartering for food in the war-torn streets and preventing the remaining animals from being looted, through to saving Saddam's lions and Arabian horses, this is a thrilling adventure of courageous people committed to saving animals. A war-zone story with a difference.

BAD PHARMA

Goldacre, Ben 430pp 2012

From a workday headache to a life-threatening illness, the contents of the medicine cupboard are there to cure all that ails us. But can consumers be confident that the drugs they turn to are not going to cause them more harm than good? From the trial and reporting processes to regulations and marketing, this book puts the pharmaceutical industry under the microscope to answer this question. Supported by extensive research, this is compelling and important journalism that examines and diagnoses the maladies affecting the industry as well as proffering the appropriate treatment to ensure consumers can make informed decisions.

BATAVIA

FitzSimons, Peter 490pp 2011



On the 1629 maiden voyage by the Dutch East India Company's flagship 'Batavia', from Amsterdam to Jakarta (Batavia), disaster strikes. Not only is the ship wrecked on the Abrolhos Islands off the west coast of Australia, but worse is to follow: murder, mayhem and depravity. A brutal but fascinating account, this story recreates this dramatic and horrific episode in Australia's past in a gripping blend of fact and fiction. Not for the faint hearted. [BIG READ]

BECOMING

Obama, Michelle 421pp 2018



'What do you want to be when you grow up?' Michelle Obama has some strong opinions about such questions, but certainly her response would not have been to say 'to be the First Lady'. But of course, this is exactly where she ends up as the wife of President Barack Obama, from 2009-2017. Her journey to one of the most famous addresses in the world started in a working class neighbourhood in the South Side of Chicago and progressed via Princeton and Harvard, corporate law, marriage and motherhood. Written with warmth and candour, this is an inspiring memoir from a former First Lady offering readers the unique perspective of someone achieving many 'firsts' in her life thus far.

BEHIND THE BEAUTIFUL FOREVERS

Boo, Katherine 256pp 2012



From its intriguing title to the vivid individuals who inhabit its pages, this is a book you will never forget. It tells the story of the people who live in the Annawadi slum bordering the luxury hotels of Mumbai International Airport. The self-immolation of one of the women (Fatima), sets in play a series of catastrophic events involving her neighbours, highlighting the huge challenges the very poor must negotiate to survive and if at all possible, prosper. This fast-paced story of contemporary India reads like a novel but reflects meticulous research and journalistic dedication.

BEING CHINESE

Wong, Helene 182pp 2016



Helene Wong's life reads in a similar vein to many New Zealanders: an idyllic Kiwi childhood, then tertiary education followed by a career launched in the Public Service. The customary OE in the form of a family visit to China in 1980 proved to be a seminal experience, reawakening and consolidating the strength of her Chinese heritage. From a place in Sir Robert Muldoon's Think Tank, to life in film and theatre, from the rich detail of her family history in both China and New Zealand through to reflecting on what it means to be a New Zealander, this is a fascinating and eloquent memoir. Not only is it eminently readable and perceptive, it also courageously holds up a mirror to the face of New Zealand, racism and all.

BELIEVER, THE

Krasnostein, Sarah 342pp 2021

Take six ordinary people, add a quest for meaning, weave through a strong conviction, and examine the weird and wonderful stories that result. From Mennonite missionaries to paranormal investigators, from a death doula to creationists, journalist Sarah Krasnostein respectfully tells their stories of belief systems that are often startling, but always heartfelt. Written with compassion and empathy, these six portraits of the human condition offer unique insights into our longing to make sense of life, death and everything between.



"As far as subject matter for discussion goes, this book is a goldmine."

"The author is mostly non-judgemental about some seriously 'out there' theories."

"The writing is clever and erudite and gives excellent insight into these beliefs."

BDS Reviewers

BEING MORTAL

Gawande, Atul 277pp 2014



According to Benjamin Franklin, 'in this world nothing can be said to be certain except death and taxes'. In this book American surgeon Atul Gawande addresses the first of these certainties and the death that awaits us all. Beginning with the history of residential care for the elderly and moving on to the issue of medical intervention, this is a thought-provoking analysis presenting these issues in an open and easy to read style. Confronting the harsh realities of our mortality, this book is a springboard into examining our attitudes and expectations for our eventual demise, well supported by research and the author's professional and personal experiences in USA and India.

BENEATH THE SURFACE

Hargrove, John 273pp 2015

Killer whales, aka blackfish, aka orca. John Hargrove's childhood ambition to be a trainer of these largest members of the dolphin family, was fulfilled in the SeaWorld theme parks for more than a decade. However, what began as a dream job deteriorated into a nightmare as he came to understand the cruelty, under the guise of conservation, of their captivity. Compelling and informative, this is a thought-provoking story that celebrates orca while documenting the transition of a professional trainer to a passionate animal rights advocate.

BESIDE THE DARK POOL

Kidman, Fiona 301pp 2009



Covering the period 1958-2006, this is the second instalment of Dame Fiona's memoir. Interwoven with personal history that reflects on influences and experiences, it is also a social commentary of the political and societal events of the era. From the Springbok Tour, Muldoon and Rogernomics, to an intimate perspective of New Zealand's literary scene, it offers a recognisable overview of life in New Zealand. Often provocative and evocative in turn, it is a candid and accessible account of a life well-lived.

BEYOND RELIGION

Dalai Lama, His Holiness the 188pp 2011

A proponent of secular ethics, His Holiness the Dalai Lama argues that for a sustainable world future, in both personal and global realms, compassion must be melded with reason and applied independently of religious beliefs. Supported by a wide-ranging reflection on the state of the world, the latest scientific knowledge and engaging examples and analogies, this work offers much food for thought whether you consider yourself a seasoned philosopher or this is your first foray into the subject. Easy to read, plenty to discuss.

BEYOND THE SKY AND THE EARTH

Zeppa, Jamie 342pp 1999



A rich and uplifting memoir of Zeppa's three years on a teaching programme in Bhutan, the tiny Buddhist kingdom south of Tibet. She gives an account of the difficulties and joys of living alone in an alien culture far away from the security of home in Canada, but comes to be reinvigorated by the warmth of this country's people.

BIG THIRST, THE

Fishman, Charles 402pp 2011

From the needs of the seven billion inhabitants of earth, to the demands of fuel hungry societies and widespread pollution, a substance essential to our very existence is under threat: water. Journalist Charles Fishman plumbs the depths of the role water plays in our lives; how we use it, abuse it, allocate it and fight over it. Highly informative while entertaining and easy to read, this book considers water management in several countries as well as presenting constructive solutions to the water challenges the world faces. [SMALL FONT]

BIG TRUCK THAT WENT BY, THE

Katz, Jonathan M 320pp 2013

When the 2010 Haitian earthquake struck, American news correspondent Jonathan Katz initially thought it was a truck going by, something that was part of everyday life he had experienced since living in the country. But a truck it definitely was not; from the moment of picking himself up from his collapsed home through to his observation of the inadequate reconstruction efforts three years later, Katz turns his journalistic lens on this devastating event and its aftermath. Perfectly encapsulated by its subtitle 'how the world came to save Haiti and left behind a disaster', this is a riveting account of international aid gone awry and a much misunderstood country.

BIG TWITCH, THE

Dooley, Sean 322pp 2005

As a self-proclaimed twitcher — a bird-watching extremist who travels around Australia trying to catch a glimpse of as many species of birds as possible — the author pursued the goal of seeing seven hundred birds, and breaking the national record for the most birds seen in one year. In this memoir, Dooley recounts his quest, including how he spent all of his inheritance to make his dream a reality.



BIRD SENSE

Birkhead, Tim 224pp 2012

Beyond the derogatory use of 'bird brain' to the more complimentary 'bird's eye view', most of us give fleeting consideration to birds and their experience of the world. This eye-opening guide to all things ornithological is the answer to our avian ignorance. From the promiscuity of the vasa parrot through to the kiwi's ability to smell earthworms through 15cm of soil, this book is full of fascinating and often amusing information and insights into the avian world. Supported by comprehensive research and delivered in an accessible and engaging style, this book, in the process of teaching us about birds also teaches us about our own biological capabilities.

BLACK AND BLUE

Gorrie, Veronica 236pp 2021

The day after being discharged from the Queensland police force with post-traumatic stress disorder, Veronica Gorrie sat down to write about her life. The blue of the title captures her ten years as one of the few Aboriginal police officers, while the black details her upbringing and the intergenerational trauma experienced by her family. Eloquent, shocking, honest and brave, this important story gives voice to a survivor and lives up to its subtitle: A memoir of racism and resilience.



"Without dramatisation, self-pity or undue justification, this is a book everyone should read and consider."

"I enjoyed this book and was very glad I'd read it."

"This book should be standard text for social workers, health care professionals and police, both in Australia and NZ."

"A rare aboriginal voice from a strong woman who 'survives' in the midst of terrible abuse."

BDS Reviewers

BODY, THE

Bryson, Bill 464pp 2019

Have you ever wondered how far sneeze droplets can travel? (eight metres) What about the strength of our bones? (stronger than reinforced concrete) Brimming with facts and figures and fascinating anecdotes, this quirky and engaging 'guide for occupants' addresses these questions and many, many more as it reveals both the wonders of the human body, and the history of medicine. Comprehensive, yet easy to read, this owner's manual requires no prior knowledge beyond the basics for its extraordinary revelations to be appreciated.

BOMB, BOOK & COMPASS

Winchester, Simon 317pp 2008

Subtitled Joseph Needham and the Secrets of China, this is the story of one of the unsung heroes of science, and the country of his life-long passion. In his 24 volume magnum opus, this brilliant British biochemist and academic chronicled China's scientific and technological achievements over five thousand years, which included gunpowder, printing and the compass. An accessible writing style and impeccable research makes this book a fascinating read for scientist and non-scientist alike.

BOOKING PASSAGE

Lynch, Thomas 301pp 2005

Lynch was born in USA, but, like so many Americans, his roots go back to Ireland. In 1970, Lynch visits the humble cottage in West Clare from which his great-grandfather had departed nearly a century before, and meets his cousins and other relatives for the first time. In the decades since, Lynch has returned to Ireland, sharing stories and gaining wisdom.

BOOKSELLER AT THE END OF THE WORLD

Shaw, Ruth 316pp 2022

By any measure, New Zealander Ruth Shaw has led an extraordinary life, whether it was sailing the Pacific, working with drug addicts and prostitutes in Sydney's Kings Cross, feeding archbishops or running a charter boat around Fiordland. Equal parts adventure and loss, Ruth's eventful life has had one constant – books – and now to the delight of the reading public, she runs wee bookshops in Manapouri. Captivating and honest, this is a fascinating memoir that combines the wisdom of a passionate reader with the story of an unconventional life shaped by tragedy but redeemed by courage and determination.



"Well written, brutally honest, utterly captivating."

"First chapter was a wee bit bland, but from then on, it was riveting."

"Great book — I do recommend it."

"The book not only interested me throughout, but it left me warmly disposed to the author and her achievements."

BDS Reviewers

BOOKSELLER OF KABUL, THE

Seierstad, Asne 276pp 2003

Norwegian journalist Seierstad lived with the Khan family for several months, accompanying family members to work, school, shops and weddings. Her account of her life with them is full of the tragedy, contradictions, rivalries, and the frustrations of daily life for a middle-class family in post-Taliban Kabul.

BOOKWORM - A MEMOIR OF CHILDHOOD READING

Mangan, Lucy 320pp 2018



'Bookworm', a peculiar description when you think about it, but nonetheless one many of us would be happy to claim for ourselves. Kindred spirit Lucy Mangan lives up to this sobriquet, passionately chronicling her childhood reading adventures, as well as pondering the history of writing for children. A delightfully nostalgic memoir recalling past literary encounters and acknowledging the power of books and reading to shape our lives. A must-read for fellow bookworms.

BORN A CRIME

Noah, Trevor 285pp 2017



Comedian Trevor Noah has not just survived being born a crime (according to the Immorality Act of 1927), but has thrived. With a black mother and a white European father, he was forced to negotiate the racially restrictive apartheid laws of 1980s South Africa, fortunately armed with a secret weapon: his fearless and indomitable mother Patricia. Both funny and insightful, this is a memoir of witty truth telling, exposing a South African upbringing to the sensitive insights of an acute observer. [SMALL FONT]

BORN ON A BLUE DAY

Tammet, Daniel 242pp 2006



Daniel Tammet has Savant Syndrome, a rare form of Asperger's Syndrome. He is able to do extraordinary calculations and has mastered more than seven languages. He also experiences narrow fixations, and has an obsessive need for order. Yet, he overcomes his disabilities to live independently, and form lasting relationships. The book explores what it's like to be special and, in so doing, gives us an insight into what makes us all human — our mind.

BOUNDLESS

Hopkinson, Greg 252pp 2014



Entrepreneur Greg Hopkinson would be the first to admit that money can't buy happiness. His business experiences in Russia in the 1990s and the launch of a very successful pet store chain back in New Zealand are testimony to that fact. On the lookout for a different definition of happiness and success, Greg discovers meditation, becomes a monk, and the rest, as they say, is history. Gritty and down to earth, this is an engaging adventure, a kiwi bloke's quest for inner peace, warts and all.

BOY OF CHINA, A

Loseby, Richard 301pp 2016



Mao Tse-tung gave away a son during the Long March? Interest piqued, New Zealander Richard Loseby set out to determine the truth of the matter. While visiting many of the key places along the 13,000 kilometre route that Mao's Revolutionary Army marched in the 1930s, and revisiting the history of the rise of communism, today's China is also up for scrutiny. With its fascinating cultural commentary, observations of contemporary China and its intriguing search for 'Little Mao', this part mystery, part travelogue heads off the beaten (tourist) track with gusto and finesse.

BOY WHO HARNESSSED THE WIND, THE

Kamkwamba, William 273pp 2009

This is an inspiring memoir from Malawi, one of the least developed and most densely populated countries in the world. William Kamkwamba came from an impoverished village affected by the severe famine of the 2000s with hunger a constant companion and no money available for him to be able to attend secondary school. Undaunted by these trials, William built a windmill from scrap materials generating electricity for his village and thus changing their lives forever. An uplifting story of contemporary Africa that is testimony to an amazing teenager's determination to overcome adversity and never give up. [SMALL FONT]

BOYS IN THE BOAT, THE

Brown, Daniel James 392pp 2014



Who would have imagined it; trounced by a university rowing team! At the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin, a crew of young American lads won gold, defeating the German team who were expected to win. This is the story of these working-class boys, particularly young Joe Rantz who rises from adversity to participate in this triumphant event. Capturing the difficult economic and social conditions in the US at the time, and the rise of Nazism in Europe, this is a moving and inspiring piece of history given full rein in this detailed story. [SMALL FONT]

BRAIN THAT CHANGES ITSELF, THE

Doidge, Norman MD 421pp 2007

An astonishing new scientific discovery called neuroplasticity is overthrowing the centuries-old notion that the adult human brain is fixed and unchanging. It is, instead, able to change its own structure and function, even into old age. Using personal stories from the heart of this neuroplasticity, Dr Doidge has written an immensely moving, inspiring book that will permanently alter the way we look at our brains, human nature, and human potential.



BREAKING AND MENDING

Cannon, Joanna 158pp 2019

Now a bestselling author of fiction, Joanna Cannon was once a junior doctor working for the NHS in Britain. In this short but powerful account of her experiences as an intern, she shares the traumas and triumphs of dealing with patients and staff, finally finding her place in psychiatry. Encapsulated by its subtitle 'a junior doctor's stories of compassion & burnout', it is a deeply moving and insightful memoir that exposes what happens when we fail to care for those who care for us.

BREAKING RANKS

McNeish, James 289pp 2017



A doctor, a soldier and a judge, all men of strong conviction, all men who died prematurely. In his final book, New Zealand literary luminary, James McNeish, brings together three men who defied the Establishment and broke ranks: Dr John Saxby, a pioneering psychiatrist; Brigadier Reginald Miles, a soldier who disobeyed orders and went into battle with his men; and Judge Peter Mahon of Erebus fame. Presented in a compelling narrative, this highly readable book not only celebrates the lives of these notable men and their contributions to New Zealand, but also considers what it means to be a good New Zealander.

BREAKING THE HABIT

Graham, Judith 154pp 1992



Autobiography. In 1955, at 17 years of age, Judith Graham entered the Dominican Order and began her life as Sister Stephen. In this compassionate, yet very frank account, she recalls her years as a Dominican nun during the repressive pre-Vatican II era.

BRIEF HISTORY OF EVERYONE WHO EVER LIVED, A

Rutherford, Adam 419pp 2016

Who would have thought that humans have fewer genes than a banana or a grain of rice? In 2003 the Human Genome Project revealed this information, but their most unexpected discovery was just how little we do know about our genes. Sorting the facts from the hype, author Adam Rutherford gets us up to speed with what we do know: how we came to be, and who we are now. This is a fascinating and lively account of our collective story spelt out through our genes.

BRIGHT STAR: BEATRICE HILL TINSLEY, ASTRONOMER

Catley, Christine Cole 445pp 2006



Beatrice Hill Tinsley showed astronomers new ways of thinking and taught teachers new ways of teaching. A lover of nature and a conservationist who idealised New Zealand, she was also a musician, a feminist, a battler for zero growth population and a champion of the oppressed. Her life is a classic study in the interaction of nature and nurture, genetics and environment. It is also an inspiring and unforgettable picture of a girl determined to be a scientist who grows up in provincial New Zealand and wins through to world renown. [BIG READ]

BURYING THE TYPEWRITER

Bugan, Carmen 224pp 2012

When you have to bury your typewriter in your garden to hide it from the secret police then life is grim. But as Carmen Bugan's father continues to take a stand against the Ceausescu regime in Romania (by producing anti-Communist leaflets), life becomes even grimmer. It is imprisonment for him and ostracism and intimidation for the rest of the family until they eventually arrive as refugees in USA. In this eloquent and poignant memoir the author recounts the life of a family suffering under a totalitarian system from the unique perspective of a young citizen.

CAESAR'S LAST BREATH

Kean, Sam 373pp 2017

Breathe in ... hold ... breathe out. Repeat. Free, plentiful and essential for survival, the air around us is the ultimate in recycling. In a perfect combination of the educational and entertaining, this lively story explores the science and history of the air we breathe, revealing that with every breath we take, we are connected with the breath of everyone who has ever lived. Inhaling will never be the same again!

CAST AWAY

McDonald-Gibson, Charlotte 336pp 2016

Journalist Charlotte McDonald-Gibson puts her foreign correspondent's hat on to bring us face-to-face with Europe's refugee crisis. Focusing on five individuals from countries in sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East, she presents their stories in all their individual and collective misery: what has happened to them and their families, and their options and hope for the future. As well as giving a human face to this complex issue, the author also provides the historical and political context for these desperate journeys and Europe's response to them. A well-documented and compassionate accounting of an ongoing humanitarian disaster.

CAT AMONG THE PIGEONS

Tizard, Cath 350pp 2010



The Tizard political dynasty is headed by a woman many would consider a New Zealand matriarch, Dame Catherine Tizard, formerly Mayor of Auckland and our first woman Governor-General. The daughter of left-wing Scots immigrants, she grew up in a tiny Waikato town, and she personifies the New Zealand story: how talent and determination and a zeal to leave the world a better place than you found it can take you to the top. This memoir captures her rich and remarkable life and is full of fascinating insights into some of the key social movements and political events and intrigues of our modern history.

CATCH, THE

Field, Michael 212pp 2014



With the sixth largest exclusive economic zone in the world, New Zealand has the challenge of protecting this vast marine environment while also harvesting its resources. Examining the state of the deep-sea fishing industry, this book considers how well we are doing with respect to the fish and the people who catch them, and documents the sobering details that engender the subtitle: how fishing companies reinvented slavery and plunder the oceans. An informative and eye-opening exposé from a renowned journalist. [SMALL FONT]

CATCH AND KILL

Farrow, Ronan 448pp 2019



It could be a thriller, or a spy novel, but no, this is a work of non fiction accurately signalled by its subtitle 'lies, spies and a conspiracy to protect predators'. Investigative journalist Ronan Farrow documents the serial exploitation of women by Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein, and the collusion by many in the media to block these revelations. Although focusing on investigations between 2016 and 2019, this meticulously researched exposé is guaranteed future relevance with its shocking revelations about the institutionalised widespread abuse of power and its confronting evidence of success and morality at odds. A gripping and admirably readable quest for the truth from an award-winning #MeToo journalist.

CAUSE OF DEATH, THE

Temple-Camp, Cynric 310pp 2017



In his 30-year career as a provincial pathologist in New Zealand, Dr Cynric Temple-Camp has accrued many cases most unsuitable for discussion at the dinner table. They range from the infamous Lundy case, to instances of spontaneous combustion, exhumations and drug mules, with each case receiving the same respectful care and attention required to determine the cause of death. Compelling, surprising but never macabre, this is an easy-to-read, informative book chronicling just what goes on when the worst happens.

CHANGE FOR GOOD, A

Thorp, John 183pp 2006

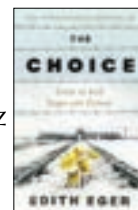


Research scientist John Thorp began life with the outward appearance of a female but with the mind and spirit of a male. Although academically and professionally successful, the young Josephine (Jo) faced derision and isolation from society. When the only escape from her lonely non-life seemed to be suicide, she was saved by the love and support of partner, Joan, who inspired Jo to endure the operations and treatments to turn her into John.

CHOICE, THE

Eger, Edith 384pp 2017

World renowned psychologist Edith Eger is uniquely placed to expound on the choice we make when it comes to suffering: live as a victim, or as a survivor. Sent to Auschwitz with her family as a sixteen-year-old, she survived, putting it down to 'working together and helping others', a lesson she then applied to the career and new life she embraced in the US. In this remarkable memoir, the story of the author's exceptional life is interspersed with accounts of patients she has helped move from trauma to triumph in her clinical practice. Written with integrity and compassion, this book contains inspiring approaches to achieving healing and freedom by confronting the suffering that life inevitably throws at us.



"We all enjoyed it without exception. It held our interest, was very well done and very detailed."

Christchurch 292

"Loved how uplifting the book was, despite the subject matter."

Alexandra 012

"Highly prized by all members. Easy read with great depth. An inspirational read to many. More than half of the members read the book twice."

Blenheim 010

"All members thoroughly enjoyed this book. Totally inspiring and would recommend for other groups."

Waiau 002



CHILD OF TIBET

Yangchien, Soname (with Vicki Mackenzie) 184pp 2006

The story of a young Tibetan woman’s flight to freedom. Soname Yangchen was born in the Tibetan countryside during Chinese occupation. Her parents sent her to Lhasa for her own safety where she became a child slave, exploited and deprived of affection. At 16 Soname risked death in a freedom trek across the Himalayas but even after managing to escape, she faced further dangers and heartache in India, being forced by poverty to give up her daughter. Soname later met and married an Englishman and shifted to England where her talent for singing was discovered.

CIDER WITH ROSIE

Lee, Laurie 231pp 1959

Lee was a poet, novelist and screenwriter. This memoir tells us of his childhood in the remote Cotswold village of Stroud in the early twentieth century. He was raised by his mother when his father left when he was three. An exquisite farewell to boyhood, and an England that has vanished.

CLEO: HOW AN UPPITY CAT HEALED A FAMILY

Brown, Helen 286pp 2009 

Cleo, an Abyssinian kitten, becomes a member of the Brown household not long after nine year old Sam dies in a road accident. Over the next 23 years, Cleo is an integral part of the family’s journey through grief and beyond. Whether you are a cat lover or not, this warm hearted story of love and loss is a delightful read.

CLOUD FARM

Chetwynd, Jane 182pp 2004 

Successful academic, Jane Chetwynd, purchased seemingly on impulse, a large piece of land on Banks Peninsula in Canterbury. With little purpose in mind but a real need to escape from what had become for her an unfulfilling life, she set about with incredible tenacity, regenerating and developing the rugged land and making the house habitable.

CODE NAME: LISE

Loftis, Larry 360pp 2019

From housewife and mother to Britain’s most highly decorated WWII operative, Odette Sansom is the stuff of legends. After ‘spy school’, her successful exploits in occupied France caught the attention of the Gestapo and eventually led to prison and then onto a concentration camp. Adventure, romance and heroism in all its guises along with all the inescapable horrors of war, drive this fast-paced and riveting story of an extraordinary spy.

COLOUR: TRAVELS THROUGH THE PAINTBOX 

Finlay, Victoria 494pp 2002

An account of Finlay’s quest to uncover the many secrets hidden inside the paintbox. From mascara to violin varnish, from nomadic carpets to stained glass, this is the story of the efforts of artists and artisans to reproduce the rainbow — and the impact their work has had on the world.

COLOR OF WATER, THE

McBride, James 291pp 1996

Only two things mattered to James McBride’s charismatic mother — school and church. The true story of a parent who dared to be different by marrying a black man, founding a Baptist church, and putting 12 children through college.

COMMON GROUND

Marriott, Janice & Pawsey, Virginia 239pp 2008 

Janice Marriott and Virginia Pawsey went to school together and then met again after thirty years at their school reunion. They rekindled their friendship and began writing to each other, discovering in the process a shared passion for gardening despite their having created two very different gardens: Janice lives in central Wellington and Virginia helps run a South Island high country farm. Their correspondence tells the story of their lives.

CROSSING, THE

Yazbek, Samar 280pp 2015

Giving life to the distressingly familiar images from the media, journalist and writer Samar Yazbek takes us to the heart of the Syria of the headlines and soundbites. Syrian herself, she was forced to flee in 2011, but recounts in this story her three trips back to her homeland in 2012-13 to help set up women’s groups. Chronicling the passage of the civil war from its peaceful uprising for a secular democracy to the hijacking of the war by foreign fighters, this harrowing account of the day-to-day suffering of the Syrian people is distinguished by allowing all sides to speak for themselves. This is an important story of our time from the pen of a gifted narrator.

DANCE OF THE PEACOCKS

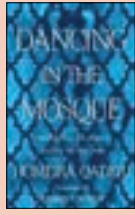
McNeish, James 472pp 2003 

Based on letters, diaries and interviews, McNeish tells the stories of five young literary and intellectual pathfinders — James Bertram, Geoffrey Cox, Dan Davin, Ian Milner, and John Mulgan who left New Zealand in the 1930s. [BIG READ]

DANCING IN THE MOSQUE

Stanizai, Zaman 212pp 2020

Growing up, Homeira Qaderi was a stropky teenager daring to homeschool girls in Afghanistan under Taliban rule. Her rebellious nature never abated and following marriage at seventeen, life as a refugee in Teheran, opportunities for higher education and then a return to post-Taliban Kabul, she remained staunch, particularly when her husband decided to take a second wife. Promptly divorced for her defiance in opposing his intention, her toddler son was taken from her (as permitted by Afghan law). In this powerful and riveting memoir, the author, a writer and activist for women's rights, shares the story of her life and directly addresses her son who was told she was dead.



"Absolutely engaging, and beautifully translated."

"It's a powerful and eye-watering read.
I only hope she is able to see her son again."

"It's an incredibly sad story, but as it's quite a small read (212 pages), it's not difficult to read."

BDS Reviewers

DARING TO DRIVE

al-Sharif, Manal 283pp 2017

Charged with 'driving while female', Manal al-Sharif was arrested and imprisoned in 2011 for daring to drive in Saudi Arabia, a nation that did not allow women behind the wheel. But with YouTube and social media to the rescue, her rebellion hit the headlines, spearheading the now internationally publicised Women2Drive campaign. From her deeply conservative upbringing in Mecca to her trailblazing I.T. career, this is a compelling memoir from a courageous activist that sheds light on an oppressive and patriarchal society, poised on the cusp of change.

DEAD WAKE

Larson, Erik 418pp 2015

In May 1915 when the Cunard liner Lusitania left New York bound for Liverpool laden with more than 2000 people, it was reputedly the fastest civilian vessel afloat. But it was to be no match for the German submarine Unterseeboot-20. What had happened to the previous unofficial gentleman's agreement that had protected civilian ships? And how could the ensuing catastrophe have occurred when the Uboat was being tracked by British Intelligence? Comprehensively researched from its human tragedy through to the details of maritime history and the perfect 'storm' of events, this is a vividly described account of a never to be forgotten disaster.

DEAR LEADER

Jang, Jin-Sung 316pp 2014

Jang Jin-sung, poet and producer of propaganda has a privileged life as a member of Kim Jon-il's inner circle, although this is not enough to protect him from the consequences of breaking a minor security rule. Along with a friend he flees the Democratic Republic of North Korea, ending up in South Korea via China. Revealing many aspects of the inner workings of the totalitarian regime, this is a riveting story of escape as well as a fascinating insight into the little known 'hermit kingdom'.

DEMON UNDER THE MICROSCOPE, THE

Hager, Thomas 340pp 2006

Antibiotics, should we need them, are just a prescription away. But this has not always been the case; not until the 1930s did the first antibiotic make its way onto the world stage, ushering in the era of modern medicine. Chronicling the history and development of sulfa (the miracle drug in question) and the attendant fledgling pharmaceutical industry, this book presents a riveting story of endeavour and the physicians and scientists involved in its discovery. Both entertaining and informative, this story while presenting the historical events that revolutionised the management of infection also considers the contemporary challenge of antibiotic resistance. [SMALL FONT]

DEVIL IN THE WHITE CITY, THE

Larson, Erik 495pp 2003

The Chicago World's Fair of 1893 was one of the great wonders of the world. Woven together, is the story of the architect, Daniel H Burnham who created the incandescent "White City", and the serial killer, HH Holmes who murdered a number of those drawn to Chicago by the fair. Set against the technological marvels of a dream city, these two disparate yet driven men turned the Chicago World's Fair into their playground.

DIAL M FOR MURDOCH

Watson, Tom & Hickman, Martin 339pp 2012

For years Rupert Murdoch's newspapers had been hacking, spying, blagging, bribing and destroying the evidence. They thought they were untouchable. They were wrong. This is the book that has exposed the shadow state at the heart of Britain. Now fully updated with the very latest News Corp scandal, it tells the story of how a criminal conspiracy involving politicians, the police and the press was revealed; the smears and threats they used to cover it up; the brave whistle-blowers who cracked open the case and what it now means for all of us. [Taken from book cover, Penguin Random House.] [SMALL FONT]



DIARY OF A BOOKSELLER, THE

Bythell, Shaun 242pp 2016

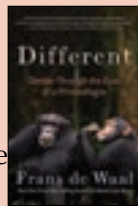


Hold off on that booking and get ready to change your travel plans ... once you've read this book, you'll be wanting to visit Shaun Bythell's premises in Wigtown, touted as the biggest secondhand bookshop in Scotland. From the daily till receipts and the latest staff insurrection, to the verbal gems from querulous customers and the rhythms of a country town with its myriad festivals, it's all here in diary form. Chronicling the day-to-day scrabbling for a living in a commercial environment strongly influenced by the author's nemesis (Amazon), this fascinating story will have you laughing out loud while you are enthusiastically writing down what recovered treasure you should be reading next. [SMALL FONT]

DIFFERENT

de Waal, Frans 416pp 2022

After decades studying some of our nearest relatives – chimpanzees and bonobos – renowned animal scientist Frans de Waal is well qualified to discuss sex and gender. In this informative and entertaining foray into the gender debate, he explores the complexity of sex and social behaviour of these anthropoid apes, and compares them with humans. Challenging our attitudes and assumptions about sex and gender, this is a fascinating read, offering a clear, non-judgemental view of an often contentious issue. [SMALL FONT]



"Informative, entertaining, and thought-provoking. Well-written."

"Fascinating evidence of intelligence and emotion in apes."

"Informative, interesting, and easy to read."

"There's a fair bit of monkey sex going on!"

BDS Reviewers

DIFFERENT KIND OF DAUGHTER, A

Toorpakai, Maria 230pp 2016

In this book, which could just as accurately be titled 'A Different Kind of Family', maverick parents guarantee that Maria Toorpakai was never going to be ordinary. Growing up in a home championing women's rights, in a repressive area in Pakistan, Maria was supported in disguising herself as a boy for the freedom it afforded her. When it was no longer possible to hide her gender, the street fighting and wrestling were replaced with squash. As one would expect in a region where the Taliban called the shots, her eventual rise to be Pakistan's number one female squash player, is a remarkable and courageous story, both of her and her family, and, is compellingly presented in this inspirational memoir.

DIVING BELL AND THE BUTTERFLY, THE

Bauby, Jean Dominique 139pp 1998



After suffering a massive stroke, Bauby, editor-in-chief of the French Elle magazine, finds himself paralysed (Locked-in Syndrome). With one eyelid, he "dictated" a memoir that recognises how personhood can continue, as insistent as ever, in an unresponsive body. Bauby's imagination and black humour dominate this moving little book.

DIVORCE DIARIES, THE

Quigley, Sarah 271pp 2020



Once upon a time, writer Sarah Quigley was happily married and living in Germany, but there came a time when separation and divorce became inevitable. Recalling these difficult events and their aftermath, this Berlin-based memoir examines with honesty and respect, what came to pass. Leavened with humour and chronicling the ups and downs of these experiences, this book is distinguished not only by its insightful and relatable moments, but by the ease of its beautiful writing.

DO NO HARM

Marsh, Henry 276pp 2014

In this contemplation of a distinguished career, British brain surgeon Henry Marsh reveals what goes on behind those swinging doors leading into the operating theatre. Written with disarming candour, it is a memoir offering a fascinating insight into the holy grail of surgery: its successes and failures and its effects on those wielding the scalpel. Featuring drama and compassion through to risk and wonder, it is a moving and informative account of the world of neurosurgery.

DON'T LET'S GO TO THE DOGS TONIGHT

Fuller, Alexandra 310pp 2002



The author vividly recollects her extraordinary childhood in southern Africa where terrorism, curfews, ambushes and the AK-47 are part of the vocabulary of daily life. A story of bravado, driven by fire-in-the-belly love of Africa.

DOUBLE CROSS

MacIntyre, Ben 417pp 2012

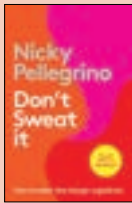
D-Day, 6 June 1944, the turning point of the Second World War, was a victory of arms. But it was also a triumph for a different kind of operation: one of deceit. At the heart of the deception was the 'Double Cross System', a team of double agents whose bravery, treachery, greed and inspiration succeeded in convincing the Nazis that Calais and Norway, not Normandy, were the targets of the 150,000-strong Allied invasion force. These were not conventional warriors, but their masterpiece of deceit saved thousands of lives. Their codenames were Bronx, Brutus, Treasure, Tricycle, and Garbo. This is their story.

DON'T SWEAT IT

Pellegrino, Nicky 320pp 2022



If all of New Zealand was to read this book, half of the readers would be guaranteed to have, at some point, intimate knowledge of the tumultuous life stage this manual covers. With such widespread personal impact, the other half would be well advised to read it too... This is 'the change' we are talking about, that once taboo subject, now firmly under the microscope in this well-researched book. Health writer Nicky Pellegrino brings together the latest information about menopause and perimenopause, and her own and many other women's experiences of this life-changing event. Written with humour, empathy and authority, this definitive guide is encapsulated by its subtitle: how to make 'the change' a good one.



"The book has a light but serious touch. Well researched and very interesting."

"Factual, easy to read and interesting."

"The bits of humour, and Nicky's personal experience thrown in, makes for a good read – especially if you are a middle-aged woman!"

BDS Reviewers

DREAMS FROM MY FATHER

Obama, Barack 480pp 2004



The son of a black African father and a white American mother, Barack Obama searches for a meaning to his life as a black American. It begins in New York, where he learns that his father—a figure he knows more as a myth than as a man—has been killed in a car accident. This sudden death inspires an emotional odyssey — first to a small town in Kansas, from which he retraces the migration of his mother's family to Hawaii, and then to Kenya, where he meets the African side of his family, confronts the bitter truth of his father's life, and reconciles his divided inheritance.

EAT THE BUDDHA

Demick, Barbara 325pp 2020

Seasoned journalist Barbara Demick brings her considerable experience to this story of Ngaba in the eastern Tibetan Autonomous Region, a significant frontier town, one of the first places where Chinese communists staked their claim on Tibet. Now an ongoing site of resistance, various residents offer up the story of their lives under Chinese rule, for scrutiny. Detailed but very accessible, this is an eye-opening read that documents historic events and 21st century Tibet through the experiences of individual Tibetans. [SMALL FONT]

EDUCATED

Westover, Tara 377pp 2016



Having never been to school until the age of seventeen nor registered for a birth certificate or medical care, Tara Westover seems an unlikely candidate for educational success. But succeed she has - blazing a trail through Harvard and Cambridge, this daughter of Domsday survivalists from a remote area in Idaho, exemplifies the transformative power of education. Riveting and often shocking, this inspiring memoir discloses a brutal childhood, the power of family to shape us and the cost of self-determination.

EMPRESS DOWAGER CIXI

Chang, Jung 436pp 2013

From minor concubine to monarch, Cixi's trajectory to power in late 19th Century China was impressive, even if she had to rule from behind a silk screen. Laying the foundation for modern China, Cixi's legacy was a many and varied one: not only developing industry and the infrastructure required to support it, but improving conditions for women by abolishing such outdated practices as foot-binding. Meticulously researched using previously unavailable material from the imperial archives in Beijing, this is a revisionist biography of a fascinating and controversial figure and the nation she ruled. [BIG READ, SMALL FONT]

END OF PLENTY, THE

Bourne, Joel K 408pp 2015



Projected world population in 2050: nine or ten billion... According to award-winning environmental journalist Joel Bourne, modern agriculture may have made it possible for the world population to grow, but the subsequent ecological damage aligned with global warming and questionable agro-economics ensure that global food supply difficulties lie ahead. Bringing together the history of food systems, current food security dilemmas and potential solutions, this meticulously researched book explores the challenges of feeding the world, now and in the future.

ESCAPE FROM BOSNIA: AZA'S STORY

McCauley, Sue 240pp 1996



The story of Brent King, NZ pilot sent as UN observer to Bosnia in 1993, and Aza Mehmedovic who King helps to escape from Zepa, a Muslim enclave under siege from the Serbs. This heart-rending telling of the struggle, starvation, and constant attacks on the enclave, as well as people's bravery and resourcefulness in their refusal to be defeated, fills the reader with admiration.



END OF YOUR LIFE BOOK CLUB, THE

Schwalbe, Will 336pp 2012

With a diagnosis of terminal cancer, Will Schwalbe and his mother Mary Anne decide that during the remaining period of her life, they will form an exclusive book club of two. As they consume and discuss an impressive quantity of poetry, short stories and novels, Mary Anne's life and her amazing work as a humanitarian is revealed. This book is both a celebration of a life well lived and an examination of the inspiring power reading can play in shaping our lives.

FACTFULNESS

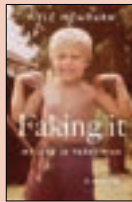
Rosling, Hans 352pp 2016

Concerned about the state of the world? Despairing about how little progress has been made? Despondent when you consider what needs to be done? The antidote to all this gloom and doom is within your grasp...subtitled 'ten reasons we're wrong about the world – and why things are better than you think'. Factfulness offers a fascinating analysis of world statistical information, and provides a new framework for understanding it. Tempering facts and figures with humour and anecdotes, it will add a pep to your step while challenging your preconceptions. [SMALL FONT]

FAKING IT

Mewburn, Kyle 266pp 2021

At the age of fifty-five, Kyle Mewburn embraced a transition that had been pending her whole life — from male to female. Growing up in 1960s' Queensland as a boy, Kyle always knew that to survive this role and its expectations, she would have to 'fake it'. She did so convincingly for decades — there was university, travel, marriage, establishing a home and a life in Central Otago, and becoming an award-winning writer of children's books. Brave, honest and engaging, this thought-provoking memoir offers direct insight into the experience of growing up in the wrong body and the challenges of gender in a world unsympathetic to difference.



"Easy to read, engaging and honest."

"Very well-written and enjoyable to read. Very honest and thought-provoking."

"Being a 'trans person' may be off-putting for some, but in fact the author's writing is excellently expressed."

BDS Reviewers



FAVORED DAUGHTER, THE

Koofi, Fawzia 266pp 2012

From her childhood in a violent and sexist society, to becoming the first female speaker of Afghanistan's parliament, Fawzia Koofi's life is an extraordinary story of courage, determination and perseverance. A leading candidate for the 2014 presidential election, Fawzia's achievements challenge the stereotypical view of Muslim women and offer to her countrywomen the vision of a very different future. The combination of personal story and political detail delivers a compelling memoir of an inspiring woman and the country she loves.

FEAR

Clark, Byron C. 336pp 2023

Aotearoa, land of the long white cloud, home of hobbits and sheep, bungee jumping and rail trails, and now, according to conspiracy researcher Byron Clark, home to a disturbing number of alt-right groups. Focusing on before and after the 2019 Christchurch terror attacks and including the 2022 occupation of parliament, this book details an eye-opening investigation into the hate groups who threaten New Zealand's democracy and way of life. An informative, well-researched wake-up call documenting the disturbing reality of domestic extremism.



"Full of references to people, places, events and groups I am not familiar with, this book was a real eye-opener."

"A very worthwhile read. I intend to read the book a second time."

"A wake-up call alerting us to the danger these people and groups pose to democracy, here and worldwide."

BDS Reviewers

FIND ME UNAFRAID

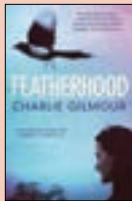
Odede, Kenny and Posner, Jessica 324pp 2015

Kennedy Odede and Jessica Posner couldn't have come from more different backgrounds if they had tried: Kennedy from abject poverty in the largest Kenyan slum and Jessica from a well-off family in Denver, Colorado. Jessica visits, as part of her studies at Wesleyan University, 'Shining Hope for Communities', SHOFKO, the organisation Kennedy developed to help the people of his community. Thus began their partnership, eventual marriage, and once they had both graduated from university in the US, their determination to start a school for the girls in the slum. This jointly narrated, inspiring memoir, demonstrates the meaningful difference determined people can make to bring about positive change, and most importantly of all: hope.

FEATHERHOOD

Gilmour, Charlie 274pp 2020

If it wasn't for the letter 'e', featherhood would be read as fatherhood, and in this delightful juxtaposition of birds and fathers, English journalist Charlie Gilmour is able to weave together these most unlikely of pairings. As the beloved stepson of a well-known musician and son of an English poet, Charlie has plenty to ponder when it comes to the importance of fatherhood. However, it is his own (and his partner's) involvement with a wild magpie that encourages this honest and poignant examination of his life and heritage. A gripping and unusual memoir that combines nature writing with courageous introspection.



"This is a fantastic and gripping book."

"The author's descriptions of the bird's behaviour, the countryside and the trials of living a domestic life with a wild bird are a delightful contrast to his life story."

"The story of the care and love for the magpie, Benzene, would have been beautiful on its own! I enjoyed his story."

BDS Reviewers

FIRST STEPS

Desilva, Jeremy 268pp 2021

The nineteenth century philosopher Søren Kierkegaard clearly knew a thing or two about walking, when he said, 'Every day, I walk myself into a state of well-being and walk away from every illness.' He would not have been aware of the anatomical and evolutionary history that has allowed humankind to walk upright but paleoanthropologist Jeremy Desilva does. With these details at his fingertips, readers are confidently escorted through seven million years of evolution, exploring the history of bipedalism and its role in our well-being. Lively, informative and peppered with engaging personal anecdotes, this is a fascinating account of 'how walking upright made us human'.



"An excellent account of the origins of the bipedal/upright stance of homo sapiens."

"The general reader will find this book engaging as well as informative."

"Well-written and informative."

BDS Reviewers

FIRST THEY KILLED MY FATHER

Ung, Loung 310pp 2000

During the Khmer Rouge's reign in Cambodia, two million people perished. Loung Ung was five years old and her family, middle class and privileged, were an anathema to the Pol Pot regime. This is their courageous story that encompasses their dispersal to labour camps, Loung's training as a child soldier, the death of parents and the eventual reuniting of the surviving siblings. With its young narrator and its matter-of-fact style, it is a powerful and compelling reminder of the experiences of the people of Cambodia.

FIX, THE

Thompson, Damian 279pp 2012

Whether it is the sweet treat that helps you get through the afternoon, that extra check of your email in case there is a new message, or more ominously, that latest bout of unnecessary shopping, we are immersed in a world of addiction. Arguing that addiction is a choice not a disease, journalist and recovering alcoholic Damian Thompson considers western society and the part it plays in supporting our addictive impulses. With its enticing combination of personal story interwoven with solid research, this is a provocative and easy book to read. So pour yourself a coffee, light up your cigarette and start reading!

FOOTPATHS IN THE PAINTED CITY

Shepard, Sadia 364pp 2008

Daughter of a white American Protestant father and a Pakistani Muslim mother, Sadia Shepard travels to India to make sense of her family's startling background: her Muslim grandmother had begun life as a member of an Indian-Jewish community who believes they are descendants from one of the Lost Tribes of Israel shipwrecked on Indian shores. Told with compassion and humility, this is an unforgettable story of a young woman's discovery of faith, family and identity. [SMALL FONT]

FOR THE BENEFIT OF THOSE WHO SEE

Mahoney, Rosemary 286pp 2014

A visit to Tibet's first school for the blind, 'Braille Without Borders', piques Rosemary Mahoney's interest in the world of the blind. The result? A fascinating odyssey that investigates German woman Sabriye Tenberken's work for blind children in Lhasa and for blind adults in Kerala, India. Supported by extensive research and the experiences of many blind people, this book explores the history and culture of blindness, particularly in developing countries, offering the reader a unique opportunity to revel in a different perspective of the world. An informative and inspiring read.

FOREST UNSEEN, THE

Haskell, David George 270pp 2012

Just as the poet William Blake suggested the idea of seeing the world in a grain of sand and heaven in a wild flower, biologist David George Haskell presents a contemporary equivalent, focusing on a square metre of old forest on the Cumberland Plateau in Tennessee. Observed almost daily for a year, this patch of forest teeming with life reveals the intricate and complex nature of ecosystems and through a philosophical lens, our place in the world. Blending current scientific thinking with a lyrical writing style, this is a book to savour.

FORT OF NINE TOWERS, A

Omar, Qais Akbar 389pp 2013



First it was the Russians, then civil war, the Taliban and finally the Americans. Qais' family, like every other Afghan family have had plenty to contend with over recent decades. He is just a small child when the Russians withdraw but far from releasing the country from adversity, the hard times are just gathering strength. Forced to flee Kabul, the family traverse Afghanistan seeking refuge until they are finally able to return to the capital, just in time for the arrival of the Taliban. Not for the faint hearted, this insightful memoir places the reader firmly in the midst of a complex country and its people in turmoil; it is a story of survival and resilience tempered by the saving grace of a strong and loving family. [SMALL FONT]

FORTUNATE WOMAN, A

Morland, Polly 256pp 2022



John Berger's classic account of a country doctor working in an isolated English valley, *A Fortunate Man*, captivated and inspired its readers, and more than half a century later, this story about its present community is doing the same. The intertwining stories of the patients' lives, their unnamed doctor, and the beautiful countryside, ensure this is a story with plenty to offer both rural and urban readers alike. Foremost it invites consideration of the importance of relationship-based medicine in an era where impersonal care is becoming the norm.



"I loved this book. It is so beautifully written in both its descriptive prose and the hardships endured by the community."

"Beauty, kindness and caring shine out from the pages all wound up together in a magical way."

"This is an interesting read, alternating between stories of the patients and the doctor herself."

BDS Reviewers

FORTY AUTUMNS

Willner, Nina 391pp 2016

The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 couldn't come fast enough for a family separated by Germany's partition in the wake of WWII. It begins with Hanna's escape to West Germany in 1948, continues with the arrival of her daughter (the author) in Berlin at the height of the Cold War as a US Army Intelligence Officer, and finally resolves with a family reunion once the wall is down. Brimming with photos and other supportive material, this is the graphic but inspiring story of a tenacious family that celebrates the resilience of the human spirit and highlights the value of political freedom.

FOX BOY, THE

Walker, Peter 342pp 2001



Walker undertook a memorable, personal journey to research the story of a young Maori boy, Ngatau Omahuru (aka William Fox junior). Omahuru was abducted during the 1860s Taranaki wars, adopted by Prime Minister William Fox and raised as an English gentleman. The author discovered, among other things, the enmeshment of this little boy's fate with seminal events in New Zealand history.

FREEZING ORDER

Browder, Bill 303pp 2022



Reader beware — although this story sports all the components of a thriller — money, power, corruption and one man prepared to take on the archvillain — this is a work of nonfiction. Subtitled 'a true story of Russian money laundering, murder and surviving Vladimir Putin's wrath', in this book, Bill Browder moves past the events relayed in *Red Notice* as he continues to seek justice for the death of his Russian lawyer, through the now internationally supported Magnitsky Acts. Compelling and almost too incredible for words, this is the sobering story of a determined financier dodging the crosshairs of the Russian state.



"This is a book that grabs you. Compelling."

"Fabulous book. It follows on from 'Red Notice' but the first chapter brings you up to speed. Perhaps it would be best to read 'Red Notice' first, but it's not necessary. Highly recommended."

"Definitely a thriller, particularly in the current political situation."

BDS Reviewers

FRIENDSHIP HIGHWAY, THE

Carroll, Charlie 360pp 2014

Charlie Carroll had always wanted to visit Tibet. When he finally arrives there, not only does he have his own fascinating journey to recount, but also that of Lobsang, an exile who grew up in India and Nepal but returned to Tibet. Told through alternating chapters, this is a comprehensive reckoning of Tibet: its history and culture, its relationship with China and foremost, its people. A moving and provocative account from the roof of the world.

FRED HOLLOWES: THE AUTO-BIOGRAPHY

Hollows, Fred 262pp 1991



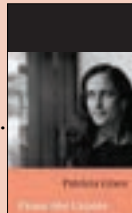
Ophthalmologist Fred Hollows spent years improving the eye health of the Aborigines, and also worked in Nepal and Eritrea. His life story is related here by Peter Corris. [SMALL FONT]

FROM THE CENTRE

Grace, Patricia 298pp 2021



With the publication of her first collection of short stories in 1975, Patricia Grace became the first wāhine Māori to achieve such an outcome... and the rest, as they say, is history. From short stories to novels to children's books, over the decades that have followed she has continued to enrich and expand New Zealand literature. In this unadorned memoir, this award-winning author humbly relates the story of her life against the backdrop of a changing society: from her birth to a Pākehā mother and Māori father, her childhood through to her training as a teacher, marriage, motherhood and at its centre, her writing, her whānau, her whenua.



"It is difficult for an autobiography to be seen as complete while the subject is still alive, but this book does fulfil that aim. Hopefully there will be more to be said about this remarkable lady."

"I enjoyed this book. Her growing awareness of her bi-cultural family is described with such skill."

BDS Reviewers

FROM THE HOLY MOUNTAIN

Dalrymple, William 454pp 1998

A rich stew of history and travel narrative spiced with anecdote, opinion and bon mots. In *From the Holy Mountain*, Dalrymple travels the Silk Route of ancient Byzantium through the present-day Middle East, tracing the AD578 journey of John Moschos, the great Byzantine monk, traveller and oral historian. Dalrymple's aim is to uncover the human archeology of Eastern Christianity.

GHOST MAP, THE

Johnson, Steven 299pp 2006

London, 1854. A contaminated water supply, an outbreak of cholera, two determined gentlemen and the birth of epidemiology. From opposite sides of the contagious disease debate, Doctor John Snow and the Reverend Henry Whitehead eventually worked together to successfully pinpoint the source of the outbreak, forever changing the way the world would understand the spread of disease. Combining great storytelling with dishing the dirt on the nature of epidemics and the implications for our modern cities, this is a compelling and accessible read.

GIRL WHO SMILED BEADS, THE

Wamariya, Clemantine 275pp 2018

When Clemantine and her older sister Claire flee the Rwandan genocide in 1994, their search for refuge takes them six long years and through eight African countries. Finally, when Clemantine is twelve, they are granted refugee status in the US. And as they say, the rest is history. But it is a history of adjustments, of remembering and forgetting and making sense of the world and what has come to pass. Eloquent and moving, this is an unforgettable memoir of survival and finding home, wherever it may take you.

GIRL WITH SEVEN NAMES, THE

Lee, Hyeonseo 304pp 2015



What were you doing when you were seventeen? North Korean defector Hyeonseo Lee was escaping over the border into China. Disillusioned by the Great Famine of 1990, Hyeonseo sought a better life but it came with the cost of continual subterfuge and reinvention. First China, then South Korea, then a return twelve years later to the Chinese border to smuggle out her mother and brother, this courageous and difficult journey is underpinned by Hyeonseo's strength and determination. Both a dramatic and powerful personal story and a unique insight into life under the repressive North Korean regime, this is also an inspiring testimony to what people will risk for freedom. [SMALL FONT]

GLASS CASTLE, THE

Walls, Jeanette 341pp 2005

While Walls was living on Park Avenue covering the Academy Awards and attending black-tie parties at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, her parents were squatting in an abandoned building on the Lower East Side. An unsentimental memoir by Walls whose parents' ideals and non-conformity were both their curse and their salvation. The family lived a nomadic lifestyle, moving among Southwest desert towns, and camping in the mountains. Her father was charismatic and brilliant; her mother creative, but unable to stand the responsibility of providing for her family. Engaging and quirky.



GOLDEN PARASOL

Law-Yone, Wendy 309pp 2013

Better late than never; when Wendy Law-Yone eventually edited her father’s papers, she discovers an intriguing account of 20th century Burma. As a newspaper editor, especially one committed to democracy, Edward Law-Yone was a man who rubbed shoulders with the political movers and shakers of the day. From colonial rule, Japanese occupation, fledgling independence to the instigation of military rule, it’s all there, in glorious, vivid detail. An intriguing memoir, this deft weaving of the personal and political, blends the recent history of a complicated nation with a warm and candid portrait of family.

GOOD DOCTOR, THE

O’Sullivan, Lance 254pp 2015



It could have gone either way for Lance O’Sullivan: a fast track to underachievement and trouble or knuckling down, connecting with his Maori heritage and eventually studying medicine. The latter prevailed and from humble beginnings he has gone on to become a household name when he received the 2014 Kiwibank New Zealander of the Year Award. With a passion and commitment to those who are disadvantaged, particularly Maori in Northland, he exemplifies the book’s subtitle ‘breaking the rules, making a difference’. Not only does this book offer an inspiring personal story but also cogent analysis of New Zealand’s health related social issues, from an expert in the field.

GOODBYE SARAJEVO

Reid, Atka & Schofield, Hana 339pp 2011



This is the story of a Bosnian family from Sarajevo. Written by sisters Atka Reid and Hana Schofield, it tells of the experiences of their family during the infamous siege. Hana was evacuated to Croatia as a refugee while Atka remained in the city to care for her other siblings. Eventually the family was successfully sponsored to come to New Zealand. More personal than political, it is a compelling account that depicts not only the horrors of the conflict but also the redeeming qualities of courage, determination and kindness that shine through these tragic events.

GREY GHOSTS

Challinor, Deborah 304pp 2009

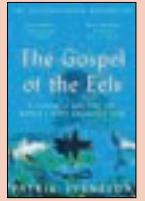


Based on interviews with New Zealand troops, historian Deborah Challinor presents the stories of the ‘Grey Ghosts’, New Zealand’s Vietnam veterans talking about their war. These compelling personal accounts are related along with the political and military background of a divisive period in New Zealand living history.

GOSPEL OF THE EELS, THE

Svensson, Patrik 235pp 2020

Going fishing means many different things to different people. For Swedish journalist Patrik Svensson, it plays a significant role in his relationship with his father (an enthusiastic eel fisher) and encourages him to investigate the almost mythical target of their fishing expeditions – the European eel, *Anguilla anguilla*. The result is an intriguing and thought-provoking memoir that draws together strands of history and philosophy with the elusive and mysterious eel at its heart.



“The book is beautifully written and easy to read.”

“It’s a lovely story of eels, as well as a father and son story — and a happy father and son story, not an exposé.”

“Anyone with a love of — or even an awareness of — natural history would be moved by this book.”

BDS Reviewers

GRAND

McCarthy, Noelle 272pp 2022



When journalist Noelle McCarthy arrived in Auckland at the beginning of the new millennium, it was to be a new start – away from her difficult childhood in Ireland, and away from her mother Carol, a mercurial alcoholic. But it is never that easy, and thousands of kilometres away, she follows in her mother’s footsteps, raising her glass to the world. Years later, as Carol’s life draws to a close, Noelle returns to Ireland and to a relationship that demands untangling, understanding and forgiveness. Written with wit and skill, and with much introspection and honesty, this is the story of a mother and daughter, a memoir that reminds us of the love and pain within families and what we do to survive them.



“It’s a clever book — Noelle traces how she becomes her mother (figuratively), until finally she is able to claim being a daughter of her mother.”

“Interesting to read Noelle’s eventual understanding of herself and her mother and finding some peace with both.”

“I enjoyed reading about the culture in which Noelle grew up — namely a poor, Catholic Irish family.”

BDS Reviewers

GWEILO

Booth, Martin 375pp 2004

In contrast to Britain's bleak post-war years, Hong Kong was an exotic and colourful destination. Accompanying his parents to this far-flung corner of the Empire, seven year old Martin Booth embraces his new setting with all the boundless enthusiasm and innocence of his age. With insatiable curiosity and enviable freedom, Martin experiences the marvels and delights of the Hong Kong of the 1950s and recalls them decades later, in rich and vivid detail. An engaging and witty memoir of a special time and place.

H IS FOR HAWK

MacDonald, Helen 300pp 2014

As a young girl Helen Macdonald vows to train her own hawk, but it does not come to fruition until decades later when her father dies. In an attempt to deal with her grief she acquires a goshawk – Mabel – and begins the arduous challenge of taming the bird. In this fascinating insight into the world of falconry, the reader is not only exposed to the day to day training but also to the experiences of another falconer and author, T.H. White, who also found healing through this arcane sport. Interwoven with memories of her father and lyrical descriptions of the English countryside, this is a deeply moving and unusual memoir.

HALF THE SKY

Kristof, Nicholas D & WuDunn, Sheryl 296pp 2010

According to a Chinese proverb 'women hold up half the sky', but in this book it is not a clear blue sky as you might imagine, but one filled with the dark and ominous clouds of poverty, ill health and abuse. Concentrating on Asia and Africa, and basing the stories on their newspaper columns compiled over several years, journalists Kristof and WuDunn reveal the plight of many women in third world countries. Simultaneously horrifying and inspiring this is an important book bringing to our attention not only the forces (cultural and political) that keep women disenfranchised, but the possible solutions we can be part of.

HANOI, ADIEU

Perkins, Mandaley 323pp 2005

Michel L'Herpinière arrived in Hanoi as a teenager in the years before World War II, and fell in love with the country and its people. His story is entwined with the history of Vietnam in those years: the French response to the nationalist movement; the Japanese occupation; the rise of Vietminh and the refusal of the US to aid a "colonial regime", and the political vacuum, chaos and tragedy in the aftermath of war.

HARE WITH AMBER EYES, THE

De Waal, Edmund 351pp 2011

The hare with the amber eyes along with the other 263 pieces of a netsuke collection, tell a remarkable story, that of its collectors, the Ephrussi family. Played out against the backdrop of a turbulent and dynamic Europe, this memoir traces the fortunes of this wealthy and privileged Jewish dynasty from the 1850s to the present day. Rich with the details of the art and literary worlds of the time, it is a fascinating history of a family weathering the storms of anti-Semitism and war.

HEADSCARVES AND HYMENS

Eltahawy, Mona 238pp 2015

Journalist Mona Eltahawy appeared on the world stage following the 2011 Egyptian Revolution when she was assaulted by riot police. Her response – in the form of an article – ignited debate so controversial that Time magazine named her as one of its People of the Year. In this book, this award-winning commentator continues her fearless discussion on the repression of women's rights in the Middle East, bolstered by information about the socio-political and religious contexts and the catalysts of the Arab Spring. Refreshing and authoritative, it is both a thought-provoking examination of female oppression and a passionate advocacy vehicle for change.

HER LIFE'S WORK

Shepard, Deborah 328pp 2009

Writer Deborah Shepard interviews five eminent New Zealand women: Jacqueline Fahey, Margaret Mahy, Merimeri Penfold, Gaylene Preston and Anne Salmond. All born in the first half of the 20th Century, these women reflect on all facets of their lives, especially their journeys to prominence in their chosen fields while juggling the demands of motherhood and family. These engaging and inspiring dialogues offer an important feminist perspective on ordinary women aspiring to and achieving extraordinary lives.

HIDDEN LIFE OF TREES, THE

Wohlleben, Peter 271pp 2015

Trees that warn their neighbours of impending insect attack using scents and sound vibrations? Trees' parents caring for their offspring? Who would have thought? Presenting the science behind the latest discoveries about trees, forester Peter Wohlleben employs humour and anthropomorphic comparisons to great effect to convey just how trees feel and communicate. Whether it is woodland etiquette, the particular challenges trees in urban streets face, or the impact of climate change, the wide-ranging information is cogently presented. This is a well-researched and intriguing commentary of trees in all their complexity.

HILLBILLY ELEGY, THE

Vance, J D 257pp 2016

Raised in an addiction-riddled, dysfunctional Appalachian family, J D Vance, as a Yale Law School graduate, is a statistical outlier. An advocate of the notion that no-one escapes their upbringing, he relates the story of his childhood, the abuse, poverty and trauma and the loss of hope experienced by so many of his community. Offering both a forthright description of the chaos he faced on a daily basis and also an insightful analysis of the receding American Dream, this is a riveting and deeply moving memoir.

HISTORY OF SILENCE, A

Jones, Lloyd 270pp 2013

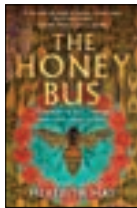


Told alongside the experience of Christchurch following the February 2011 earthquake, this is a memoir of the Jones family and the revelations from its history that shake it to its core. Juxtaposed with the havoc resulting from the seismic upheaval are the devastating events from the family's past painstakingly uncovered by the author, that create a compelling story of uncertain landscapes and shifting realities.

HONEY BUS, THE

May, Meredith 288pp 2019

When Meredith and her brother are transplanted from Rhode Island to California in the 1970s, the world of honeybees and beekeeping become unexpected saviours in their unstable circumstances. 'Gramps' introduces Meredith to life in the hive and it is through this knowledge that she begins to understand herself and the people around her. This is the thoughtful memoir of a troubled childhood, an encouraging demonstration of the healing power of nature and the difference one person can make in a child's life.



"Well received by the group. One of the best reads for 2022. It provokes compassion, grace and hope."

Havelock North 011

"For us the best book of the year! Great discussion. All thoroughly enjoyed the book. Learnt a lot about bees."

Whanganui 004

"This was probably our most popular book of the year. Everyone enjoyed it — a fascinating account of bees, but also of a childhood with a depressed mother."

Palmerston North 006

HOUSE IN THE SKY, A

Lindhout, Amanda 367pp 2013

For intrepid traveller Canadian Amanda Lindhout, the experience of captivity is almost unbearable. But bear it she must: kidnapped along with an Australian friend, she is held captive for 460 days in Somalia. From converting to Islam, to positively engaging with her captors as much as she is able to, Amanda does everything she can to survive. And survive she does, triumphing over the torture and incarceration with courage. Never maudlin, and positive in outlook, this is a powerful, unforgettable memoir that will engender much discussion. [SMALL FONT]

HOUSE OF STONE

Lamb, Christina 290pp 2006

This book aims to tell the history of modern Rhodesia/ Zimbabwe (from 1970 to 2006) through the personal stories of two of its citizens. Nigel Hough is the son of white farmers who attends the most prestigious private boys' school in the nation, while Aquilino grows up in a poor village where her family is considered well-off because the daughters wear shoes. Interwoven with the triumphs and tragedies of their own lives is the tale of a country changing from white-governed Rhodesia into an independent, hopeful Zimbabwe, and finally into the destroyed plaything of dictator Robert Mugabe.

HOW TO AVOID A CLIMATE DISASTER

Gates, Bill 272pp 2021

Which do you want first, the good news or the bad news? In this accessible and cogent guide to global warming and climate change, author Bill Gates delivers both the many challenges ahead, as well as the solutions that are lining up and the breakthrough technologies that are needed. Written with simplicity and clarity, this blueprint for avoiding disaster is fortified with science and economics and offers a potential path to a zero-carbon future.

HOW TO BE A DICTATOR

Dikotter, Frank 274pp 2019

Lord Acton's proverb 'power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely', was just as relevant in the twentieth century as it was when it was originally coined in 1887. Look no further for proof than to the eight dictators assembled here: Mussolini, Hitler, Stalin, Mao Zedong, Kim Il-sung, Duvalier, Ceaușescu, and last but not least, Mengistu. Strikingly similar in their ability to achieve and maintain power through political terror and public worship, these household names are examined to engrossing effect. Approachable and well-crafted, this book is an impartial exposé of tyrannical leaders hard at work manipulating and menacing their respective nations.

HOW TO FLY A HORSE

Ashton, Kevin 298pp 2015

If at first you don't succeed, try, try again. It turns out that our parents really did know what they were talking about. Forget about needing to be a genius, this book convincingly debunks the mythical nature of creativity and reveals the consistent factors at the root of discovery and innovation. Drawing on examples as diverse as the discovery that stomach ulcers are caused by a bacterium through to James Dyson's development of a cyclone-based vacuum cleaner, author Kevin Ashton demonstrates that the same principles apply. Subtitled '*The secret history of creation, invention and discovery*', this is a thought-provoking and wide ranging exploration of creativity. [SMALL FONT]

HUMANKIND

Bregman, Rutger 463pp 2020

In an antidote to the woes of the world, this Dutch historian offers a fresh perspective on human nature. Is it possible that people are fundamentally decent and not the selfish and self-interested beings we have been led to believe? Drawing from wide-ranging disciplines including psychology, politics, philosophy and sociology, the author reassesses historical events and landmark studies in human behaviour, to make the well-referenced case that we have been woefully misinformed. Bold and engaging, this stimulating book challenges the basic negative assumptions we have about human nature that we have inherited and proposes an optimistic alternative, and a roadmap for a better future.

HUSNA'S STORY

Ahmed, Farid 316pp 2020



In the wake of the Christchurch terror attacks on March 15th 2019, there were many families whose lives were irrevocably changed. Included in this number is Farid Ahmed, husband of the indomitable Husna who was a casualty of the attack at the Al Noor mosque. This is his tribute to her: the story of her life, one of dedication and service to the Muslim community, from her upbringing in Bangladesh to life as a wife and mother in New Zealand. Written with humility and focused on peace and forgiveness, this is a heartfelt testimony to a courageous and selfless woman.

I AM NUJOOD, AGE 10 AND DIVORCED

Ali, Nujood (with Delphine Minoui) 188pp 2010



The title says it all. This is the unforgettable account of the first child bride in Yemen to be granted a divorce. Receiving international attention, Nujood's short and simply told story lays bare the customs, culture and circumstances that made such an event possible. Co-author Denise Minoui sets this story in context, highlighting the plight of these child brides.

I AM, I AM, I AM

O'Farrell, Maggie 285pp 2017



If a cat's nine lives are worth marvelling at, then Maggie O'Farrell's 'seventeen brushes with death' are truly memorable. In this uniquely structured memoir these near-death experiences weave together the story of a whole life. Flicking between illnesses and accidents, near misses and potentially disastrous encounters, these reflective vignettes, with their many and varied circumstances, remind us of the complexity of identity and experience, and encourage contemplation of one's own mortality. An elegant and life-affirming read.

I AM MALALA

Yousafzai, Malala 276pp 2013



Malala Yousafzai captured the world's attention when she was shot by the Taliban in 2012 when she was fifteen years old, for fighting for the right for girls to be educated. From the remote Swat Valley in northern Pakistan where she lived, through to the hallowed halls of the United Nations in New York, after a remarkable recovery, Malala has continued her campaign advocating for universal access to education. Enhanced by the contribution of renowned foreign correspondent Christina Lamb, this is Malala's story: powerful, hopeful and above all, inspiring.

I KNOW WHY THE CAGED BIRD SINGS

Angelou, Maya 281pp 1969



An African-American poet's memories of her childhood in the American South and early youth in North America. Angelou is one of the most honoured writers of her generation, being awarded over 30 honorary degrees and nominated for a Pulitzer Prize.

I, MIGRANT

Shah, Sami 280pp 2014



Did you hear the one about the kangaroo and the Karachi comedian? Well, if you haven't yet chuckled over this unlikely combination, it's time to investigate Sami Shah's story of life in Western Australia, his new home. Pakistani born and bred, with a sojourn in the United States for tertiary education, Sami Shah is well qualified to reflect on the tension between Muslim orthodoxy and Western culture, modern Islam, and the migrant experience, and he doesn't hold back ... Confronting, inspiring and capable of inducing involuntary laughter, this is an engaging memoir infused with the humour and insight one would expect from Pakistan's first stand-up comedian.



I SHALL NOT HATE

Abuelaish, Izzeldin 234pp 2011

Overcoming humble beginnings in Gaza to study medicine, Dr Izzeldin Abuelaish is a remarkable man. But it is not until three of his children are killed in an Israeli raid in 2009 that the world becomes aware of how truly inspiring he is. Despite this personal tragedy he advocates for forgiveness and reconciliation to be the only way forward for Israelis and Palestinians. Both riveting and heart-wrenching this story turns the spot light on the struggles of daily life in Gaza and the need for a very different future.

ILLUSTRATED HISTORY OF THE TREATY OF WAITANGI, AN

Orange, Claudia 345pp 2004

A straightforward account of the history of the Treaty, featuring a wide range of illustrations. The book covers not only the events of 1840, but also the forces leading to the making of a treaty and the impact of the protests and negotiations that followed for the next century-and-a-half.

IMMORTAL LIFE OF HENRIETTA LACKS, THE

Skloot, Rebecca 369pp 2010

When Henrietta Lacks, a poor African-American died in 1951, she and her family had been unaware that cancer cells were taken from her body and cultured. From the development of the polio vaccine, to the effects of radiation and to more recent work of gene mapping and cloning, these so called HeLa cells have revolutionised medical science and benefitted millions of people. This is the story of Henrietta, her family and her immortal cells, generators of not only material for research, but large amounts of money. A fascinating and accessible read whether you are a scientific novice or guru. [BIG READ]

IN MORAL DANGER

Biggs, Barbara 346pp 2003

An autobiography by Barbara Biggs, who at 14, was a runaway with nowhere to go. The book tells of her sexual abuse by one of Australia's most successful criminal barristers, who had 'purchased' her from her grandmother. This begins her account of the damaging after effects, and of the dark side of the permissive seventies. An extraordinary family story told with black humour and unflinching honesty.

INCONVENIENT INDIAN, THE

King, Thomas 287pp 2012

Pesky Redskins or Inconvenient Indians? Academic Thomas King weighed up both titles settling on the latter to better convey his perspective on the relationship, past and present, between 'Indians' and 'Whites' in North America. With land at the heart of the matter, the author delves into the history of the colonisation of Canada and the United States to examine the dysfunctional relationship that eventuated. Rounded out with the story of indigenous resistance and the place of Indians in popular culture and tempered with wry humour and insight, this is a forthright and thought-provoking account that will resonate with New Zealand readers.

INCURABLE ROMANTIC, THE

Tallis, Dr Frank 276pp 2018

Lie back on the couch, take a deep breath and ready yourself for a session with clinical psychologist Frank Tallis. Based on case studies from his clinical experience, this is a warts and all examination of romance and emotional attachment. With its easy narrative style and obvious compassion, it is an enlightening read that puts the messy and fascinating business of love (especially when it gets out of control) under the microscope.

INDONESIA, ETC

Pisani, Elizabeth 395pp 2014

The largest Islamic nation and the fourth most populous country in the world, Indonesia, looming large to New Zealand's north is a land of diverse language, ethnicity, religion and peoples. Journalist, seasoned observer and enthusiastic Indonesia-phile Elizabeth Pisani guides us through the culture, politics and society that comprise this 'improbable' post-independence nation. Blending humour, empathy and information galore, this is the best of travel writing as it weaves anecdote and analysis into a fascinating and entertaining mix.

INFIDEL: MY LIFE

Ali, Ayaan Hirsi 353pp 2007

Born in Somalia and raised a Muslim, Ayaan Hirsi Ali escaped an arranged marriage and made a new life as a Dutch parliamentarian, championing the reform of Islam and its attitude to women's rights. She recounts her extraordinary transition from a third-world upbringing to her current status as one of Time magazine's one hundred most influential people in the world. [SMALL FONT]



INHERITANCE: HOW OUR GENES CHANGE OUR LIVES

Moalem, Sharon 254pp 2014

According to the field of epigenetics, the interaction of genes and the environment, 'you are what you eat' can now be expanded to 'you are what you eat as well as where and how you live and the stresses you face'. In the face of this new knowledge that it is possible to change our genes, physician Dr Sharon Moalem outlines how it all comes together. From individualised chemotherapy to how much fruit you can consume, this fascinating and immensely readable book confirms that with our genes calling the shots, there are many implications with respect to our ability to affect our individual genetic make-up and that of generations to come.

INVENTION OF NATURE, THE

Wulf, Andrea 473pp 2015

If Alexander von Humboldt was alive today, he would be justified in saying, 'I told you so'. Among the many and varied accomplishments of this 19th century scientist was his prediction of human-induced climate change. An intrepid explorer and visionary scientist, he was an important mover and shaker of his time, an opinion-shaper and science communicator extraordinaire, ensuring his theory of the interconnectedness of nature continues to influence how we view the natural world today. Ostensibly a biography, this impressively researched book weaves threads of travel, adventure, intellectual pursuits and a who's who of the other luminaries of von Humboldt's era, into a thrilling and dazzling whole, a worthy celebration of this scientific superstar. [SMALL FONT]

IRIS: A MEMOIR OF IRIS MURDOCH

Bayley, John 294pp 1998

Author and literary critic, John Bayley, was married to writer, Iris Murdoch. Before her death in 1999, she suffered for several years from Alzheimer's. This memoir recounts in a moving, but unsentimental way, their life together.

ISLAM

Armstrong, Karen 192pp 2000

From the Prophet Muhammad's receipt of the revelations of the Quran 1500 years ago through to a postscript featuring the 2001 attack on the World Trade Centre, this guide examines the history and development of the Islamic religion. In offering an overview that includes the effect of the West on Islam and the rise of fundamentalism, it also includes possibilities for a 'way forward'. With supporting material in the form of maps, a glossary of Arabic terms, a list of key figures, a chronology and a list of suggestions for further reading, this book provides all of the detailed information needed to counteract prejudice and gain an understanding of one of the world's greatest religions.

JAMES HECTOR

Nathan, Simon 264pp 2015



From a dolphin and a whale, to a bird and a snail, and a location or two, James Hector's name is remembered throughout New Zealand, but his legacy is even more significant. Born in Scotland in 1834, he arrived in New Zealand in 1862 via Canada and the Australian goldfields, commissioned for starters to undertake a geological survey of Otago. Many achievements followed that we still benefit from today, including: establishing the Colonial Museum and the first national earthquake recording system, undertaking large public works and standardising New Zealand time. Reflecting comprehensive research and with its lively writing style, this is a fascinating account of an energetic colonial 'explorer, scientist and leader' responsible for laying the groundwork for organised science in New Zealand.

JANE AUSTEN: A LIFE

Tomalin, Claire 345pp 1998

The novels of Jane Austen picture a world of civility and reassuring stability, but her work also connected with some key events of the period. Sourcing local archives, Tomalin produces a picture of this author's life, and English society at the end of the 18th century.

JANET FRAME: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Frame, Janet 434pp 1984



A three-volume autobiography of the iconic Janet Frame's childhood in Oamaru, her time as a student, a mental hospital patient, and later as an established author. [BIG READ]

JEWELS: A SECRET HISTORY

Finlay, Victoria 496pp 2007



Lift the lid of your jewel box and bring out your favourite gems, you're about to be dazzled by their seductive stories. From amber and jet through to rubies and diamonds, in this extensively researched but easy to read book, journalist Victoria Findlay explores the world of precious stones: their foundation, the mythology that surrounds them, their history and their uses. A gem of a book. [SMALL FONT]

JOURNAL OF BEST PRACTICES, THE

Finch, David 224pp 2012

When David Finch is diagnosed with Asperger syndrome, it is not a surprise to Kristen his wife of five years. But what is a surprise is how this diagnosis saves their marriage. Determined to be a better husband and father, David starts taking notes (in his distinctly excessive manner) and hence the 'journal of best practices' is born. Not only is the reader exposed to the experiences of living with an autistic spectrum disorder, but also to the very essence of what constitutes a good relationship. A warm, amusing, and insightful memoir.



JOURNEY TO PRISON, THE

Lashlie, Celia 181pp 2003



A collection of ex-prison officer and prison manager Celia Lashlie's reflections and observations, based on her fifteen years of experience with Corrections in New Zealand. She discusses the origins of crime in New Zealand: the way we punish offenders, the effectiveness of prison, parental responsibility, the role of drugs, education, and state institutions. Underpinning her argument, is the need for the community to take responsibility for the incidence of crime in New Zealand society.

JUST MERCY

Stevenson, Bryan 336pp 2014

Although he grew up in a poor black community in the American South, Bryan Stevenson is a Harvard graduate, a law professor and an influential and impassioned advocate for those at the bottom of the heap. With their fate resting in the balance, he established a legal practice, the Equal Justice Initiative, which has successfully defended many of those most in need. With one in three black men imprisoned in the USA, his plea for justice and mercy from their dysfunctional criminal justice system is compelling and powerfully argued. A disturbing but undoubtedly inspiring story. [SMALL FONT]

KIDNAPPED IN YEMEN

Quin, Mary 282pp 2004



Quin recounts her experiences as a member of a group of tourists who are kidnapped by Yemeni rebels. Following their rescue (when four of the group are killed by crossfire) this NZ born, American resident returns to her high powered career in the USA. As part of her recovery from the ordeal, she searches for understanding of the kidnappers and their motives which takes her around the world. It is also a journey of self-discovery culminating in a new very different life in Alaska.

KILLERS OF THE FLOWER MOON

Grann, David 339pp 2017

When the Osage Indians were relocated from their ancestral lands to Oklahoma, huge wealth was on the cards when oil was discovered under their new reservation. But it was not long before dozens of members of the tribe started to die in mysterious circumstances. When the people investigating the deaths are also killed, it is the nascent FBI, under the directorship of the young J. Edgar Hoover, who steps into the breach and exposes a chilling conspiracy. This is a detailed and fascinating story of the early FBI and the shocking real events of the 1920s American West whose legacy remains with the Osage tribe today.

KIKA & ME

Patel, Amit 280pp 2020



Amil Patel's life is on the up and up. He is an A & E doctor at a London hospital and newly married but almost overnight he goes blind. In the grief and turmoil that follows, the prospect of a satisfying and meaningful life seems impossible. That is, until the arrival of a guide dog, Kika, who turns his life around. Inspiring and informative, this uplifting memoir details the author's experiences in losing his sight, gaining an extraordinary canine companion, and placing readers in the challenging world of visual impairment.



"Best book this year! Group thought it was perfectly pitched and structured. Kika was a delight to us all."

Ngongotaha 001

"The story is one of love, devotion, perseverance and courage. We strongly recommend *Kika and Me*."

Nelson 007

"Everyone thoroughly enjoyed the book. Would recommend it. Great insights into the effects of blindness in everyday life."

Ashburton 009

KNOW MY NAME

Miller, Chanel 365pp 2019

In telling her story and allowing her name to be known, Chanel Miller moves from victimhood to reclaiming her life. As the survivor of the internationally publicised 2015 Stanford University sexual assault case, Chanel details what happened to her and her experiences at the hands of an inadequate justice system, and her successful efforts to change Californian law to better support future victims. Compelling and harrowing, this courageous memoir positions her experience against the backdrop of the #MeToo movement and eloquently exposes the cost of rape culture and entitlement. [SMALL FONT]



"An engaging, true and honest account. Humorous in some very difficult situations."

"A very moving and intimate account from the victim's point-of-view."

"This is a very empowering account. She is a courageous woman."

"I don't know who disgusted me more — the young man who assaulted her, or the judge!"

BDS Reviewers

KNOW YOUR PLACE

Ghahraman, Golriz 305pp 2020



The title of this memoir signals the many strands of Golriz Ghahraman's life – knowing her place as a refugee, immigrant, a woman of colour, a human rights lawyer and as a member of parliament. From her childhood in Iran and arrival in New Zealand aged nine, through to her experiences as an advocate in legal and political spheres, this is a confronting account of a multifaceted life and of the discrimination meted out to those who are perceived to be different. Knowing one's place and finding one's voice... in this compelling and inspiring story, the author has found both.

LAB GIRL

Jahren, Hope 369pp 2016



Hope Jahren is perfectly described by the title 'lab girl': as a child it was her father's lab in a community college in Minnesota, followed by university labs, and then, the pinnacle of success, her own research laboratory. Passionate about the world of science, especially plants, seeds and soil, this paleobiologist turns her talents to candidly telling the story of both her professional and personal journeys. From her adventures in fieldwork in the American West, North Pole, Ireland and Hawaii, through to the struggle for funding and the particular challenges of being a woman in science, this story is a dazzling blend of memoir and very readable science.

LADY IN WAITING

Glenconner, Anne 321pp 2019



The subtitle says it all: 'my extraordinary life in the shadow of the crown'. The daughter of an earl, Maid of Honour at the Queen's coronation, wife of a Lord, mother of five, Lady in Waiting to Princess Margaret ... the list is long, but this is no fairy tale. Along with the famous names and the glitz and glamour, there is tragedy, betrayal and heartache. Both fascinating and sobering in turn, this very readable memoir of Lady Anne Glenconner offers a unique window into a world of wealth and privilege that most people can only dream of.

LANGUAGE OF KINDNESS, THE

Watson, Christie 322pp 2017

Although she would be horrified by the unresolved funding challenges of the profession she launched, Florence Nightingale would be delighted to endorse this tender and candid story of modern nursing. Following the author's 20 years of nursing practice in NHS hospitals, this is a factual and compelling exposé of what it means to be a nurse: the patients, the love, care and compassion and the toll it takes. Presenting the individual stories of patients as well as the history and principles of nursing, this is a remarkable story of the nursing profession in action, revealed through the experiences of a warm and empathetic practitioner.

LANI'S STORY

Brennan, Lani with Hazel Flynn 281pp 2013



Before she was even a teenager, Lani Brennan had taken her first steps towards becoming an alcoholic. By the time she was thirteen, an inevitable future was mapped out for her: drug and alcohol addiction and full scale domestic violence. But Lani with her Aboriginal and Maori heritage is a survivor, and her decision to become sober and see her abuser brought to justice through the Australian legal system not only turns her own life around but has a powerful influence on others suffering from the same harsh realities. Shocking at times but always compelling, this is a disturbing story with a happy ending brought about by Lani and her family breaking the cycle.

LAST RESORT, THE

Rogers, Douglas 378pp 2009



While Journalist Douglas Rogers is off overseas seeking his 'big story', his parents are back home in Zimbabwe living a 'big story': surviving in their war-torn country. Heart breaking and astonishingly funny in turn, this is the story of their determined struggle against the tumultuous Mugabe regime and all of the attendant danger and upheaval. It is a vibrant and captivating memoir providing a feel for the history and people of Zimbabwe that will remain with you long after you finish the last page.

LAST RHINOS, THE

Anthony, Lawrence 334pp 2012

Conservationist Lawrence Anthony is a man with a mission. In this instance, it is to save the few remaining wild Northern white rhino that inhabit the land in the Congo controlled by the Lord's Resistance Army. As if this wasn't challenge enough, there are also the demands of his own game reserve in Zululand to contend with. With its enthralling mix of animals, poachers and politics, this is a fast-paced, exciting story of Africa.

LAST TRAIN TO ZONA VERDE, THE

Theroux, Paul 353pp 2013

Take one large continent. Start at the bottom, head up the left hand side. Observe closely the people and places you come across. Express your very definite opinions for others to ponder; such is the case in this African odyssey from veteran travel writer Paul Theroux. Setting forth from South Africa, he wends his way north sampling Namibia and Botswana on the way before reaching his final destination, Angola. From slum dwelling to safari tourism, this story combines the exciting details of a travelogue with thoughtful commentary on contemporary Africa.



LAUGHING ALL THE WAY TO THE MOSQUE 🔍🗣️

Nawaz, Zarqa 221pp 2014

Domiciled in Canada from the time she was a young child, Zarqa Nawaz comes from a conservative Muslim family and describes in a forthright and humorous fashion the tricky business of growing up and being a practising Muslim in a Western society. From a film-maker who produced a TV series titled 'Little Mosque on the Prairie', one would expect an amusing and clever story; happily this memoir succeeds on all counts. Entertaining as well as informative.

LET THERE BE WATER

Siegel, Seth M. 337pp 2015

It's official – global water shortages are looming. Necessity being the mother of invention has meant that Israel, with 60% of its land in desert, is in the perfect position to lead the way in how to transform water scarcity into water abundance with its use of cutting-edge technology, conservation and promotion of a water-sensitive culture. Not only does this well-researched report document the people and solutions involved in this success, but also reveals the potential of water systems collaboration to promote diplomacy. An informative, enthusiastic and inspiring account of Israel's rise to a water superpower, and what their blueprint offers a thirsty world.

LETTERS FROM THE BAY OF ISLANDS: THE STORY OF MARIANNE WILLIAMS 🗣️

Fitzgerald, Caroline 270pp 2004

In 1822, Marianne Williams, her missionary-husband, Henry, and their three children left England for the Bay of Islands. A year later, they arrived at a remote one-house settlement where they stayed for thirty years. Marianne's letters to her family in England tell her story. Her courage and uncomplaining determination shine through as she describes, in vivid and compelling detail, the hardships and joys of their daily lives, their relationship with Maori, and the battles between different tribes.

LIFE AFTER DEATH

Echols, Damien 416pp 2012

For Damien Echols, the so called 'ring-leader' of the West Memphis Three, there is finally life to be lived after eighteen years on death row. Championed by celebrities (including Sir Peter Jackson and Fran Walsh) before being released in 2011, Echols, and friends Jason Baldwin and Jessie Misskelly were wrongfully convicted as teenagers of the murder of three boys in Arkansas in 1993. Both an exposé of the American justice system and a raw and gritty memoir of a life beset by many challenges, this is a surprisingly uplifting story of perseverance and hope in the face of bad odds. A powerful and unforgettable read.

LIFE IS SO GOOD

Dawson, George 285pp 2000

Providing a window into the entire 20th century, *Life Is So Good* is a reflective look at a humble man who has lived an understated yet fascinating life. This memoir of George Dawson, a black manual labourer who learned to read at age 98, is the product of a collaboration between Dawson and a high school history teacher. It gives a black man's perspective of life in the American South during many of the significant events of the century. Although he endured hardship, Dawson's positive philosophy has sustained him to a ripe old age.

LIFE IN A JAR

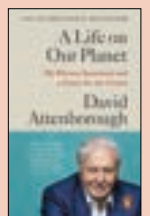
Mayer, Jack 375pp 2011

Virtually unknown in her native Poland, Irene Sendler's World War II exploits in organising the rescue of Jewish babies, were brought to prominence in 1999 by three American high school students developing a play for a National History Day project in Kansas. In a poetic counterweight to the inhumanity of the Holocaust, this project demonstrated just the opposite: Protestant American school children celebrating the work of a Catholic woman saving Jewish babies in a Polish ghetto. An edifying story of courage, unsung heroes and the inspiration of people working together to make a difference.

LIFE ON OUR PLANET

Attenborough, David 288pp 2022

A household name and with decades of international experience under his belt, broadcaster and historian David Attenborough is a man with a powerful message. In this 'witness statement and vision for the future', he outlines what has been done to the natural world, and spells out how it is possible to remedy the damage that has been inflicted. Part-memoir, part-manifesto and part-blueprint, this is a sobering account of the mess we have made of the natural world, and crucially, how to restore balance to our planet. [SMALL FONT]



"I loved this book, and my husband enjoyed it too. I'll be buying my own copy."

"The first book I've given a 10/10 rating. Not only are the words great, but pictures and illustrations too! The perfect read for me."

"There isn't a more distinct and dulcet voice than Attenborough's and I wouldn't want any other person to read me this confronting story."

BDS Reviewers

LIFE LIKE OTHER PEOPLE'S, A

Bennett, Alan 242pp 2009

Alan Bennett's *A Life Like Other People's* is the core of his collection *Untold Stories*. It is a poignant memoir of his parent's marriage and his own childhood, recalling Christmases with Grandma Peel and the lives, loves and deaths of his unforgettable aunts, Kathleen and Myra. With the sudden descent of his mother into depression and, later, dementia, a long-held family secret is uncovered in this heart-rending and at times irresistibly funny work of autobiography by one of the best-loved English writers.

LIGHTHOUSE KEEPER'S WIFE, THE

Aplin, Jeanette 228pp 2001

A classic New Zealand story of life on remote Stephens Island, famous for its wildlife, and stronghold of the pre-historic tuatara. Aplin reveals her struggles to live up to her high ideals, and "to be a good, true, lighthouse keeper's wife". She brings alive a way of life now gone forever.

LINE BECOMES A RIVER, THE

Cantu, Francisco 247pp 2018

The lure of the prospect of a better life is on stark display in the deserts of Arizona, New Mexico and Texas, where they border Mexico. Policing this boundary as a US Border Patrol agent from 2008-2012, the author witnesses the risks the prospective Mexican migrants will take, desperate for a better future than the one their own country can provide. People smugglers, drug mules, death and despair, it's all in a day's work trying to keep control of the border. Distinguished by its humane perspective and lyrical prose, this thoughtful and soul-searching account of the harsh realities of managing illegal immigration provides valuable context for a contentious issue of contemporary America.

LITTLE CRIMINALS

Cohen, David 288pp 2011

When journalist David Cohen arrived at Epuni Boys' Home as a 13 year old in the 1970s, far from being part of the residential system offering solutions to the problems of juvenile delinquency, Epuni was becoming part of the problem. This book examines Epuni; its history, its purpose, how it functioned on a day-to-day basis, and the societal context underpinning its ethos. With input from former residents and staff, Cohen reveals its legacy: the nurturing of little criminals into big criminals, many who have become household names. A sobering and thought provoking social history.

LITTLE PRINCES

Grennan, Conor 308pp 2011

A short stint in a Nepali orphanage develops into something far more for American Conor Grennan. The children turn out not to be orphans but trafficked children, abandoned or on-sold after their parents had originally paid for them to be taken to Katmandu for safekeeping so they would not be forced to join the Maoist army. Caring for the children is one thing, risking his life to reunite the children with their families is another, and Conor is there, boots and all. Written with refreshing honesty, this is a captivating story that engages the reader every step of the journey to take these children home.

LONG SLOW AFFAIR OF THE HEART, A

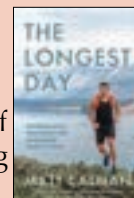
Ansley, Bruce 213pp 2008

A memoir from writer Bruce Ansley documenting his and his wife Sally's year-long adventure buying a canal boat in Holland and sailing it through Belgium to France. The author delivers not only a picturesque travelogue but the more personal journeys experienced in trying to make a dream come true. Humorous and easy to read.

LONGEST DAY, THE

Calman, Matt 297pp 2020

The 'longest day' is the name of the 243 kilometre one day event of New Zealand's Coast-to-Coast Multisport World Championships, but also an apt description of how journalist Matt Calman was experiencing his life. No longer choosing to use alcohol as a crutch, he was battling anxiety and depression. The Coast-to-Coast race became his goal for recovery and in this easy-to-read memoir he details just how gruelling the training is and the challenges of the event itself. Open and honest, this story of hitting rock bottom and then reaching for the top, step by step with the support of friends and whānau, is a constructive and hopeful addition to understanding men's mental health issues.



"Well-written. It's easy to read and brutally honest."

"Matt's tale is very pertinent to this era of increasing awareness of mental health issues and the need for people, especially men, to seek help."

"Matt has a warm, intimate way with his words."

BDS Reviewers

LONG WALK TO FREEDOM

Mandela, Nelson 768pp 1994

Nelson Mandela’s account of his life as a freedom fighter in apartheid South Africa. A readable and inspiring autobiography. (BDS Twenty-fifth Anniversary Book). [BIG READ]

LONG WAY HOME, A

Brierley, Saroo 256pp 2013

Most people use Google Earth to check out the route to a new address, but for Saroo Brierley it was to find his way home. Lost as a five year old, Saroo traversed India on a train and ended up on the streets of Kolkata before being adopted by an Australian family. Twenty five years later, after years of viewing satellite images and attempting to match them to the few visual memories he had, Saroo was able to return to India to be reunited with his birth family. A simply told heart-warming story, testament to the power of determination and perseverance.

LOST DAUGHTER, THE

Williams, Mary 300pp 2013

From life in an impoverished Black Panther family, to life with the rich and famous, Mary Williams has seen it all. As a teenager she attended summer camps run by Jane Fonda and eventually came to live with the family. Embracing the world that was then at her fingertips, Mary studied at university, undertook aid work in Morocco and Tanzania and faced the extreme demands of Antarctica and a solo traverse of the Appalachian trail. But there was a price to pay for being part of two disparate worlds; Mary also needed to accept the challenge of reconnecting with her conflicted past. Both interesting and insightful, this is a fascinating account of deprivation and opportunity, and the importance of working out one’s place in the world.

LOST PIANOS OF SIBERIA, THE

Roberts, Sophy 354pp 2020

Russia has Catherine the Great to thank for its love affair with the piano, and centuries down the track, journalist Sophy Roberts discovers just what a significant role the piano has, and continues to play, in Russian life and culture. On the lookout for a suitable piano for a friend, her quest ultimately has her criss-crossing Siberia, tracing the history and whereabouts of the many pianos and their owners that made their way to this region of exile and imprisonment. With its fascinating encounters with these people and their pianos, and journeys through the vast reaches of Siberia, this is an entertaining and intriguing story about one of the most remote places on earth.



LOVE WITH A CHANCE OF DROWNING

DeRoche, Torre 337pp 2013

What we do for love! Australian Torre DeRoche casts off into the challenging waters of both love and the Pacific when she embarks on an ocean journey with a charming Argentinian and his yacht. A slight complication - Torre is risk averse and scared of the sea, but takes the plunge nonetheless. Both funny and engaging, this is a fast-paced story of love, adventure and facing up to your fears.

MADNESS MADE ME

O’Hagan, Mary 261pp 2015



From psychiatric wards through to the hallowed halls of the United Nations, Mary O’Hagan has had the full gamut of experience in the mental health sphere. With her belief in the value of ‘madness’ Mary channelled her experiences of the New Zealand mental health service and those of her fellow sufferers into committed advocacy, culminating in her roles as the Mental Health Commissioner and more recently as an international mental health consultant. Sometimes uncomfortable, always honest and uniquely insightful, this is an important and thought-provoking personal account of the full human experience of ‘madness’, and its place in our society.

MAKING IT

Blades, Jay 282pp 2021

Perhaps you have heard of Jay Blades from TV’s ‘The Repair Shop’? Even if you haven’t, he’s a man worth knowing for his amazing rise from considerable adversity to being a TV personality, a furniture restorer, businessman, recipient of an MBE, and an all-round likeable chap known for his kindness. Of Jamaican heritage, he grew up in East London facing poverty, racism, police brutality and eventually homelessness, but today he inspires others with his compassion and positivity. This easy-to-read memoir with its open, frank approach and conversational style, really is the story of a repairman repairing himself.



“Fans of ‘The Repair Shop’ will be particularly interested. It’s uplifting because it really is a ‘self-repair’ story.”

“Very easy to read. An interesting life-story and Jay has a very positive outlook.”

“Written in a conversational style, and while it’s not a literary read, it is written with a disarming honesty.”

BDS Reviewers

MAN'S SEARCH FOR MEANING

Frankl, Viktor E 221pp 1984

A dispassionate account of this renowned psychiatrist's time in concentration camps during World War Two. From these experiences, he developed 'logotherapy', a therapeutic model encouraging the person to look forward to meaning in life in contrast to the retrospection and introspection of psychotherapy. Frankl's classic bestseller (originally published in 1947) continues to offer theoretical and practical insights for finding meaning in one's life experiences.

MAO'S LAST DANCER

Cunxin, Li 368pp 2003

This is the autobiography of Li Cunxin, who, as an eleven-year-old, was chosen by Madame Mao's cultural delegates to be taken from his desperately poor village in northeast China to study ballet in Beijing. In 1979, the young dancer arrived in Texas as part of a cultural exchange, only to fall in love with America — and with an American woman. Two years later, through a series of cloak-and-dagger events, Cunxin defected to the US. This is the story not only of a dancer's coming of age in turbulent times, but also of individual strength, self-discovery, and the triumph of the human spirit.

MĀORI BOY

Ihimaera, Witi 378pp 2014

Once upon a time, a baby was born into a Mormon Māori family. This baby grew up to be none other than one of New Zealand's greatest storytellers – Witi Ihimaera. The childhood that followed became the foundation for much of his writing, reflecting his cultural heritage and unique perspective on life. Rich with whakapapa and mythology, this enthralling memoir of his early years beautifully articulates the experience of growing up Māori in New Zealand.

MAP THAT CHANGED THE WORLD, THE

Winchester, Simon 338pp 2001

The fascinating story of an Oxfordshire blacksmith's orphaned son who discovered an unmistakable pattern in the rocks. From this, William "Strata" Smith developed the first true geological map following fossils and rock patterns, earning him a place in history as the father of modern geology. An account of a man who crossed boundaries of class and science.

MARRIED TO A BEDOUIN

Van Geldermalsen, Marguerite 279pp 2006

Van Geldermalsen writes on her website: "This is the story of how I fell in love with Mohammad and married him; how I settled into his cave, and slept with him on a ledge under a sheet of stars; how I fetched water by donkey, and ran the local clinic. It also describes the

most recent history of Petra. Through our stories, and the stories of the people with whom we shared the valley, comes a picture of the site when it was alive, and when I was married to a Bedouin."

MASTERING THE ART OF SOVIET COOKING

Von Bremzen, Anya 327pp 2014

Gastronomic delights and culinary abundance are not usually the first things that spring to mind when contemplating Soviet Russia. But Anya von Bremen confirms in this detailed memoir that food (or the lack thereof) underpins much of Soviet political history. From Lenin through to Gorbachev and the collapse of the USSR, from blini through to borscht, this black humoured story examines Russian life and history through the unique lens of food, cooking and family.

MIDNIGHT IN THE GARDEN OF GOOD & EVIL

Berendt, John 388pp 1995

Literary non-fiction comparable to another true crime story: Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood*. Berendt, an unknown journalist from New York, befriends the enigmatic, southern gentleman, Jim Williams. The author leads us into Savannah's culture and people, interweaving the experience with a crime of passion. [SMALL FONT]

MEMORY PALACE, THE

Bartok, Mira 301pp 2011

When life with their brilliant but schizophrenic mother becomes unbearable, sisters Mira and Natalia are forced to sever all contact. Reconciled many years later, artist and writer Mira Bartók draws from her 'memory palace' to tell the story of growing-up with a parent with a debilitating mental illness, and the pain and heartbreak that led to their abandoning their mother. Punctuated with Bartók's original art, this is an exquisitely written memoir, compassionate, poignant and above all, testimony to the strength of bonds between mother and daughters. [SMALL FONT]

MIGRANT JOURNEYS

Jansen, A & Grant, L 207pp 2015

Subtitled 'New Zealand taxi drivers tell their stories', this book gives voice to fourteen migrants from ten different countries: what they left behind, what they have found in their new home, and of course, why they are behind the wheel of a taxi. Whatever the circumstance, refugee or migrant, and whatever the background, banker, accountant, or mechanic, each of these stories resonates with the striving for a better future. Bringing together experiences both positive and negative, this story offers, from the perspective of its newest residents, a unique and fascinating view of New Zealand and New Zealanders, and a reminder of the part we can all play in making these journeys the success they deserve to be.

MILES TO GO

O'Regan, Pauline 216pp 2004



A glimpse of one woman's journey towards, what is often dismissed as "old age", without acknowledging the wisdom that it can bring. Now, in her eighties, author and nun, O' Regan, shows there is nothing to fear about ageing, and a whole lot to look forward to.

MILK LADY OF BANGALORE, THE

Narayan, Shoba 259pp 2018

Shoba Narayan knows she is really back home again when she meets a cow in a lift in her apartment building in Bangalore. After 20 years in the US, the cow and Sarala, the cow's owner, prove to be the perfect entry point for reacclimatising to life in India. Having the cow 'bless' her apartment in a Hindu ritual is just the first step to a burgeoning friendship with Sarala, and an exploration of the complex role cows play in India. Employing journalistic expertise and the unique observations of a returning citizen, this gentle and humorous memoir immerses the reader in the richness of Indian culture, especially its bovine veneration.

MODERN SINGHS, THE

Wroe, Jo Browning 377pp 2022



They are an unlikely couple – Abbey Brown was a Scottish immigrant and Money Singh an Indian Sikh who had also arrived in New Zealand as a child. They meet at work and the rest, as they say, is history ... but not until they face the challenge of bringing together two diverse cultures and finding common ground. Known as The Modern Singhs, they now share their experiences via social media, exposing a wide audience to many contemporary issues, amidst rich cultural traditions. Narrated by both Abbey and Money, and written in simple, engaging prose, this is a fascinating account of a family and a marriage embracing difference.



"A lovely human-interest story and you can't help but wish them well."

"The authors present an honest, open discussion on cultural and religious differences and how these were resolved in their relationship."

"I found it very interesting to read how Sikh society is organised and the importance of rituals and food."

BDS Reviewers

MIRROR BOOK, THE

Grimshaw, Charlotte 320pp 2021



So much for the oft quoted 'lovely childhood, a house full of books'. In this cathartic memoir, Charlotte Grimshaw, the famous daughter of a famous New Zealand father (C. K. Stead), rips the bandaid off her early memories, to re-examine her place in her literary family. Fuelled by a quest for truth and understanding amidst the shifting sands of disputed memory, this is a thought-provoking exposé. With skill and courage, it reveals the public and private faces of this esteemed New Zealand family in conflict with itself.

MITFORD GIRLS, THE

Lovell, Mary S 611pp 2001



A biographical saga of the dynasty of the English Mitford family. Lord and Lady Redesdale, both eccentric parents, had six daughters and a son. Their privileged background, a rich network of connections, and the political affiliations of their daughters, make for fascinating reading. [BIG READ]

MOMENT OF LIFT, THE

Gates, Melinda 288pp 2020

No, this is not an instruction manual for pilots learning to fly, but certainly is an introduction on how to go about changing the world by empowering women. Drawing on her experience over the last twenty years, and as co-chair of the world's largest philanthropic organisation, Melinda Gates writes compellingly about the world's most urgent humanitarian issues. From family planning and child marriage through to educating girls and women in the workplace, a combination of evidence and anecdote offers convincing first steps and solutions. Thoughtful and down-to-earth, this is an encouraging manifesto for changing the world as well as the record of a personal journey undertaken by a committed global advocate.

MONIQUE AND THE MANGO RAINS

Holloway, Kris 256pp 2011



When United States Peace Corps volunteer Kris Holloway is assigned to help in a village in Mali, her host is an exceptional young woman: Monique Dembele. In one of the poorest countries in the world, Monique is a midwife valiantly working to improve the lives of village women. Offering the reader a unique window into the experiences of West African women, this is an outstanding story of hardship, courage and hope and is aptly subtitled 'an extraordinary story of friendship in a midwife's house in Mali'.

MOTH SNOWSTORM, THE

McCarthy, Michael 272pp 2015

The limited joy in Michael McCarthy's Merseyside childhood came from his exposure to nature, so much so that it ultimately nudged him down the path of writing about it for a living. Now a veteran environmental journalist, he draws from his experience and awe of the natural world to conclude that to be fully human requires us to embrace the joy of nature. Weaving the personal and the political, and the destruction of the environment with the solace it offers, this engrossing book asks us to re-evaluate our relationship with nature. Sincere and moving, this is an ode to the planet, teeming with details of the natural world and with an unforgettable message.

MOTHER OF INVENTION

Marçal, Katrine 308pp 2021

Necessity might be considered the mother of invention, but Swedish journalist Katrine Marçal reveals that there is a lot more to the science of selecting what inventions are regarded as worthwhile, than simply science itself. Subtitled 'how good ideas get ignored in an economy built for men', this well-researched book considers, among many interesting scenarios, why it was that wheeled suitcases were late to the party, why electric cars were originally rejected in favour of petrol cars back in the early 1900s and how it is that people who work with machines or numbers earn more than those who work with people. Examining both the past and future impacts of sexism in the economy, this is a fascinating and thought-provoking read.



"This is a thoughtful and thought-provoking book."

"The book is written in a free-flowing style which is very easy to read – very interesting."

"A fascinating insight into how our world has become dominated by male beliefs which automatically deprecate anything seen as feminine."

BDS Reviewers

MY FATHER'S ISLAND

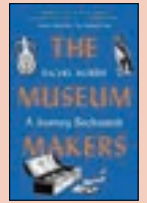
Dudding, Adam 271pp 2016

From the 1950s to the 1980s, literary editor Robin Dudding, was involved in New Zealand's finest literary journals. But as talented as he was, there was a dark side to the life of this uncompromising nonconformist. Revealed sensitively and honestly by his son Adam, this is the riveting portrait of an unconventional man and his family woven through with the social and cultural history of the era and intrinsically linked with the development of modern New Zealand literature. Part biography, part autobiography, this entertaining memoir is as enjoyably unconventional as the important cultural figure of its focus.

MUSEUM MAKERS, THE

Morris, Rachel 272pp 2020

In an appealing mashup of history and memoir, museum expert Rachel Morris begins a journey to uncover her family's bohemian past while also telling the story of museums. From collections and curators, archives and artefacts, to the author's own 'Museum of Me', this fascinating immersion into memorabilia and memory making, both personal and societal, is a gently reflective dive into the value of our stories and how we preserve them. [SMALL FONT]



"It was a delight to read about something so many of us do and for the same reasons as the author. I too sort out family 'stuff'."

"I think readers who love museums would be those most likely to enjoy this book."

"The gently reflective nature of the narrative is appealing, as is the author's kind depiction of a fascinating line of people."

BDS Reviewers

MY GRANDFATHER WOULD HAVE SHOT ME

Teege, Jennifer 215pp 2015

It's hard to imagine a more arresting title, but in this instance, it is trumped by its sub-title 'a black woman discovers her family's Nazi past'. Daughter of a white German mother and a Nigerian father, Jennifer Teege was adopted out as a young child. However, at age 38, her random selection of a library book revealed photos of her biological mother and grandmother and even more shockingly, that her grandfather was Amon Goeth, a Nazi commandant known as the Butcher of Krakow. This is the empowering story of the author's quest to confront the truth and understand her troubled legacy, supported by an intertwined narrative providing balanced analysis and historical context for this heart-felt testimony.

MY LIFE IN FRANCE

Child, Julia 352pp 2006

When American Julia Child arrives in France, little does she realise how her life is to change. Enraptured from the very first mouthful, Julia embraces French cuisine, rapidly becoming an international expert. Related with an infectious enthusiasm, this story not only documents a passionate love affair with French cooking but draws the reader into a fascinating glimpse of post-war France and a life exuberantly lived.

MY LIFE ON THE ROAD

Steinem, Gloria 310pp 2015

The foundations for Gloria Steinem’s adult life, spent on the move, were laid in her itinerant childhood. Growing up to become one of the key figures of American feminism, her dedication to the movement for equality for many decades, had her crisscrossing the USA and further afield, connecting with communities and campaigns, conversing, empowering, walking the talk and bringing about change. Both the engaging memoir of a writer, journalist, activist and inspiring leader, and a primer of late 20th century American political history, this is an intelligent and thoughtful reflection, delivered with humour and humility.

MY STROKE OF INSIGHT

Taylor, Jill Bolte 183pp 2006

When Jill Bolte Taylor suffered a stroke, aged 31, she was in a unique position: as a brain scientist she was able to recognise and observe what was occurring. Following emergency brain surgery, Jill embarked on the long road to recovery, all of which is clearly and comprehensively documented in this story. As well as a guide for stroke sufferers, their families and carers, this book also offers fascinating insights into achieving management of thought patterns and well-being.

NANCY WAKE: THE INSPIRING STORY

FitzSimons, Peter 310pp 2001



In the early 1930s, New Zealand-born Nancy Wake was enjoying a Bohemian life in Paris. By the end of WWII, she was the Gestapo’s most wanted person. As a young journalist, Wake witnessed a horrific scene of Nazi violence in a Viennese street. From then on, she declared she would do everything in her power to rid Europe of the Nazis. What began as a courier job, turned into a highly successful escape network for Allied soldiers. Wake’s network was soon doing so notoriously well that she was forced to flee France to escape the Gestapo who had dubbed her “the white mouse” for her uncanny knack of slipping through its traps.

NAVIGATION

Cowley, Joy 202pp 2010



From her childhood in 1940s Foxton, to family life, marriages and international fame as a writer, Joy Cowley takes us on a candidly told and often surprising journey. She touches down constantly at her retreat centre in the Marlborough Sounds, where she writes passionately about the seasons and the natural world. Warm, sensitive and peppered with Joy’s irrepressible love of life, Navigation is a relaxed and beautifully written memoir.

NAZI OFFICER’S WIFE, THE

Beer, Edith Hahn 305pp 2001

Born to a middle-class, non-observant Jewish family, Edith Hahn was a promising law student until the German Anschluss annexed Austria. Taking on a Christian friend’s identity and documents, she eventually married a Nazi officer. Outwardly, she lived as a Hausfrau, but after the Russians conquered and burned her neighbourhood, she retrieved her identity papers and diploma, and from an illegal fugitive was eventually transformed into a feared judge.

NEVER HAVE YOUR DOG STUFFED

Alda, Alan 224pp 2005



Award-winning actor Alan Alda tells of his childhood spent travelling with his father’s burlesque company; memories of his dog, Rhapsody (before it was stuffed); coping with his mother’s mental illness, and the highs and lows of his acting career. This is a touching and poignant memoir of a boy growing into a man, and events that would make him who he is today.

NINE LIVES

Dalrymple, William 284pp 2009

Subtitled ‘In Search of the Sacred in Modern India’. A Buddhist monk takes up arms to resist the Chinese invasion of Tibet – then spends the rest of his life trying to atone for the violence by hand printing the best prayer flags in India. A Jain nun tests her powers of detachment as she watches her best friend ritually starve herself to death. Nine people, nine lives; each one taking a different religious path, each one an unforgettable story. William Darymple delves deep into the heart of a nation torn between the relentless onslaught of modernity and the continuity of ancient traditions. [SMALL FONT]

NINE PINTS

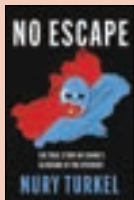
George, Rose 384pp 2019

Whatever our creed or race, we all have nine pints or just over five litres of blood coursing through our veins. In nine fascinating chapters, investigative journalist Rose George – literally and figuratively – puts blood under the microscope. From plasma clinics to leech farms, from menstruation taboos to transfusion services, it’s all here. Entertaining and educational, this cultural and scientific examination of blood reflects comprehensive research and an enthusiastic engagement with this vital bodily fluid.

NO ESCAPE

Turkel, Nury 336pp 2022

In 1949, life changed forever for the Uyghur people of Turkistan; their land handed over by Stalin to the Chinese Communist Party, followed by an ongoing campaign of forced assimilation. Author Nury Turkel is a champion for his people, a human rights lawyer and activist, and a commissioner for the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom. In this important and eminently readable book, Turkel's lived experience and extensive research reveal the many horrors of genocide and crimes against humanity inflicted on the Uyghur people. Written with respect and sensitivity, this is a riveting and shocking account of the Uyghur crisis.



"I found this book a riveting read and once started it was hard to put down."

"An eye-opening story of life as a human rights campaigner. An amazing story of struggle and sacrifice."

"This book is not for the faint-hearted. It is difficult to read of the torture, but we need to be able to read it and take notice."

BDS Reviewers

NOTE THROUGH THE WIRE, THE

Gold, Doug 332pp 2019

What are the chances that a note thrust through the wire fence of a WWII prisoner of war camp would lead to love, marriage and a life on the other side of the wire? Probably not high, but this is exactly what happened to Yugoslav resistance fighter Josefina Lobnik and New Zealand soldier Bruce Murray. Their random encounter, followed by a series of coincidences, is the stuff of fiction. However, the reality of the hardships and brutality of their war and post-war experiences makes their love story all the more remarkable. Written simply and with inspired imagination, this is a gripping yarn and a reassuring indication that sometimes, just sometimes, love can conquer all.

NOTHING TO ENVY

Demick, Barbara 314pp 2010

Journalist Barbara Demick peels back the lid on life in the elusive Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Based on several years of conversations with North Koreans, the stories of six defectors are narrated revealing the struggle for survival under its totalitarian regime. With its fluent style and its excellent background information on the two Koreas, this book offers a rare insight into a mysterious nation that 23 million people call home.

ONE MINUTE CRYING TIME

Ewing, Barbara 333pp 2020



Barbara Ewing's diaries of her childhood and teenage years in the 1950s and early 1960s provide the basis for this poignant memoir, recalling a very different New Zealand from the one we live in today. From these earnest entries of growing up in Auckland and Wellington, this renowned actress and writer has revisited these memories, now enhanced by the insight and understanding that comes with age and distance, and illuminating them with a contemporary perspective. Moving and engrossing, this heartfelt revisiting of one's younger self lays bare the foundations of a life, and encourages contemplation of just how society has changed.

OPEN

Agassi, Andre 386pp 2009



It is shocking to discover that tennis great Andre Agassi hated tennis. With a refreshing degree of candour, this autobiography reveals the conflicted man behind the outstanding tennis career; the pitfalls on the path to maturity, the dysfunction and the success, and everything between. With its open and honest disclosures, this is a fascinating story that will appeal to both tennis fans and those who have never graced a court. [SMALL FONT]

ORANGE IS THE NEW BLACK

Kerman, Piper 342pp 2010

Piper Kerman's rebellious youth eventually catches up with her a decade after smuggling drugs and she is sentenced to time in the notorious Danby Federal Correctional Institute in Connecticut. Life as inmate # 11187-424 is in stark contrast to her usual privileged existence but in rising to the challenge, she is able to offer a unique insight into life on the inside. Told with honesty and respect for her fellow prisoners, this is a fascinating story of actions and consequences and the hard road to rehabilitation.

OUR LAST BEST CHANCE

Abdullah II of Jordan, King 324pp 2011

Written by Jordan's reigning monarch and dedicated to the people of Jordan, this powerful memoir offers the reader an insider's perspective to a tantalising possibility: peace in the Middle East. With great clarity and insight, King Abdullah provides the historical and contemporary context to this window of opportunity. Along with an inspirational personal story that includes his unexpected ascension to the throne, this book lays bare the urgent challenges of the Middle East in easy to comprehend detail.



ORWELL'S ROSES

Solnit, Rebecca 320pp 2022

On one hand there was his passion for social justice famously expressed through his classic works of literature, and on the other, was his unexpected passion for ... gardening. At the centre of this story is George Orwell, writer, political thinker, and avid gardener. Part biography, part personal memoir, and with thought-provoking rambles through nature, art and politics, this book is a fascinating foray into the life of one of the most influential writers of the 20th century.



"A fascinating collection of essays. Excellent writing."

"This is a book to reflect upon and enjoy."

"This collection of chapters, almost essays, reads like a conversation with a thoughtful, literate friend."

"This work encompasses many periods in Orwell's life and presents him in a fresh light."

BDS Reviewers

OUTBACK TEACHER, THE

Gare, Sally & Marnie, Freda 304pp 2022

Fresh out of teacher training, Sally Gare's first posting in 1956 is a far cry from city life – Forrest River Mission is more than 3000 kilometres from Perth, in the far north of Western Australia. Developing strong connections with her Aboriginal students and their families, and undaunted by its remoteness and lack of resources, Sally embraces outback life. Simply written, this is the inspirational memoir of a passionate educator and intrepid adventurer, of good intentions and cultural clashes, and an illuminating snapshot of a different time and place.



"A truly enjoyable and educational read. I would so like this story to be made into a film."

"Although this book is simply written, the story is inspirational."

"A well-written story of a young teacher embracing teaching in an outback posting in an aboriginal school. A very good read."

BDS Reviewers

OUTRUN, THE

Liptrot, Amy 276pp 2016

After years of riotous living in London, Amy Liptrot, now 30, has finished rehab and needing to embrace sobriety, does so by returning home to the remote Orkney Islands, off the north coast of Scotland. It is a journey of rediscovery, not just of the people who shaped her, but also the wild beauty of Orkney; its icy waters, its dramatic, windswept landscape and its abundant wildlife. Moving from addiction to recovery, this is an unflinchingly honest memoir, poignant and beautifully descriptive, that confidently balances personal revelation with an ode to Orkney and the healing power of nature.

OUT OF THE SHADOWS

Griffith, Penny 255pp 2015



Millicent Macmillan Brown was so taken with Archie Baxter's stand as a conscientious objector, that she sought him out, and the rest – as they say – is history. Although having a renowned husband was to be followed by an even more famous son (the celebrated poet James K Baxter), Millicent's life was also conspicuous by her own achievements. A formidable and determined woman, she became a leading figure in the peace movement in New Zealand. This extensively researched and unpretentious biography is not just the story of Millicent Baxter and the eminent Macmillan Brown and Baxter families, but a fascinating overview of New Zealand social history.

OUTSIDER THE

Forsyth, Frederick 366pp 2015

Pilot, adventurer, journalist and spy, author Frederick Forsyth's real-life experiences are the stuff of fiction. Becoming a RAF pilot at 19 was just the beginning, and his subsequent adventures in some of the major events of the mid-20th century have guaranteed a cache of enthralling, action-packed incidents available to fuel the plots of his bestselling thrillers. Written with self-deprecating humour, this is an entertaining memoir from a master storyteller, presented in a series of vignettes that make for compulsive reading.

PACIFIC

Winchester, Simon 492pp 2015

Selecting representative events and circumstances for an entity that covers more than a third of the planet is no mean feat, but author Simon Winchester manages it with aplomb. From the superpower rivalry between the US and China, and the transition of surfing from Hawaii to California, to Australia's asylum seeker policy and the rise of the Sony empire in Japan, this award-winning writer and researcher dips his toes into the post-war Pacific and its people, through ten stand-alone topics. Geopolitics and history, culture, climate, geology and more, it's all here in this extensively researched and easy-to-read ode to the Pacific Ocean.

PERFECT WIVES IN IDEAL HOMES

Nicholson, Virginia 526pp 2015

The dinner would be on the table when he walked in the door; his wife, immaculately presented would be waiting cheerfully, ready to act on his every whim... or so we are told. Drawing on interviews, archives and newspapers, social historian Virginia Nicholson reveals otherwise, as she pulls back the covers on the life of women in 1950s Britain. Allowing individual women to tell their stories – from a beauty queen, a miner's wife, and a Teddy girl to educated (but isolated) suburban housewives, and two famous Margarets (one a princess, the other a prospective politician), this is an engaging nostalgic commentary on how life used to be and invites reflection on how far (or not) we have come since washing machines and the pill arrived on our doorsteps.

PIANIST OF YARMOUK, THE

Ahmad, Aeharm 276pp 2019

From the time he was a young child, music has always been an integral part of Aeham Ahmad's life. With the arrival of the chaos and horror of the Syrian civil war, it is the gift of music that he offers the people around him as their homes are reduced to rubble and normal life becomes a distant memory. Playing his piano in the war-torn streets becomes an act of defiance and a symbol of resistance, and remains so, even after he and his family become refugees in Germany. Simply written and humbly told, this is an enthralling account of the lives of ordinary people caught up in conflict and the power of music to bring hope and connection in the darkest of circumstances. [SMALL FONT]



"A great read. Promotes discussion about the plight of refugees –no solution in sight. It made us all feel grateful to live in NZ and have so much."

Whakatane 009

"We all really found this book a very moving read and would recommend it to all who could appreciate an insight into the horrors of modern warfare."

Richmond 010

"Enjoyed by our members A harrowing but uplifting story about the importance of family, music, courage, and ambition for a better life."

Tauranga 028

"Well enjoyed by all, but a story of such hardships."

Marlborough 001

PERMANENT RECORD

Snowden, Edward 352pp 2019

A spy... a whistleblower... a traitor? Edward Snowden is known around the globe as the American Intelligence expert who disclosed, in 2013, the widespread surveillance antics of the US government that contravened human rights and privacy laws. While living in Russian exile, Snowden recounts his early life and the events leading up to his sensational whistleblowing, as well as setting out the development of computer technology and the internet. This is an exciting and important story that combines a detailed but accessible record of momentous events in the digital world with the memoir of a courageous world citizen.

PIGEON TUNNEL

Le Carré, John 342pp 2016

The blurred lines of fiction and fact are given full reign in this collection of 38 vignettes from espionage storyteller John le Carré. Building on his own experiences as a young man in the British secret services, his extensive research for his novels involved exposure to exotic locales and characters and meeting with illustrious movers and shakers over the last several decades. From meeting with Margaret Thatcher, Yasser Arafat and heads of the KGB or visiting Beirut, Rwanda or a desert prison in the Negev, these people and places are vividly portrayed. This book is a fascinating and enjoyable glimpse into a writer's creative journey, acutely observed and recounted with the wry humour of its genial host.

POWER OF HABIT, THE

Duhigg, Charles 371pp 2012

From the moment the alarm goes off in the morning to the click of the light switch turning off last thing at night, we are creatures of habit. Investigative journalist Charles Duhigg is on the trail of the science behind habits; those of individuals, organisations and wider society. Presenting the latest scientific discoveries seasoned with fascinating stories, this book makes compelling and thought-provoking reading on a subject integral to our behaviour and the functioning of society.

PURPLE DANDELION

Sultana, Farida 245pp 2011

At eighteen Farida Sultana enters into an arranged marriage with a fellow Bangladeshi. Thus begins a journey that took her from Bangladesh to Iran, Scotland, Borneo and eventually New Zealand. Subject to domestic violence and traditional cultural and religious expectations, Farida survived, going on to help others in similar circumstances by establishing Shakti, an Asian women's refuge in Auckland and advocating for the plight of many migrant and refugee women. Subtitled 'a Muslim woman's struggle against violence and oppression', this is a harrowing yet inspirational story.

PRISON BOOK CLUB, THE

Walmsley, Ann 279pp 2015

Becoming involved in the Book Clubs for Inmates programme run in some Ontario prisons was an eye-opener for journalist Ann Walmsley. The victim of a violent assault, she was initially reluctant to be involved, but just like inmates taking part, she too was to benefit from the experience. Author Somerset Maugham observed that 'to acquire the habit of reading is to construct for yourself a refuge from almost all the miseries of life', and as became apparent through the shared experience of reading and discussing books, these prisoners had misery aplenty. Complete with a comprehensive book list, this is a fascinating story of prison life, the transformative power of reading and the potential of book clubs to be vehicles for change.

PURPLE HEART

Fiu, Ta'afuli Andrew 319pp 2006

Fiu candidly outlines life as a Samoan growing up in New Zealand society. At the age of five in 1970, Fiu and his family emigrated from Samoa, and settled in Auckland. At 14 years of age, Fiu is misdiagnosed with the 'flu, and his untreated rheumatic fever flares up into heart trouble. Fiu embarks on a journey through illness that will involve a world record of five open-heart-surgery operations. This honest and often emotional memoir is an almost accidental history of New Zealand's unchanged attitudes towards the Pacific cultures.

RADIUM GIRLS, THE

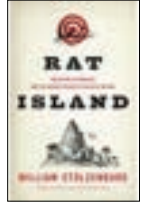
Moore, Kate 496pp 2016

When Marie and Pierre Curie discovered radium in 1898, it was promoted as a miraculous cure-all. For the young American women who worked with it as 'dial-painters' during WWI, it afforded them a glamorous and much-envied job, until it became apparent it was poisoning them. The battle they had on their hands was both for their own health and against the United States Radium Corporation, deniers of radium's risks and their responsibility to their employees. Harrowing yet inspiring, this extensively-researched exposé of courage and sacrifice versus corporate greed and dishonesty, delivers an engrossing story of a ground-breaking victory for workers' rights.

RAT ISLAND

Stolzenburg, William 279pp 2011

Islands + birds = paradise, but paradise + rats = DISASTER. With islands home to more than half the world's endangered species, the arrival of introduced predators has had a catastrophic effect on fauna, especially birds. With particular focus on two bird species that evolved in mammal-free environments, New Zealand's kakapo and the auklets from the Aleutian Islands, this book considers the different conservation measures employed to protect these fragile island ecosystems. Informative and lively, this is a story fraught with ethical complexities, of conservation crusades and radical pest eradication, and the people and animals on both sides of the equation.



"People really enjoyed this book. Found it interesting, well-written and educational. Very pertinent to the NZ situation with NZ mentioned frequently."

Rotorua 006

"It should be compulsory reading in all NZ secondary schools."

Geraldine 006

"For those interested in conservation and eradication of pests, this is excellent and recommended. For those more interested in fiction, it was a tough read."

Christchurch 099

"Excellent discussion. Several of us are hoping to buy the book. Well written and food for thought."

Richmond 009

READING LOLITA IN TEHRAN

Nafisi, Azar 368pp 2003

Part memoir, part literary criticism, Reading Lolita in Tehran is a moving testament to the power of art, and its ability to change and improve people's lives. In 1995, Azar Nafisi resigned her job as university professor and invited seven female former students to meet weekly at her home to study Western literature. They met for two years to talk and share, and "shed their mandatory veils and robes and burst into colour".

READING WITH PATRICK

Kuo, Michelle 301pp 2017



Under the auspices of Teach for America and armed with a strong social conscience and a recent college education, Michelle Kuo opts to teach in an alternative school in one of the poorest areas in the US, the Mississippi Delta. One of her students is Patrick Browning, a 15-year-old African-American boy who thrives under her tutelage. She then heads off to Harvard Law School, and when she is next in contact with him, she finds him in prison for murder. Michelle returns to pick up where she left off, reading with him and mentoring him into a different future. This is an inspirational memoir of two memorable characters with a mutually transformative friendship, that confronts the politics of disadvantage and confirms that books do indeed have the power to change lives.

REBEL WITH A CAUSE

Avery, Ray 268pp 2010



When Ray Avery became the winner of the New Zealander of the Year award for 2010, it was the first time many had heard of his remarkable life and achievements. Born in the UK, Ray arrived in New Zealand in his mid-twenties. Having survived a traumatic childhood, he has gone on to achieve great success as a philanthropic scientist and inventor of medical devices for third world countries. This is an inspiring and heart-warming story of obstacles overcome, and opportunities embraced. Recounted in Ray's distinctive style, this book is an enjoyable and easy read.

RECKONING

Szubanski, Magda 371pp 2015



With a Scottish granny, an Irish Catholic mother and a Polish father, you'd expect to have a few jokes up your sleeve... and Magda Szubanski certainly does. Best known for her roles in Kath and Kim and Babe, this Australian entertainer reveals that the path to stardom has had many a pitfall. Along the way she has needed to reconcile with the usual accommodations of entering adulthood, but also her beloved father's role as an assassin during the Warsaw Uprising in WWII, and more latterly, with the decision to publicly acknowledge her sexual orientation. This is no frivolous celebrity memoir, but a story of substance, a voyage of discovery to understand self and family; a brave and tender, beautifully written reckoning.

RED NOTICE

Browder, Bill 479pp 2015



International financier Bill Browder is one of Vladimir Putin's least favourite people. What on earth did he do to earn such disapproval? It wasn't so much his reaction to his highly successful investment in post-Soviet Russia being derailed by government chicanery, but rather Browder turning into a relentless human rights campaigner, exposing corruption at the highest level. Going on to lobby US lawmakers to avenge the imprisonment, torture and death of his Russian lawyer Sergei Magnitsky, didn't help either ... Fast-paced and direct, this real-life thriller of high stakes and vast fortunes is also an intriguing memoir of a high-flier bent on bringing about justice.

RELATIVE STRANGERS

Murdoch, Pip 256pp 2019



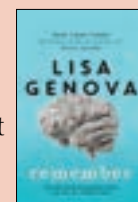
When student nurse Pip Murdoch became pregnant while unmarried, she found herself in 1970 in a position shared by many young women of the time, in needing to give her child up for adoption. However, with changing societal attitudes and with the advent of the 1985 Adult Adoption Information Act, she was able to successfully search for her son, and embark on a fledgling relationship with him. Unflinchingly honest, this touching and very personal story lays bare the author's experiences of the adoption circle as well as painting a vivid picture of life in the conservative New Zealand of the 1960s.

REMEMBER

Genova, Lisa 232pp 2021



Remembering and forgetting – two sides of the same coin and both essential for the memory function of our brains. In this engaging and fascinating story, neuroscientist Lisa Genova explores the whys and wherefores of how we remember, why we forget and how to improve this data storage, retrieval and disposal. Peppered with humorous examples, common sense and reader-friendly scientific detail, this book presents the mysterious science of human memory with a light but authoritative touch.



"I did not expect to find a book about memory to be so engaging."

"Very readable, for clarity, simplicity and a light touch on what is a serious subject."

"The topic is treated with serious attention and a good amount of humour."

"She's an excellent author. I enjoyed her novel, *Still Alice*."

BDS Reviewers



REMEDY, THE

Goetz, Thomas 298pp 2015

In 1890 when renowned German scientist Robert Koch staged a public event to demonstrate a remedy for tuberculosis, Arthur Conan Doyle, physician and creator of the fictional Sherlock Holmes was in attendance. Although Koch had discovered the TB bacillus earlier that decade, an absolute cure for the disease still remains a challenge more than a century later. Drawing together the intersecting paths of these two devotees of the progressive scientific thinking of the time, this is a captivating medical detective story with tuberculosis at its heart. It is a fascinating and easily accessible account of 19th century science and the men at the forefront establishing the beginnings of modern medicine.

RIPIRO BEACH

Barron, Caroline 280pp 2020



Having undergone a near-death experience during the birth of her second child, Caroline Barron enters unfamiliar territory. In her search for healing that follows this traumatic event and its aftermath, she spends the next six years delving into her family history, uncovering a difficult and diverse ancestry. But there is joy and consolation too, with Northland's Ripiro Beach at its heart. Brave and honest, this memoir details a passionate search for identity and understanding that attempts to answer the universal question: why am I the way I am?

ROAD NO GOOD

Isichei, Bridget 236pp 2017



When Bridget Isichei up sticks and relocates to Luganville on the Vanuatu island of Espiritu Santo, one of the obvious contrasts to her white middle-class life, is her new street address – not the familiar Smith Street or Jones Lane, but 'Road No Good', the first of many interesting differences she was to face during her two-year stay. Having accepted a New Zealand Volunteer Service Abroad (VSA) assignment to teach pre-school teachers, Bridget finds herself immersed in a society that simultaneously practises black magic and a Christian faith and ranks pigs higher than women – something she and the women she is to teach, are determined will not be a barrier to their education. This is an inspiring story of friendship, of the power of education, and the realisation that none of us have all the answers.

SAMUEL PEPYS: THE UNEQUALLED SELF

Tomalin, Claire 499pp 2003

A meticulous biography, capturing the life of Samuel Pepys, the most famous diarist in English letters. Tomalin focuses on Pepys' life and times, including plague, fire, war, peace, domesticity, ill-health and extended family — all coloured by Pepys' own words as expressed in his journals. [BIG READ, SMALL FONT]

SAPIENS

Harari, Yuval Noah 498pp 2011

Homo sapiens. Why not homo neanderthalensis or homo erectus? What set us apart from the handful of human species present around 100,000 years ago? How is it that we are still here, and they are not? This 'brief history of humankind' explores the forces that have shaped human societies through cognitive, agricultural and scientific revolutions. Entertaining as well as spectacularly informative, this wide-ranging examination of our species from a professor of world history is a pleasure to read, even as one contemplates a possible cyborg future.

SEVEN LIVES OF LADY BARKER, THE

Gilderdale, Betty 296pp 1996



The absorbing biography of Lady Mary Anne Barker, a widely travelled, adventurous Victorian woman who lived in England, India, New Zealand, South Africa, Mauritius, Australia and Trinidad. Momentous historical events of the period are recorded with a degree of equanimity.

SKIN TO SKIN

Archie, Carol 279pp 2005



Ten families, and 37 individuals; some well-known, some not. This is a human account of modern Maori-Pakeha intermarriage and the mixed-raced children of Aotearoa. Their stories cover the spectrum of overcoming everyday racism to the question of identity in a diverse and multi-cultural land.

SLEEPING ARRANGEMENTS

Cunningham, Laura S 240pp 2000

A humorous memoir about growing up. Adopted by her two eccentric bachelor uncles after her mother's death, the author describes growing up in an unorthodox, but happy, Bronx household during the 1950s.

SO YOU'VE BEEN PUBLICLY SHAMED

Ronson, Jon 306pp 2015

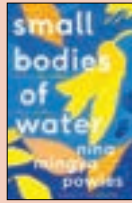
In this era of social media, it seems that pillories and stocks are still with us, albeit in a different form. No longer are rotten vegetables lobbed in the direction of those who are judged as having erred. Instead a barrage of destructive and threatening online comment impacts on the victim's reputation, employment and privacy. Focusing on four such cases, the author, himself a victim of online abuse, examines the issue of mob justice and disproportionate judgements in an attempt to understand this online phenomenon. An engaging read on a serious issue that has implications for the way we use the internet.

SMALL BODIES OF WATER

Powles, Nina Mingya 250pp 2022



Whether it is Wellington Harbour, a swimming pool in Borneo, or the River Thames, various elements of water link these 16 lyrical essays that merge memoir and nature writing. Exploring identity and belonging, NZ-born Nina Mingya Powles offers both a calming and thought-provoking reading experience. Written with poetic flair, and capturing her wonder in the world around her, this is a unique and dazzling collection.



"This book is inviting, warm and comforting. Exquisitely written and intimate."

"I loved it and couldn't put it down."

"Every sentence is crafted with a poet's gift for the written prose."

BDS Reviewers

SOIL

Evans, Matthew 272pp 2021

Astoundingly, there is more biodiversity in the earth than above it, and in this exposé farmer and commentator Matthew Evans digs down into this essential top layer of the Earth. Pulling together history, agriculture and science, this highly readable account of soil sets out the essential role it plays in our lives and the future of the planet. Practical as well as passionate, this story reminds us of the interconnectedness of all natural systems and the responsibility we have for the state of the environment.



"Highly readable. I am buying a copy!"

"By the end of the book, I had a positive thicket of scraps of paper marking points I wanted to share with others."

"When reading this book you will gain a deeper understanding and love of the planet and nurturing what is good in the soil."

BDS Reviewers

SOUND OF A WILD SNAIL EATING, THE

Bailey, Elisabeth Tova 183pp 2010

As noted by Florence Nightingale, "a small pet is often an excellent companion". Such was the case for Elisabeth Tova Bailey. Incapacitated by chronic illness she was reduced to a bedridden existence with a small common woodland snail as her companion and eventually the focus for her in-depth scientific study of gastropods (snails). Part memoir, part natural history lesson, this book is a gentle and moving examination of the profound connection between humans and nature. It leaves the reader an expert on snails, mindful of the gift of good health and with the incentive to look at the world anew.

SPARK, THE

Barnett, Kristine 250pp 2013

As with all mothers, Kristine Barnett wanted her son to reach his full potential, but in Jake's case, with an early diagnosis of autism, it looked to be a limited potential. Trusting her own instincts instead of the advice of the experts, Kristine undertook to nurture Jake's 'spark', focusing on what he could do instead of what he could not do, with extraordinary results. Teaching himself calculus in two weeks and at age twelve becoming a paid researcher in quantum physics, Jake's trajectory is impressive. So too are the hope and care Kristine has been able to give other families with children with special needs when she established a pre-school that espouses the very same approach. This book is a truly inspirational page-turner that demonstrates the power of love to overcome adversity, and recognises that all children, whatever their circumstances, have untapped potential. [SMALL FONT]

SPILLING THE BEANS

Wright, Clarissa Dickson 328pp 2007



Born into a wealthy but dysfunctional English family, Clarissa became the youngest woman ever to be called to the Bar in Britain. However, in her grief at the sudden death of her mother, she descends into alcoholism and bankruptcy. Through her passion for cooking she eventually achieved sobriety and peace as part of the BBC TV partnership 'Two Fat Ladies'. A 'no holds barred' account of an amazing life.

SPIRIT LEVEL, THE

Wilkinson, Richard & Pickett, Kate 375pp 2010

Rates of teenage pregnancy, mistrust of neighbours and the size of waistlines all have one thing in common: they are affected by how equal a society is. In this renowned book, the English epidemiologist authors draw together recent research to provide understanding of how income inequality is deleterious to everyone, including the wealthy. New Zealand with its increasing income disparity is frequently cited, but along with the



litany of woes associated with inequality are suggested positive solutions. A new chapter written in response to controversy generated by the book's analysis, rounds off discussion that convincingly addresses the aptly named sub-title "why equality is better for everyone." A thought-provoking and socially responsible read. [SMALL FONT]

SPY AMONG FRIENDS, A

MacIntyre, Ben 340pp 2014

Oscar Wilde may have asserted that 'true friends stab you in the front', but it would have been no consolation to the friends of English spy Kim Philby. One of the notorious 'Cambridge Four', and reputedly a charming and charismatic man, Philby spied for the Russians over a thirty year period during the Cold War. Betraying his colleagues, family and especially his friends, he was responsible for many people being tortured and killed. This well written and researched account of his relationship with his friends, including his MI6 handler Nicholas Elliot and the head of the CIA James Angleton, delivers a thrilling real-life spy story of duplicity and subterfuge.

SPY AND THE TRAITOR, THE

McIntyre, Ben 370pp 2018

London-based KGB Colonel, Oleg Gordievsky, has for eleven years successfully passed vital information to MI6, before the game is up and he is recalled to Moscow. However, MI6 achieve a nail-biting victory and Oleg is spirited out of the Soviet Union and back to England for a new identity and life in a nondescript suburb. Extensively researched, this is a gripping story of Cold War espionage, a case of truth being as thrilling as fiction, especially the daring 1985 escape. [SMALL FONT]



"Excellent book. Gripping and very readable. Made us really think about current issues and the place or value of spies. Thoroughly recommended."

Palmerston North 040

"A challenging read but well worth the effort. Highly recommended."

Nelson 007

"Oh my goodness, we loved this book! It read just like a Le Carre thriller. It was hard to put down."

Greytown 001

STASILAND

Funder, Anna 288pp 2002

During its forty-year-history, the former East Germany was the perfect police state. The secret police, known as the Stasi, had organised a large army of citizen informers. Funder, an Australian author, sets out to establish how it felt to live in "the most perfected surveillance state of all time". Her careful portraits of the people she meets, shine a dazzling light on one of the world's most paranoid and secretive regimes, and its effects on contemporary society.

STATION LIFE IN NEW ZEALAND

Barker, Lady 238pp 1883



The fascinating account of Lady Barker's three years on a sheep station in the foothills of the Southern Alps. Not one to sit at home, she crossed mountain ranges, faced a charging boar and rode through flooded rivers. Lively and astute, this is an evocative record of early Canterbury and of a fascinating pioneer. A New Zealand classic. [Taken from book cover - Vintage Books]

STIFF

Roach, Mary 303pp 2004

Mary Roach takes the age-old question, "What happens to us after we die?" quite literally. And in Stiff, she explores the "lives" of human cadavers from the time of the ancient Egyptians to current campaigns for human composting. Along the way, she recounts with morbidly infectious glee how dead bodies are used for research ranging from car safety and plastic surgery to the authenticity of the Shroud of Turin.

STORYTELLER: THE LIFE OF ROALD DAHL

Sturrock, Donald 655pp 2010

Roald Dahl's life is not unlike the stories he has gifted to the world of children's literature: extraordinary and verging on the unbelievable. In this comprehensive biography, Donald Sturrock presents Dahl's fascinating life, from fighter pilot to spy, from creative genius to devoted family man and mercurial friend. Widely researched and meticulously referenced, it is a highly readable book revealing a flawed but larger-than-life character: a storyteller extraordinaire. [BIG READ]

STREET WITHOUT A NAME

Kassabova, Kapka 337pp 2008



Part memoir, part travelogue, this book provides a unique view of Bulgaria. Having left the country with her family, just after the fall of the Berlin Wall, Kassabova, a poet and writer, returns as an adult. Her remarkable understanding of people, her lively style and wry humour combine to produce a captivating look at a nation and its people moving from communism to capitalism.

STRAIGHT UP

Tui, Ruby 315pp 2022



An unequivocal title for an unequivocal character... Ruby Tui, one of the most well-known women's rugby players in the world, tells the story of her life. The daughter of a palangi mother and a Samoan migrant father, she overcomes a challenging childhood to become an elite athlete and a household name. Written with honesty and courage, this is the story of a young woman at the top of her game, an inspirational memoir with appeal whether you are a rugby fan or not.



"An extraordinary insight into life as an elite athlete."

"A very raw and honest account by a remarkable young woman."

"An honest insightful memoir of how Ruby overcame her challenges."

"It is written as Ruby Tui speaks, making it very easy to read."

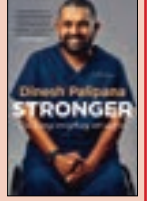
BDS Reviewers

STRONGER

Palipana, Dinesh 261pp 2022



'Doctor-lawyer-disability advocate-researcher'. This list in itself is impressive, but Dinesh Palipana can also add, 'has quadriplegia'. A car accident while in medical school resulted in a spinal cord injury that profoundly changed his life, but persistence and resilience along with the support of family and friends win out: Dinesh is now practising in one of Australia's busiest hospitals. Refreshingly honest and written with passion and humour, this is the inspiring memoir of a man who doesn't take 'can't' as an answer.



"This book is truly a source of wonder and inspiration."

"Dinesh was named Queenslander of the Year."

"The author's determination to succeed and his joy in life shine through his narrative with a refreshing honesty."

"An inspiration for any age group or ethnic group. It's hard to imagine anyone wouldn't find this a source of inspiration."

BDS Reviewers

STRENGTH IN WHAT REMAINS

Kidder, Tracy 284pp 2009

It sounds like a made-up story: young man escapes from scenes of horror in genocidal civil war affected country, arrives in New York unable to speak English and with two hundred dollars to his name; strangers befriend him and support him to study as a doctor at a prestigious university and medical school. This is the life of Deogratias Niyizonkiza who arrives in the United States from Burundi in 1994. This story considers the background to the Burundi conflict while serving testimony to the resilience of the human spirit, the power of hope and the kindness of strangers. An important book with a powerful and inspirational message.

STUART, A LIFE BACKWARDS

Masters, Alexander 296pp 2005

The story of a remarkable friendship between the author, a reclusive writer and illustrator and Stuart, a chaotic, knife-wielding beggar whom he gets to know during a campaign to release two charity workers from prison. Interwoven into this is Stuart's confession: the story of his life, told backwards. With humour, compassion (and exasperation) Masters slowly works back through post-office heists, prison riots and the exact day Stuart discovered violence, to unfold the reasons why he changed from a happy-go-lucky little boy into a polydrug-addicted-alcoholic Jekyll and Hyde personality. [SMALL FONT]

SUM OF OUR DAYS, THE

Allende, Isabel 301pp 2008

Structured as a letter addressed to the author's daughter Paula, who died at the age of 28. Paula's death and the year-long coma that preceded it were the subject of Allende's first memoir Paula. In this memoir, Isabel Allende reconstructs the painful reality of her own life in the wake of her tragic loss. Recalling the past thirteen years from the daily letters the author and her mother wrote to each other. She recounts the stories of the eccentric, strong-minded and eclectic tribe she has gathered around her. [SMALL FONT]

SURFACING

Jamie, Kathleen 248pp 2019

Merging past and present, nature and culture, the twelve essays contained in this collection share with the reader both a deep appreciation of the environment and a reminder of the transitory nature of humankind. Describing momentous happenings, whether it is the events of Tiananmen Square, her children leaving home, or the Yup'ik village of Quinhagak, the site of a 500-year-old massacre, poet Kathleen Jamie brings clarity, warmth and deep reflection to these initially disparate but ultimately connected vignettes. Part memoir, part travelogue and part nature writing... complete delight.

TENDER STRUGGLE, A

Bremer, Krista 287pp 2014

For Krista Bremer it's not the radical fundamentalist jihad of media attention. Instead, a more private 'striving for spiritual and intellectual growth' that comes about from a chance encounter with a fellow runner in a North Carolina wood. Krista and Ismail couldn't have come from more different backgrounds; Krista with her privileged middle class American upbringing and Ismail hailing from a humble Libyan fishing village. In the life they embark on together and the family they become, Krista must rise to the challenges inherent in a cross-cultural marriage, especially her husband's strong Muslim faith. An honest and rewarding memoir.

THESE PRECIOUS DAYS

Patchett, Ann 322pp 2021

Well and truly embedded in the literary world, Ann Patchett can turn her hand to both fiction and non fiction, and in this collection of essays, she welcomes readers into her life with more than twenty pieces to ponder. Reflecting on what matters most in life – including of course, family, friendship, marriage and writing – her trademark elegant and lucid writing is on display. Transforming the personal into the universal, this book is an engrossing and stimulating read from a consummate storyteller.



"I love Ann Patchett. I love all her books."

"The dark and light shades in this book are perfectly balanced between humour and sadness."

"I love the way Ann Patchett writes her wonderful prose and her view of the world."

BDS Reviewers

THESE TWO HANDS

Taylor, Renee 411pp 2017

Reflective prose, family anecdotes, poems, extracts from plays and novels, even a recipe or two – each one a patch signifying a year of a life, 88 in all and still counting – a quilt stitching together the life of New Zealand poet and playwright Renée. With depth and breadth, this fascinating and uniquely distinctive memoir combines clever writing with an astute social commentary of NZ society and the fascinating details of a courageous life lived to the full.



THINGS THAT MATTER

Galler, David 225pp 2016



Intensive Care Specialist Dr David Galler is a man who, on a daily basis, has the opportunity to consider just what are the things that really matter. In the hands of this veteran Auckland physician, we journey through the hallowed doors of the Intensive Care Unit and into the lives of the patients and staff and beyond. From the nuts and bolts of bodies to the wider picture of New Zealand's health care system, it is not only the professional arena laid bare, but the personal too, particularly the story of his Polish Jewish refugee parents. Subtitled 'stories of life & death', this is an enlightening and engaging book, refreshing in its blend of humanity and science.

THIS IS NOT MY BEAUTIFUL LIFE

Fedden, Victoria 321pp 2016



The arrival of Federal Agents on the doorstep of her mother and stepfather's southern Florida mansion, was the first hint to nine-months pregnant Victoria Fedden, that the 'let's play happy families' scenario she was happily embracing, was not going to last. Heading off to trial on multiple charges of fraud, Cecily and Joel are going to be out of the picture, taking with them the Hollywood lifestyle they have all been enjoying. In the meantime, Victoria must traverse the challenges of childbirth, the reassessment of her dysfunctional family and the spectre of post-natal depression. Messy and vicariously hilarious, this engaging memoir is elevated by its powerful combination of honesty and humour, and its hard-won insights.

THIS PAKEHA LIFE

Jones, Alison 228pp 2020



What does it mean to be pākehā in Aotearoa New Zealand? In this engaging memoir, educator Alison Jones attempts to answer this question. Examining her life, from a childhood moving around the North Island, to her immersion in academia and close association with Māori scholars, this is a relatable story of an open and honest search for identity. Supported with a glossary and end notes, this 'unsettled memoir' offers much food for thought, and an opportunity to consider one's own place in Aotearoa New Zealand.



"I rated this book highly. It is interesting, has a flowing style and is easy to read. I was very pleased I read it."

"Very interesting, very timely, and would lead to robust discussions I think."

"I really liked the background to Māori language, the structure, meanings and relationships."

BDS Reviewers

THOUSAND HILLS TO HEAVEN, A

Ruxin, Josh 308pp 2013



Everyone has a different idea as to what heaven is like but for Americans Josh and Alissa Ruxin and their children, it is the name they give to their restaurant in Kigali. While Josh is tackling Rwanda's many public health challenges, Alissa is free to follow her foodie passion, and in creating a gourmet dining experience she is able to provide employment and training for the locals. The delicious food dished up at Heaven's tables bears testimony to hopeful new beginnings as Rwandans learn to live and work together again. Both inspiring and heart-wrenching with its stories of Rwanda's recent past, this is a life affirming memoir of good people working hard to make a difference.

THREE CUPS OF TEA

Mortenson, Greg & Relin, David Oliver 349pp 2008



In 1993 a mountaineer named Greg Mortenson drifted into an impoverished Pakistan village in the Karakoram mountains after a failed attempt to climb K2. Moved by the inhabitants' kindness, he promised to return and build a school. Over the next decade Mortenson built not just one but 55 schools – especially for girls – in the forbidding terrain that gave birth to the Taliban. Mortenson is a keen admirer of Sir Edmund Hillary. [SMALL FONT]

TO BE FAIR

Riddell, Rosemary 220pp 2021



When Rosemary Riddell became a lawyer at age 40 and later a District Court judge, she was well prepared for her role in the courtroom by her previous experience as an actor and film director. Following the change of script, the author spent fourteen years on the bench dispensing justice and observing at close range the ills and challenges of NZ society. Insightful, thought-provoking and often highly entertaining, this relaxed memoir offers a unique view of our justice system and the more personal story of a wife, mother and concerned citizen.



"A warm, revealing insight into what it is like to be a district court judge with many amusing examples."

"Well-written and well-constructed."

"It's a quick and easy read but full of humour and insights into our judicial system."

"Great to read a woman judge's views from the bench."

"I thoroughly enjoyed this book. It is written in a very relaxed style."

BDS Reviewers

TOAST

Slater, Nigel 247pp 2004

Most of food columnist Nigel Slater's childhood memories seem to be connected to food. Rice pudding, Sunday roasts, mince pies and toast all played different roles in his life growing up in 1960s England, but not all of those memories were happy ones. His memoir relates his formative years through individual anecdotes with a focus on food as he grew from a shy little boy, to a novice cook, to an eager disciple of a student at a culinary school with French pretensions.

TOUFAH

Jallow, Toufah with Pittaway, Kim 310pp 2021



When Toufah won a national competition that promised a full scholarship to any university in the world, it was the first step to fulfilling her dreams. But it turned into a nightmare when she was raped by the president of her West African country, The Gambia. With both her own and her family's safety at risk, she fled to Senegal and then sought refuge in Canada, eventually being in a position to publicly expose the since deposed dictator. Introducing readers to the history and culture of The Gambia, this is a powerful and inspiring memoir of the courageous young woman and now advocate, who led the way for an African #MeToo movement.



"Well-written and easily readable."

"A remarkable story of huge bravery and determination."

"She was not yet 19 when she escaped from her native country and this makes her story all the more outstanding."

BDS Reviewers

TRAUMA CLEANER, THE

Krasnostein, Sarah 257pp 2017



When we ask someone what they want to be when they grow up, it would be unusual for someone to answer, 'a trauma cleaner'. However, Sandra Pankhurst is an exceptional person and the cleaning of crime scenes and hoarder's caches, has come towards the end of a challenging life. From husband and father to sex worker and eventually a wife and businesswoman, Sandra has strived for respectability and now brings order to other people's compromised lives. Compelling and disturbing, this is the candid personal history of a transgender woman as well as an eye-watering uncovering of the specialised world of trauma cleaning.



TRIAL OF THE CANNIBAL DOG, THE

Salmond, Anne 491pp 2003



Salmond vividly retells the story of Captain Cook's great voyages in the Pacific, focusing on the encounters between the Explorers and the Pacific Island peoples they "discovered". Salmond's work reveals impressive anthropological knowledge, but also reads as a sensitive exploration of personality. [BIG READ]

TRUE RED

Isaac, Tuhoe 'Bruno' 166pp 2007



This book explores the gang life of ex-Mongrel Mob Gang Leader Tuhoe 'Bruno' Isaac and what it really took for him to leave that environment and find a new life. In the Mongrel Mob for 17 years, Isaac was constantly living for the bash, beer and prison but the possibility of dying in a pool of blood eventually saw him search for another way of life.

TRUTH AND BEAUTY

Patchett, Ann 257pp 2004

Patchett first met the poet, Lucy Greely, in college and remained friends with her until Greely's death. Mourning her best friend, Patchett writes of her memories of their devoted friendship, which survived years of artistic, medical, economic and emotional upheavals. Using selections from Greely's letters, Patchett writes of their shared lives in a moving tribute.

TURNING POINTS

Moon, Paul 264pp 2013



From the arrival of the earliest Polynesians through to the introduction of MMP in the 1990s, historian Paul Moon presents twenty significant events that have left their mark on New Zealand society. A chapter dedicated to the in-depth exploration of each event and an easy-to-absorb style gives readers the best of both worlds: accessibility and substance. A thought-provoking read guaranteed to springboard thoughtful discussion.

TWELVE LITTLE CAKES, THE

Dery, Dominika 349pp 2006

Born to Czech dissidents in 1975, Dominika Dery grows up on the outskirts of Prague in a small village full of prejudices, politics, and petty informing. Largely shunned by her parents' association with the failed 1968 Prague Spring uprising, she seeks solace in her tight-knit family, the friendship of three old ladies she dubs her "fairy god-mothers", and her love of ballet. A testament to a family's will to survive through the final turbulent years of a terrible regime.

TWELVE MINUTES OF LOVE: A TANGO STORY

Kassabova, Kapka 319pp 2011



From downtown Buenos Aires to the banks of the Seine, Kapka Kassbova has danced the tango. But tango is never just about the dance, and here she takes us on an exhilarating journey across the globe in search of music, adventure, love and belonging. [SMALL FONT]

TWENTY CHICKENS FOR A SADDLE

Scott, Robyn 445pp 2008



When Robyn Scott was six years old, her parents abruptly exchanged the tranquil pastures of New Zealand for a converted cowshed in the wilds of Botswana. Once there, Robyn and her siblings, mostly left to amuse themselves, grew up collecting snakes, canoeing with crocodiles and breaking in horses in the veld. In the shadow of one of Africa's worst AIDS crises, this moving, enchanting memoir is an extraordinary portrait of an unforgettable childhood. [SMALL FONT]

UNBROKEN

Hillenbrand, Laura 473pp 2010



From a delinquent adolescence to being the youngest distance runner in the Berlin Olympics, American Louis Zamperini was destined for a life of adventure. When his plane was shot down over the Pacific in 1943 while serving as an airman, what followed was a truly amazing story. Surviving 47 days marooned on a raft, existence in a Japanese POW camp and then back state-side for the challenges of post-traumatic stress disorder, Zamperini's life is distinguished by his unflinching determination to endure. Not only is this a courageous story of attitude trumping circumstances but it also gives a unique insight into the wartime experiences of American soldiers serving in the Pacific arena.

UNDERGROUND GIRLS OF KABUL, THE

Nordberg, Jenny 336pp 2014

When the birth of a boy is a cause for celebration and the birth of a girl the absolute opposite, families in patriarchal Afghanistan must survive this cultural reality the best way they can. 'Bacha posh' – a daughter raised as a son – is a solution that enables families to maintain their honour. From childhood and puberty to marriage and beyond, this book investigates the experience of 'bacha posh', their place in history and the outcomes for them and their families. Lifting the lid on the hidden lives of Afghani women this is a thought-provoking and profoundly moving story from an award winning journalist. [SMALL FONT]

TWO SHAKES OF A LAMB'S TAIL

Hawkins, Danielle 304pp 2021



This year-long diary of a country vet could more accurately be described as the diary of a country vet, farmer's wife, mother, environmentalist, gardener, cook and writer. There is something for everyone in this humorous record of an action-packed rural life, whether it is details of large farm animal anatomy, smoko menus for shearers, parenting challenges or many other snippets of daily life. A rollicking good yarn, warts and all of New Zealand country life where there are just not enough hours in the day.



"I loved the book and am absolutely in awe of rural women."

"A fun read. I enjoyed the author's style of writing, her wonderful honesty, willingness to describe major mistakes and at times judgemental thoughts."

"I found myself laughing a good deal of the time."

"This is not a Herriot-style book. We learn of her everyday domestic lifestyle as a woman in the country."

BDS Reviewers

UNIVERSE IN YOUR HAND, THE

Galfard, Christophe 420pp 2015

Buckle up, you are about to embark on some mind-boggling journeys into our universe. From the surface of the moon and the interior of a proton, to riding on a light beam or finding yourself in the heart of a black hole, this layman's guide to the mysteries of the universe from your astrophysicist travel guide, explains the complex ideas of physics and cosmology using stories rather than equations. With its simple, direct language and vivid imagery, all you need to bring with you to appreciate the 'journey through space, time and beyond' is a lively imagination. Sit back and enjoy the trip!

UNNATURAL SELECTION

Hvistendahl, Mara 262pp 2012

It used to be that boy meets girl and they live happily ever after, but not so in many parts of the world. With the availability of gender determination technology and the resulting sex-selective abortion, it is now the case that boy only meets girl if he is very, very lucky. Subtitled 'choosing boys over girls, and the consequences of a world full of men', this book examines the cultural, political and economic factors underlying this choice and comprehensively documents the serious implications of such action. A thought-provoking and disturbing book with a global perspective. [SMALL FONT]

UNRAVELLING, THE

Sky, Emma 382pp 2015

It seems such an unlikely story: an ordinary British civilian advising the leadership of the US military in Iraq. Not at all what humanitarian worker Emma Sky was expecting when she travelled to Iraq in 2003 for a three-month stint helping out with post-war reconstruction. More than a decade later she had chocked up experience governing a province and then acting as a political advisor to American generals. Tempered with self-effacing humour, this memoir from a woman with impressive credentials and a unique perspective, provides a detailed and balanced account of the American war in Iraq, and the men and women on all sides, who did their best for the country. [SMALL FONT]

VIOLIN LESSONS

Zable, Arnold 288pp 2011



Linked by the common thread of music, this collection of ten non-fiction short stories takes the reader on a global odyssey reaching from Australia to Vietnam, Iraq, Germany, Poland and beyond. Ranging from 1970-2011, these are stories of survival that celebrate life while conveying the breadth and depth of the challenging experiences of each narrator. Whether it is the asylum seeker who is shipwrecked or the young violin student in Melbourne, each story is complete unto itself and a vivid reminder of the resilience of the human spirit. Sobering yet inspirational.

WAR DOCTOR, THE

Nott, David 360pp 2019

How do you get to be the most experienced trauma surgeon in the world? You front up to the world's war and disaster zones, year in, year out. Taking regular leave from the NHS in Britain, David Nott has spent the last twenty-five years performing field surgery in a list of hot spots from Afghanistan through to Yemen. Not content to just save lives directly, he also offers other doctors 'Surgical Training for Austere Environments'. Honest and confronting, this is an extraordinary account, not for the faint-hearted, from a courageous and compassionate humanitarian.

WATER THIEVES, THE

Mahon, Sam 269pp 2006



Sam Mahon, galvanised into action by rumours that the Hurunui River is under threat, agrees against his better instincts, to become involved in local politics. He embarks on a crusade that rivals the best of Shakespearean comedy: he's comically disarming, yet often a blistering social satirist. His energy for sustaining the good fight is prodigious, his techniques for gaining media and political attention are hilarious, bloody-minded and bold. From pyrotechnics to mock funerals, from stabbingly witty speeches to asking men in power to drink polluted river water, Mahon demonstrates all the qualities of a firebrand.



WE CAN MAKE A LIFE 

Henry, Chessie 253pp 2018

Telling your family's story is a daunting task, but Chessie Henry proves herself up to the challenge. The daughter of rural GP Chris Henry and his wife Esther, Chessie, the eldest of five, narrates her parents' story but it is the shockwaves of the 2011 Christchurch and the 2016 Kaikoura earthquakes that shape this inspiring book. Encapsulated by its subtitle, 'a memoir of family, earthquakes and courage', this uplifting and insightful accounting of a loving and resilient family also gives voice to the untenable stresses and strains placed on rural doctors and their families.

WE WILL NOT CEASE 

Baxter, Archibald 189pp 1939

The epic record of New Zealander Archibald Baxter's brutal treatment as a conscientious objector. This is an account of Baxter's lonely fight against "the war to end all wars". Baxter was arrested, sent to prison, then shipped under guard to Europe where he was forced to the front line. Baxter's influence, not least on his son Terence, a conscientious objector in WWII, and on his poet son, James K Baxter, continues today. Long regarded as a classic, his book is as relevant now as it was when first published.

WHATEVER YOU DO, DON'T RUN 

Allison, Peter 239pp 2007

All set for a brief OE, Australian teenager Peter Allison heads off to Africa only to have it turn into a prolonged OE when he becomes a safari guide in Botswana. There are plenty of mistakes along the way but fortunately the advice of the title is heeded and Peter lives to tell the tales of the fascinating animals and people he encounters. Settle back, put your feet up and immerse yourself in this warm and entertaining story of Africa, animals and adventures galore.

WHEN BREATH BECOMES AIR 

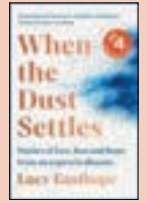
Kalanithi, Paul 225pp 2016

US neurosurgeon Paul Kalanithi was forced to face his mortality earlier than most when he was diagnosed with inoperable lung cancer at 36. This inspiring memoir shares his life: his passion for literature and writing and his later switch to the gruelling demands of medicine, and what to do with a terminal diagnosis when there are so many things you still want to achieve. Powerful, profoundly moving, and insightful as doctor becomes patient, this life-affirming triptych of literature, medicine and family is poignantly completed with an epilogue from his wife Lucy.

WHEN THE DUST SETTLES 

Easthope, Lucy 275pp 2022

Whether she likes it or not, Lucy Easthope, an international authority on recovering from disaster, has no choice about keeping up with the news. The 2004 Boxing Day tsunami, the Christchurch earthquake, the Grenfell fire, even the Covid-19 pandemic to name but a few, come under her domain as the go-to person for helping communities and governments recover from disaster and prepare for the next time it happens. Practical, honest and underpinned with compassion, this is the at-times funny, no-nonsense memoir of a disaster management specialist who brings hope and expertise when catastrophe strikes.



"Honest, practical and enthralling."

"Fascinating. Who knew what a career in disaster management was all about?!"

"This is not just a list of disasters. It is a thought-provoking read, deep and in places a quite moving account of her life."

"Be aware, some of the descriptions are QUITE vivid."

"Required reading for us all. We know the possibilities but are we ready?"

BDS Reviewers

WHY BE HAPPY WHEN YOU COULD BE NORMAL 

Winterson, Jeanette 230pp 2012

Adopted by a fundamentalist Christian family in the north of England, Jeanette Winterson endured a bleak childhood marked by a litany of abuse but made bearable by an early and strong connection to literature. Life became even more difficult when, aged 16, she fell in love with a woman, causing her adoptive mother to pose the question, 'Why be happy when you could be normal?' Focusing on her childhood and then the period later in her life when she is searching for her birth mother, this is an absorbing story, rich in fascinating literary detail and shaped by a painful past and the universal yearning for love and family.

WHY YOUNG MEN

Jivani, Jamil 263pp 2019

The question being asked is: why are young men falling prey to radical and violent ideologies? Exploring the disaffection and alienation of young men apparent all around the world, Canadian activist Jamil Jivani draws on his own impoverished upbringing and current academic research to examine this topical issue. Accessible and thought-provoking, this is an important book for our time and is encapsulated by its subtitle: 'The dangerous allure of violent movements and what we can do about it.'

WILD MARY – A LIFE OF MARY WESLEY

Marnham, Patrick 289pp 2006

Novelist Mary Wesley was born in 1912 into a privileged family, but lived an unconventional life. From rebellion to free living, Mary's bohemian existence provided much of the basis for her successful novels, the first being published when she was 70. This meticulously researched biography conveys the essence of a spirited and fascinating woman, aptly named 'Wild Mary', living through changing and challenging times.

WIND FROM A DISTANT SUMMIT

Deavoll, Pat 264pp 2011



From New Zealand to North America and Asia, Pat Deavoll has encountered many distant summits in her more than thirty years climbing mountains. But it is not just high peaks that she has conquered in her adventurous life: her battle with depression has required the same perseverance and determination as her chosen sport. This is an engaging and moving story of the highs and lows of elite mountaineering and the remarkable achievements of an inspiring New Zealander.

WORLD'S STRONGEST LIBRARIAN, THE

Hanagarne, Josh 291pp 2013

Librarians are usually associated with brain power not brawn, but in the case of Josh Hanagarne, it is two for the price of one. In an effort to manage the symptoms of his Tourette Syndrome, Josh becomes a weight lifter. This, in conjunction with his impressive height of 6'7" and his chosen vocation at the Salt Lake City Public Library justifies the title of the book. Touching on Tourette's, libraries, faith and family, this is a refreshing and interesting memoir from a man shouldering more than most.

WORST HARD TIME, THE

Egan, Timothy 340pp 2006

The dust storms that terrorised the American High Plains in the darkest years of the Depression were like nothing ever seen before or since. Following a dozen families and their communities through the rise and fall of the region, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Egan tells of their desperate attempts to carry on through blindingly black dust blizzards, crop failure, and the death of loved ones. The Worst Hard Time is an epic story of blind hope and endurance almost beyond belief.

YEAR OF MAGICAL THINKING, THE

Didion, Joan 227pp 2006



Several days before Christmas 2003, John Gregory Dunne and Joan Didion saw their only daughter, Quintana, fall seriously ill and placed on life support. Days later, sitting down together to have dinner after visiting the hospital, John has a massive and fatal coronary. In a second, a close and symbiotic partnership of forty years was over. This is Didion's account of her grieving.

ZEITOUN

Eggers, Dave 335pp 2009



When Hurricane Katrina descends on New Orleans, Kathy Zeitoun leaves town with the children while her Muslim American husband Abdulrahman remains behind to secure their business and properties, and once the levees are breached, to help in any way he can. Arrested by the National Guard, he is accused of terrorism and incarcerated without due process. In this astonishing narrative the author interweaves the background of the Zeitouns with the shocking events of this disaster to reveal a family living the American dream transformed into a nightmare. A gripping exposé that leaves you feeling hot under the collar but reassured by the courage and decency of ordinary citizens.

ZEN UNDER FIRE

Elliott, Marianne 279pp 2012

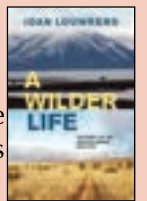


Living in what is considered to be one of the most dangerous places on earth is not everyone's cup of tea, but for New Zealand lawyer Marianne Elliott, it was the lure of her dream job that took her to Afghanistan to work as a human rights officer for the United Nations. From liaising with tribal leaders and warring factions, to battling bureaucracy and getting to grips with local customs and protocols, the life of a peace advocate is a constant challenge. In this very personal account of life in a war zone, the author not only recounts the daily struggles of living in such a high-stress environment, but the many difficulties faced by ordinary people. An insightful and inspiring read. [SMALL FONT]

WILDER LIFE, A

Louwrens, Joan 280pp 2020

Widowed when her children were very young, Dr Joan Louwrens decided to pursue 'adventure medicine' which allowed her to work on all seven continents and many of the world's oceans, frequently with her daughters in tow. From the Arctic to the Antarctic, to every landscape in between, including the Australian outback and the African savannah, this is captivating storytelling combining fascinating medical stories with an exciting travelogue of the remote and inhospitable places of the world.



"I loved this book. Joan is adventurous, humble, skilled and tells a wonderful, descriptive story."

"The medical stories are both interesting and engaging."

"I enjoyed the way the author interspersed medical case anecdotes with clear descriptions of the people she met and the locations."

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