

Herefordshire Readers' Group Book Sets

Updated April 2019

Sets have 15 copies except where indicated, and some include audio books (SW) and/or large print books (LP)

Achebe, Chinua - Things Fall Apart

First published in 1958 this seminal African novel depicts the problems of European colonisation. Okonkwo, a leader and local Igbo wrestling champion is a strong and well respected man with three wives. When outsiders threaten the traditions of his clan, he takes violent action. Will the great man's dangerous pride eventually destroy him?

Allende, Isabel - Daughter of Fortune

(includes SW & LP)

A sweeping portrait of an era; rich in character, history, violence, and compassion. An epic tale spanning four continents.

Angelou, Maya - I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings

The moving autobiographical account of the early years of the late, iconic, African-American writer and poet Maya Angelou.

Armitage, Simon – Walking Away

Modern day troubadour poet Simon Armitage walks the South West coastal path performing poetry along the way. He walks penniless and after each performance he passes around a sock for the audience to make their donations. His dry sense of humour and wry observations make this a very entertaining read.

Ashton, Juliet – The Sunday Lunch Club (New September 2018)

When Anna and her nearest and dearest get together for Sunday lunch every few weeks they laugh bicker and just enjoy each other's company. Much like any other family. But Anna's life is changing. How will she reconcile her painful past and uncertain future? Full of love and laughter, as well as tears, this is comfort food in a book – but without the calories, or the pain of burning your mouth on a roast potato.

Athill, Diana - Somewhere Towards the End

Aged ninety, and freed from any inhibitions that even she may once have had, Diana Athill reflects frankly on the losses and occasionally the gains that old age brings, and on the wisdom and fortitude required to face death. This is a lively narrative of events, lovers and friendships: the people and experiences that have taught her to regret very little and to question the beliefs and customs of her own generation.

Atkinson, Kate - Life After Life

What if there were second chances? And third chances? In fact an infinite number of chances to live your life? Would you eventually be able to save the world from its own inevitable destiny? And would you even want to? Life After Life follows Ursula Todd as she lives through the turbulent events of the last century again and again.

Atkinson, Kate - When Will There Be Good News?

(includes SW)

Jackson Brodie, retired police officer, returns for a third time in this literary detective story. Beginning with an appalling murder, the story races along full of drama and coincidence and it all ties up nicely in the end. Atkinson writes in an easy style with playful humour and great insights into human behaviour.

Atkinson, Kate - Started Early Took My Dog

The fourth novel featuring Jackson Brodie- It only takes one impulsive action to turn Tracy's humdrum life as a security guard upside down, into one of fear and danger at every turn.

Atwood, Margaret - The Handmaid's Tale (New July 2018)

Margaret Atwood describes a dystopian North America where nuclear toxicity has resulted in critical levels of female infertility. The elites of this society – Gilead - make fertile women like Offred live as 'handmaids' with the families of high-ranking officials specifically to breed. Any babies born are removed from their birth mothers by force and brought up by the 'establishment' family. It is difficult to know whether the most terrifying thing about this book is about the way women's rights (eg real family life, reading and writing etc) have been taken away from them, the brutal punishments for disobedience, or how humans have the capacity to adapt and 'go along with things' no matter how bad or wrong the circumstances in which they find themselves are.

Balding, Clare – Walking Home

Clare Balding is on a mission to discover Britain and Ireland. She's conquered over 1,500 miles of footpaths, from the Pennine Way to the South-west Coast Path. As well as suffering blisters and a twisted ankle, she's also walked with extraordinary people - botanists, barefooted rambles, whisky-drinking widowers. In Walking Home she shares these stories and tells of more misadventures with her family and her wayward terrier Archie.

Barnes, Julian - The Sense of an Ending

Winner of the Man Booker Prize 2011. A short but brilliant novel about a man coming to terms with his past.

Barry, Sebastian – Days Without End Thomas McNulty, who narrates this novel, is barely seventeen when he flees the Great Famine in Ireland and signs up for the U.S. Army. He and his brother-in-arms, John Cole, fight in the Indian wars and, ultimately, the Civil War. They go through extreme hardship together and share times that are undoubtedly violent and horrific, but also vivid and alive. The voice of Thomas McNulty in this book is fresh, natural and often beautiful and deals in a disarmingly matter-of-fact style with historical events, romance and the meaning of family.

Beale, Catherine - Champagne and Shambles

The well-researched and very readable story of the Arkwright family and their Hampton Court estate in Herefordshire.

Beevor, Kinta – A Tuscan Childhood

In this evocative and engaging account of an English girl growing up in Tuscany in the early 20th century, Kinta and her brother lead an idyllic and carefree existence. They explore the countryside near her parents' Italian castle and also spend time staying in their aunt's grand Florentine villa. Famous writers, poets and painters are regular visitors. But the author is just as interested in the local farm workers, stonemasons, craftsmen, shepherds etc, and writes about them vividly and with obvious affection. A Tuscan Childhood is a memorable and very

enjoyable portrait of a landscape, an eccentric family, a lost way of life, and – as war approaches - a society in major upheaval.

Bennett, Alan - Four Stories

Originally released between 1990 and 2001, here we meet a host of brilliantly drawn characters, like the eccentric Miss Shepherd (aka The Lady in the Van) who finds an unlikely long-stay parking spot in the author's garden. Then there is the couple whose flat is stripped bare by burglars, the adult son coping with the death of his domineering father, and a dead masseur - the full and shocking extent of whose talents only comes fully to light at his funeral. Both painfully accurate and immensely entertaining, this is classic Alan Bennett.

Bennett, Alan - The Uncommon Reader

Walking her corgis one night the Queen stumbles upon the mobile library and this awakens in Her Majesty a passion for reading. Her public duties begin to suffer and the Prime Minister determines to take action as the Queen's conversation turns more literary and less 'safe'. An extremely humorous book in which Bennett makes the Queen seem human and connected with her reading public in new ways.

Boling, David - Guernica

Set in the Spanish Civil War this novel concerns the lives of the Navarro family who live in the town of Guernica. Boling has woven a well-researched and moving fictional account of the tragic events that took place in the Basque country.

Boyle, Mark - The Moneyless Man

An inspirational account of one man's attempt to live an entire year without money. Heart-warming and witty this book will make you question what truly matters in life and it will provoke much debate.

Brierley, Saroo – Lion: a Long Way Home

An inspirational true story also made into a beautiful film. Saroo is just five years old when he gets lost. Suddenly he is a small boy all alone in a vast country of well over a billion people - India. This is the remarkable and heartwarming story of Saroo's next 25 years - full of danger, determination, hope, love and even a bit of luck. Lion is definitely proof of the old adage 'truth is stranger than fiction'

Brooks, Geraldine - People of the Book

The story of "the book" - a beautifully illustrated Jewish haggadah, spans fourteen centuries. The book is saved from destruction during the Bosnian war as it has been saved many times before.

Bryson, Bill - Neither Here Nor There

A brilliantly funny account of the author's student days backpacking around Europe.

Bullough, Tom - Addlands

A novel spanning seventy years in the life of a farm set deep in the Radnorshire Hills. From the ancient silence in the hills to the encroaching roar of modernity, it captures the intertwining lives of ordinary people within the natural world, written with a poet's eye for evocative detail.

Burton, Jessie – The Miniaturist

Set in 17th century Amsterdam where a trader presents his new wife Nella with a miniature replica of their home. Its tiny occupants mirror their real-life counterparts and show Nella what grave dangers lie in wait. A wonderfully compelling debut novel.

Byatt, A. S. - Ragnarok

The story of a young girl evacuated to the British countryside during the Second World War. Struggling to make sense of her life, she is given a book of Norse myths, and her inner and outer worlds are transformed.

Byrne, Paula - Perdita

Chosen for the Richard and Judy Book Club – the true story of Mary Robinson, one of the most famous and flamboyant women of the late 18th Century.

Carr, J. L - A Month in the Country

A damaged survivor of the First World War, Tom Birkin finds refuge in a quiet village church where he is to spend the summer uncovering a huge medieval wall-painting. Immersed in the peace and beauty of the countryside and the unchanging rhythms of village life he experiences a sense of renewal and belief in the future.

Chatwin, Bruce - On the Black Hill

A beautifully written homage to rural life in a fictional location on the Welsh borders. Tracing the course of the 20th century through the story of the Jones twins and the farm where they live their whole lives, this is a 'must read' book with lots of local interest.

Chevalier, Tracy - The Last Runaway

Honor Bright finds life in 1850s America a challenge, there are skunks and raccoons in the woods and even runaway slaves. The Quaker community she lives in is opposed to slavery but is she brave enough to defy the law.

Clanchy, Kate - Antigona and Me

One morning in London, two neighbours start to chat over the heads of their children. Kate Clanchy is a writer, privileged and sheltered, Antigona is a refugee from Kosovo.

Cleeves, Ann - The Glass Room

A classic whodunit from the author of the Shetland series which sees DI Vera Stanhope investigating a murder in a writers' retreat. All the elements of the country house murder format are here: strangers thrown together in an isolated setting; a windswept landscape; red herrings and blind alleys. But Cleeves' unique creation is Vera herself - an indomitable force with scant regard for the 'rules'. What starts off as a good turn for her hippy neighbour soon becomes a whole lot more sinister as a body is discovered and her neighbour appears to be the prime suspect.

Cleeves, Ann – Raven Black

A schoolgirl is found murdered on a remote Scottish island. In the close knit community, the locals' suspicion falls on Magnus Tait, the strange old man who lives alone in his isolated croft. But Detective Jimmy Perez has other ideas. A familiar enough 'plot' perhaps. But what sets this skilfully written psychological-thriller-come-classic-whodunit apart is the remarkable sense of place the author creates to make Shetland – its way of life, history and even extreme weather - truly 'come alive' for the reader.

Coetzee, J. M - Disgrace

(10 copies)

Following a brief affair with a student, disgraced university academic David Lurie seeks refuge with his daughter Lucie on her remote South African farm. Here he is forced personally to confront the violent reality of the new post-apartheid South Africa and the place of the 'white man' within it. In this short novel Coetzee tackles universal themes in a way that is both highly elegant and deeply thought provoking.

Conlin, Juliet - The uncommon life of Alfred Warner in Six Days (New January 2019)

Alfred Warner has 6 days to live. He also has a secret which he knows he must share before he dies. So, although he is almost 80, he has travelled from his quiet English home to Berlin - to save his granddaughter's life. Alfred's backstory is engagingly told. The little boy who 'hears voices'. The tragic orphan. The prisoner of war. The German in exile in a sometimes hostile Britain. This is a heart-warming read with a very sympathetic and believable central character. A clever 'page-turner' which still manages to convey some real depth of thought.

Conrad, Joseph - The Secret Agent

Written in 1907 and set in the dark, dingy streets of Edwardian London, this is a prescient tale of a terrorist plot to blow up the Greenwich Observatory.

Cope, Wendy - Making Cocoa for Kingsley Amis

These accessible, usually rhyming, poems highlight the absurd in love, sex, courtship and in the sometimes stuffy, self-righteous literary poetry world, with a brave humour.

Costello, Paul - Utterly Undiscovered

Ex council workers Debbie and Paul move from Brighton to start a bed and breakfast business in the depths of rural Shropshire. A salutary guide for those considering a country life and a hilarious read for those who aren't.

De Waal, Edmund - The Hare with Amber Eyes

A highly original and unusual book which has captured the imaginations of millions to become a major bestseller. When the author inherits 264 tiny wood and ivory carvings from his Japanese uncle he has no idea of the dramatic light they will soon shed on the history of his family and on 150 years of global change and upheaval from Odessa to Paris and Vienna to Tokyo. Like the tiny carved netsuke which are its inspiration, this book is beautiful, mysterious and exquisitely detailed.

Devonshire, Deborah - Wait for Me

An amazing life story by almost anyone's standards. How many others, after all, could recall having met both JF Kennedy and Hitler? Deborah (Debo) Duchess of Devonshire draws on memories stretching back 90-odd years to reveal fascinating insights into what it was like to be the youngest of the Mitford sisters, mistress of Chatsworth, cope with losing three children, live with an alcoholic husband – and much more. She describes her world of wealth and privilege in a disarming and matter of fact style, refreshingly witty and piercingly honest about happy and sad times.

Diamant, Anita - The Red Tent

This internationally bestselling book has been hugely popular with book groups. Anita Diamant imagines the story of Dinah, a character from the book of Genesis. It begins with the story of the mothers--Leah, Rachel, Zilpah, and Bilhah--the four wives of Jacob. They love Dinah and give her gifts that sustain her through her life and her special calling to midwifery.

The red tent is where the women gather once a month during menstruation, where they exchange stories and histories and pass on the secrets of love-making, herbal medicine and, most importantly, midwifery.

Dickens, Charles - Great Expectations

An absorbing mystery as well as a morality tale, the story of Pip, a poor village lad, and his expectations of wealth.

Dickens, Charles - A Tale of Two Cities

After eighteen years as a political prisoner in the Bastille, the aging Dr Manette is finally released and reunited with his daughter in England. "It was the best of times it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness....."

Dillon, Lucy – A Hundred Pieces of Me

If you had the chance to make a fresh start, what would you keep from your old life? What would you give away? Gina Bellamy is starting again, after a difficult few years she'd rather forget. But the belongings she's treasured for so long just don't seem to fit who she is now. So Gina makes a resolution. She'll keep just a hundred special items - the rest can go.

Doerr, Anthony - All the Light We Cannot See

A stunning novel about a blind French girl and a German boy whose paths collide in occupied France as both try to survive the devastation of World War II. Winner of the Pulitzer Prize for fiction.

Donoghue, Emma - Room

Jack is five. He lives with his Ma. They live in a single, locked room. They don't have the key. Shortlisted for the Man Booker & the Orange Prize this is a daring, groundbreaking novel.

Dowd, Siobhan - Bog Child

Dowd posthumously received the 2009 Carnegie Medal for this astonishing novel. Bog Child is set in Northern Ireland in 1981 at the height of The Troubles. Teenager Fergus McCann is illicitly gathering peat with his uncle when he discovers a child's body buried in the bogs, perfectly preserved for 2,000 years.

Duffy, Carol Anne - The World's Wife

A humorous, accessible collection of poems from the current Poet Laureate.

Dunmore, Helen - Birdcage Walk , (New July 2018)

A haunting depiction of a troubled marriage set in Bristol at the time of the French Revolution. Lizzie Fawkes comes from a radical free-thinking family background with revolutionary leanings. But her property developer husband John Diner Tredevant potentially has everything to lose as a result of social and political upheaval. When Diner faces financial ruin and the couple's passion takes a darker turn, Lizzie finds herself dangerously alone.

Dunmore, Helen – The Lie

Set in 1920s Cornwall, Daniel Branwell has returned from the war after fighting in the trenches, physically he is undamaged but emotionally he is scarred deeply. He is about to step into the unknown, but will he ever be able to escape the terrible, unforeseen consequences of a lie?

Dunmore, Helen - The Siege

Orange Prize shortlisted 2002. Poignancy and poetry mingle; Dunmore intertwines the abstractions of politics and war with the concrete details of everyday life in this story of the St. Petersburg siege.

Dunmore, Helen - The Betrayal

Sequel to *The Siege*. A beautifully written tale of love, loss and betrayal, set in Leningrad in the 1950s during the last demented days of the Stalinist regime.

Ellis, P. R. – Painted Ladies

The transsexual detective Jasmine Frame is on the hunt for a knife killer who has taken to targeting transvestites. Working with her former partner, DS Tom Shepherd, Jasmine finds evidence to identify the killer. Despite misgivings about the clashes with her gender identity she agrees to play the part of a flamboyant transvestite to flush out the killer but finds that her life is also in danger. This is a crime novel with a difference, challenging assumptions about gender and identity written by a local author who is a former town councillor of Leominster.

Enright, Anne - The Forgotten Waltz

A doomed love story for our times from the Booker prize winning writer- Anne Enright. If it hadn't been for the child then none of this might have happened. She saw me kissing her father. She saw her father kissing me. The fact that a child got mixed up in it all made us feel that it mattered, that there was no going back.

Faulks, Sebastian - Birdsong

In 1910 a young Englishman, Stephen Wraysford, goes to France on business. While there he plunges into a love affair with the young wife of his host which changes him forever. At the outbreak of World War I he finds himself battling in the trenches of the Western Front. This novel is full of graphic images of trench warfare that are powerful and completely unforgettable.

Ferrante, Elena – My Brilliant Friend

This book has become an international literary sensation by an enigmatic author who shuns publicity. *My Brilliant Friend* is the first book in a series of novels about two friends Lila and Elena starting from their childhood in the back streets of impoverished Naples during the 1950s.

Filer, Nathan - The Shock of the Fall

Winner of the Costa prize 2013, an extraordinary portrait of a young man's descent into mental illness. A tragic, comic tale of loss, guilt and redemption from one of the most exciting new voices in fiction.

Fitzgerald, F Scott - The Great Gatsby

The Great Gatsby probably occupies a place in the affections of as many readers as just about any other book ever written. Part romance, part social commentary, part mystery, part 'American-Dream'-morality-tale, its greatness is generally agreed to be far out of proportion to its modest length. Set against the backdrop of 1920s Long Island, New York, it follows the lives of self-made millionaire Jay Gatsby and his entourage, with their lavish parties, mansions and fast cars. Gatsby is romantically obsessed with patrician Daisy Buchanan and they embark on an affair. But Daisy's philandering husband Tom seeks revenge and inevitable tragedy ensues.

Flanagan, Richard – The Narrow Road to the Deep North

In the despair of a Japanese POW camp on the Burma Death Railway, surgeon Dorrigo Evans is haunted by his love affair with his uncle's young wife two years earlier.

The winner of the Mann Booker Prize 2014. A savagely beautiful novel about the many forms of love and death, of war and truth.

Flynn, Gillian - Gone Girl

A darkly compelling best-selling, psychological thriller. Amy has disappeared the police suspect her husband Nick. Her friends reveal that Amy was afraid of him and his computer shows some very strange searches.

Forbes, Elizabeth - Nearest Thing to Crazy

Dan and a group of his friends enjoy Sunday lunch together on a perfect summer's day. They are pleased to welcome Ellie their glamorous new neighbour and novelist, who has rented a house in the village to work on her book. As Ellie slots effortlessly into the village social scene, Dan's wife begins to feel increasingly alienated from her friends and isolated from her family but, for the life of her, she can't fathom out why. Author Elizabeth Forbes lives in Herefordshire with her husband, dogs and chickens.

Foulds, Adam - The Quickening Maze

The poet John Clare is imprisoned in an asylum in Epping Forest in 1840. Tennyson moves nearby and becomes entangled in the lives of the inmates. This historically accurate, intensely lyrical novel, describes the asylum's closed world and nature's paradise outside in the ancient forest.

Fowler, Karen Joy – We Are All Completely Beside Ourselves

Rosemary is now an only child, but she used to have a sister the same age as her, and an older brother. Both are now gone - vanished from her life. A comic novel that wrestles seriously with moral questions. Shortlisted for the Man Booker prize 2014.

Fox, Essie - The Somnambulist

Set in the theatrical music hall world of the East End of London and a spooky Victorian mansion in Herefordshire. The Somnambulist has all the dark moodiness and madness of a true Victorian Gothic tale. Essie Fox grew up in Herefordshire and as a teenager worked at Hampton Court, the inspiration for the mansion in this novel.

Fraser, Antonia - Must You Go? My Life with Harold Pinter

(Includes LP)

The funny and frank love story of two creative artists giving an entertaining glimpse into British bohemian high society.

Fraser, Eugenie - The House by the Dvina: a Russian Childhood (New July 2018)

Eugenie Fraser was born to a Russian father and a Scottish mother in the years before World War I. Although she was mainly brought up in Russia she also went on visits to Scotland and this book is a charming evocation of a young girl's reactions to these dramatically different environments, cultures, customs and family backgrounds. She also conveys a real sense of

how the family faces the dangers and deprivations of war before Eugenie's final escape to Scotland.

Galbraith, Robert - The Cuckoo's Calling

The acclaimed first crime novel by J.K. Rowling, writing under the pseudonym Robert Galbraith. War veteran Cormoran Strike is called to investigate the supposed suicide of a model who has fallen to her death from a Mayfair balcony. As he delves into the young model's complex world, the darker things get - and the closer he gets to terrible danger.

Galbraith, Robert – The Silkworm

When writer Owen Quine goes missing, his wife calls in private detective Cormoran Strike. Set in a publishing world going through an identity crisis, *The Silkworm* is fast-paced and full of oddball characters - all of whom are suspects. In a glorious trip around London, Strike attempts to track down a murderer whose motive, in the end, is not as it appears.

Gardam, Jane - Old Filth

Filth, in his heyday, was an international lawyer with a practice in the Far East. Now, only the oldest QCs can remember that his nickname stood for Failed In London Try Hong Kong. A novel that spans a life-time and half the world.

Garner, Helen - The Spare Room

Helen has little idea what lies ahead when she offers her spare room to an old friend. Nicola has arrived in the city for alternative treatment for cancer. A short but perfectly formed book, with lots to discuss.

Gaskell, Elizabeth - North and South

A classic that depicts class struggle and suffering in newly industrialized Victorian cities. An early example of a female coming-of-age novel.

Gibbons, Stella - Cold Comfort Farm

When Flora Poste finds herself orphaned and penniless at age 19 the only option she has is to live with her relatives the Starkadders at Cold Comfort Farm. This classic novel is a riotously funny, much loved parody of rural melodramas.

Gilbert, Elizabeth - Eat Pray Love

When Elizabeth Gilbert has a rather premature and dramatic mid-life crisis in her thirties, she goes in search of self-discovery. Her journey takes her to Italy (eat) India (pray) and Bali (love). Her very personal story has been an international bestseller and has provoked strong reactions in its readers. It may make you reflect on your own life in a profound way and offer inspiration for a better future. Or you may hate this book for being all too hackneyed and self-indulgent! Either way, it should make for a lively discussion.

Goodwin, Daisy - Silver River

After suffering severe post-natal depression, Daisy Goodwin decides she needs to write about her experience of having been abandoned by her own mother at the age of five. In her quest to try to understand what could allow a woman to leave her children she uncovers a fascinating family history reaching back 150 years to when her Irish forebears emigrated to Argentina. Her ancestors' story is one of great wealth gained and lost, gambling, suicide, and physical and emotional isolation. This story finally helps her make sense of her mother's devastating decision and find healing.

Graham, Winston – Ross Poldark

Tired from a grim war in America, Ross Poldark returns to his land and his family. But the joyful homecoming he has anticipated turns sour, for his father is dead, his estate is derelict and the girl he loves is engaged to his cousin. The Poldark series has become extremely popular again since the new BBC series, the books are even better.

Greene, Graham - The End of the Affair

The love affair between Maurice and Sarah, flourishing in the turbulent times of the London Blitz, ends when she suddenly and without explanation breaks it off. After a chance meeting rekindles his love and jealousy two years later, Maurice hires a private detective to follow Sarah, and slowly his love for her turns into an obsession.

Gruen, Sara - Water for Elephants

After his parents' death, Jacob is left penniless and homeless during the height of the Great Depression. He joins a circus as their vet, working for an unstable ringmaster whose violent tendencies give everyone reason to be cautious around him, including his beautiful wife Marlena.

Guo, Xiaolu - A Concise Chinese- English Dictionary for Lovers

As a 23 year old Chinese woman comes to London to learn English and falls in love with an eccentric English man. Written in short chapters, each the definition of a word, this is a brilliantly clever book that pokes fun at both England and China and explores the endless possibilities for misunderstanding between East and West, men and women.

Haddon, Mark - A Spot of Bother

An hilarious and disturbing portrait of a dignified man trying to go insane politely. A painful, funny, humane novel, beautifully written, addictively readable

Haddon, Mark - The Red House

Two families spend a week together in a holiday house near Hay-on-Wye. A novel that is funny, poignant and deeply insightful about human lives.

Harari, Yuval Noah – Sapiens: a brief history of humankind, (New July 2018)

This is a truly thought-provoking read which asks the big questions “who are we?”, “how did we get here?” and “where are we going?” Sapiens is remarkable book which tells the human story in a brilliantly original and accessible way.

Harper, Jane - The Dry (New July 2018)

A massively successful debut novel from Australia. Brutal murder, suicide, and the worst drought in a century make for unbearable tensions in a small community. When Aaron Falk returns to his hometown for his childhood best friend's funeral, a secret from their shared past is in danger of coming to the surface. An atmospheric and gripping read.

Harris, Joanne – Peaches for Monsieur le Curé

When Vianne Rocher receives a letter from beyond the grave, she allows the wind to blow her back to the village in south-west France where, eight years ago, she opened up a chocolate shop. A welcome return to the village in rural France that was the setting for Joanne Harris's remarkable and much-loved number one bestseller *Chocolat*.

Paula Hawkins, *The girl on the train*

Psychological thriller and worldwide bestseller from debut novelist. Rachel is a commuter. On her repetitive journeys the train always stops at the same place waiting for a signal to change. She has gazed at the same houses and back gardens next to the railway line so many times she feels like she knows the people who live there. Then she sees something shocking that changes everything and draws her into the real lives of the real people she has so far only imagined

Healey, Emma – *Elizabeth is Missing*

Maud is forgetful. She makes a cup of tea and doesn't remember to drink it. She goes to the shops and forgets why she went. Sometimes her home is unrecognisable - or her daughter Helen seems a total stranger. But there's one thing Maud is sure of: her friend Elizabeth is missing. A stunning, smash-hit debut novel about dementia from new author Emma Healey. Winner of the Costa First Novel Award 2014.

Heller, Zoe - *Notes on a Scandal*

(10 copies plus SW)

A schoolteacher embarks on an illicit affair with 15-year-old student; it is only a matter of time before she is hauled before a frenzied media with an insatiable desire for scandal. A cleverly controlled and meticulously constructed novel, by turns, gripping, funny and cringe-worthy

Herron, Mick - *Slow Horses* (New July 2018)

The first book in the highly successful series of spy novels featuring Jackson Lamb and his team of misfit spooks. Sidelined for reasons of drunkenness, drugs, lechery and general failure, they are the 'slow horses', destined to push paper all day. But when the beheading of a kidnapped boy is scheduled for live broadcast on the internet, none of these 'slow horses' is content to sit by and watch.

Hicks, Pamela - *Daughter of Empire: Life as a Mountbatten*

The author was born in the 1920s, daughter of Lord Louis and Lady Edwina Mountbatten. Brought up by nannies, she was often parted from her parents as they carried out their public duties. A solitary child, she learned to occupy her days lost in a book, riding, or playing with the family's unusually exotic collection of animals! This is a sharply observed and often funny memoir offering an intimate insight into historical events of the 20th century. It was the inspiration for the 2017 film "The Viceroy's House".

Hill, Susan - *The Woman in Black*

A gripping atmospheric ghost story.

Hill, Susan - *In the Springtime of the Year*

After just a year of close, loving marriage, Ruth has been widowed. Her beloved husband, Ben, has been killed in a tragic accident and Ruth is left, suddenly and totally bereft. A beautifully-written exploration of bereavement.

Hiraide, Takashi – *The Guest Cat*

A short but rewarding read, *The Guest Cat* is a deceptively simple novel about what happens when a cat comes unexpectedly into a Japanese couple's life. From having little to say to one another in the course of their routine existence, their daily visitor brings them new shared experiences and a renewed closeness and sense of joy. But beneath the surface, the book is

a meditation on the nature and transience of life and love. The author, a published poet, writes with true poetic insight, as well as wisdom, humour and elegance. It is also a fascinating glimpse of modern Tokyo where the story is set.

Hogan, Phil – A Pleasure and a Calling

A macabre and blackly comic thriller with a deeply unsettling and original hero, an estate agent who keeps the keys to all the houses he sells.

Hollinghurst, Alan - The Stranger's Child

Voted the Sunday Times novel of the year 2011. A magnificent 20th century-spanning family saga, brilliantly exploring changing norms of love, taste, class and social etiquette by one of Britain's finest writers.

Honeyman, Gail - Eleanor Oliphant is Completely Fine (New July 2018)

People think there is something weird about Eleanor Oliphant and tend to steer clear. Her life is about extreme control, routine and familiarity. She drinks two bottles of vodka at home every weekend and doesn't feel the need for friends – until, that is, kindness finds a way in. An engaging and very moving story told with humour and compassion.

Horovitz, Adam - A Thousand Laurie Lees

Shortly after Laurie Lee's death in 1997, a handful of locals dressed up as Lee and cycled right through the heart of Cider with Rosie country, stopping off at all the pubs on the way. They called their journey 'The Night of a Thousand Laurie Lees'. Slad valley poet Horovitz draws on memoir, myth and literature inspired by the valley and his walks through the Slad landscape, charting what has changed and what remains. Adam Horovitz is the poet in residence for Herefordshire and will be performing and running workshops throughout the county in 2015 – 2016.

Janes, Diane - The Pull of the Moon

Kate, a retired teacher receives a letter from an elderly lady concerning the disappearance of her son 30 years previously. Kate is forced to recall the heady summer of 1972 when she shared a house in Herefordshire with three other young people, and the tragic consequences. Atmospheric recollections and convincing characters contribute to a sense of unease both in the past and the present.

Jansson, Tove – The Summer Book

An elderly artist and her six-year-old grand-daughter while away a summer together on a tiny island in the Gulf of Finland. As the two learn to adjust to each other's fears, whims and yearnings, a fierce yet understated love emerges - one that encompasses not only the summer inhabitants but the very island itself. Jansson - creator of the Moomins - captured much of her own life and spirit in The Summer Book, which was her personal favourite among her own novels.

Jerome, Jerome K - Three Men in a Boat (includes SW & LP)

Essential reading! Jerome exploits an innocuous boating excursion by three gentlemen (to say nothing of the dog) to comment on the halcyon days of Victorian England, in this wistful, drily humorous novel.

Jonasson, Jonas - The Hundred-Year-Old Man Who Climbed Out Of the Window and Disappeared

This debut novel has been a surprise international bestseller. Allan Karlsson is waiting for his 100th birthday party to begin, a party he doesn't want. The Mayor will be there. The press will be there. But, as it turns out, Allan will not. He climbs out of the window and sets off an adventure involving criminals, a suitcase of cash and some incompetent police. A hugely funny, black comedy that has been described as a Forest Gump style road-trip.

Joseph, Fiona - Beatrice: The Cadbury Heiress Who Gave Away Her Fortune

Born into the famous Cadbury's chocolate family, young Beatrice might have been destined to live a life of privilege. But in 1920 she made the remarkable decision to renounce her inherited wealth and give back all her company shares to the Bournville factory workers. This fascinating book places Beatrice's life in its historical context and follows her transformation from conventional Quaker girl into the idealistic activist who pursued a radical vision of a fairer society.

Joyce, Rachel - The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry

When Harold Fry nips out one morning to post a letter, leaving his wife hoovering upstairs, he has no idea that he is about to walk from one end of the country to the other. He has no hiking boots or map, let alone a compass, waterproof or mobile phone. All he knows is that he must keep walking to save someone else's life.

Kay, Francesca - An Equal Stillness

Francesca Kay's first novel tells the story of a fictional artist Jennet Mallow who, against the wishes of her conventional family, follows her creative instincts away from her home in Yorkshire. Firstly to London, then, through pregnancy, forced marriage and post-war austerity, to Spain. Winner of the Orange award for new writers 2009.

Kelman, Stephen - Pigeon English

Shortlisted for the 2011 Man Booker Prize. This is the story of an eleven year old from Ghana living in a London tower block. A tale of innocence and experience, hope and harsh reality.

Kilvert, Francis - Kilvert's Diary (1870-1879)

Francis Kilvert was a country clergyman who lived on the borders of Herefordshire and Hay these are his diaries: gossipy, sweet-natured, generous, curious, and full of an abiding wonder and delight in the natural world and the beauties of the changing seasons. This abridged edition is perfect for readers groups in Herefordshire as it has some the best descriptions ever written of this beautiful county.

Kingsolver, Barbara - Flight Behaviour

Set in the Appalachian Mountains a young mother discovers a beautiful and terrible marvel of nature. As the world around her is suddenly transformed by a seeming miracle, can the old certainties they have lived by for centuries remain unchallenged?

Lahiri, Jhumpa - The Lowland (includes SW)

Two brothers bound by tragedy; a fiercely brilliant woman haunted by her past; a country torn by revolution. A sweeping ambitious novel from this Pulitzer Prize winning writer.

Lawrence, D. H - The Rainbow

(10 copies)

Set in the rural midlands of England. The story of three generations of a family, deeply involved with the land.

Lee, Harper - To Kill a Mockingbird

An unforgettable tale set during the depression in America's deep south. A coming of age, anti-racist novel, about one man's struggle for justice in a small town steeped in prejudice, violence and hypocrisy.

Lee, Harper – Go Set a Watchman

A landmark book set two decades after To Kill a Mockingbird.

Lee, Laurie - As I Walked Out One Mid-Summer Morning

In this sequel to Cider with Rosie, Laurie Lee leaves his Cotswold home and embarks on an epic journey by foot. His experiences of life in Spain at the start of the civil war are described in his very distinctive poetic style.

Lee, Laurie - Cider with Rosie

A beautiful, poetic memoir of a childhood in a remote Cotswold village. Growing up amongst the fields and woods and characters of the place, Laurie Lee depicts a world that is both immediate and real and belongs to a now-distant past.

Levy, Andrea - The Long Song

The story of July a slave girl living on a nineteenth century sugar plantation in Jamaica. Shortlisted for the Man Booker and Long listed for the Orange prize a beautiful, heartbreaking novel.

Liptrot, Amy - The Outrun

At the age of thirty, Amy Liptrot finds herself washed up back home on Orkney where she tries to come to terms with the alcoholism that has swallowed the last decade of her life. As she spends her mornings swimming in the bracingly cold sea, her days tracking Orkney's wildlife, and her nights searching the sky for the Merry Dancers, Amy discovers how the wild can restore life and renew hope.

MacDonald, Helen – H is for Hawk

As a child, Helen Macdonald was determined to become a falconer, learning the arcane terminology and reading all the classic books. Years later, when her father died and she was struck deeply by grief, she became obsessed with the idea of training her own goshawk. Winner of the Costa Book of the Year 2014.

MacLaverty, Bernard - Midwinter Break (New July 2018)

Retired husband and wife Gerry and Stella go to Amsterdam for a short break. After decades of marriage they share an easy closeness with each other. Yet they are also strangely far apart. Beneath the surface of their relationship, against the wintry streets and icy canals, each is facing their own personal crisis and the cracks are appearing. A subtle and delicate description of ordinary lives told with keen observation and great tenderness.

McEwan, Ian – The Children Act

Fiona Maye, a leading High Court judge, renowned for her fierce intelligence and sensitivity, is called on to try an urgent case. For religious reasons, a seventeen-year-old boy is refusing the medical treatment that could save his life. Time is running out.

McEwan, Ian - Saturday

A beautifully written, powerful novel, about a day in the life of a neurosurgeon. McEwan explores ideas of fate, purpose and the fragility of life in our post 9/11 world.

McEwan, Ian - Enduring Love

With a breathlessly exciting opening chapter, this is a compelling psychological thriller of love and obsession.

McGregor , Jon - Reservoir 13 (New July 2018)

A teenage girl goes missing while on holiday somewhere in the heart of England. Locals help the police search the moors. Everyday life in the usually quiet community goes on albeit in an unwanted and intrusive media spotlight. Reservoir 13 unfolds inventively over 13 years as it charts the aftershocks of a single tragic event. Both a delicate observation of the rhythms of the natural world and a journey into the essence of humanity.

McLain, Paula - The Paris Wife

Paula McLain skilfully blends fact with fiction as she traces the story of Ernest Hemingway and his “Paris Wife” Hadley Richardson. Her book vividly conjures up the heady atmosphere of 1920s ‘jazz-era’ Paris with the likes of Ezra Pound, Gertrude Stein and F Scott Fitzgerald among its cast of characters. But as Ernest realises his literary ambitions and is seduced by this Bohemian life, Hadley falls further and further into the shadow of the 'great writer' and their love proves ultimately doomed. An absorbing portrait of both a compelling love affair and a remarkable era.

McMahon, Katherine - The Crimson Rooms

Still haunted by the death of her younger brother James in the First World War, Evelyn becomes a pioneering female lawyer. When the doorbell rings late one night and a woman appears claiming to have mothered James's child, her world is turned upside down.

Magnusson, Sally - The Sealwoman's gift (New July 2018)

A highly original novel based on a true event. In 1627 pirates raided the coast of Iceland and abducted 400 people into slavery. They end up in Algiers. This is a fictionalised account of how one of the abductees – Astor, a pastor's wife – uses stories from home to help her come to terms with all she has lost. Meticulously researched historical material wonderfully turned into a great bit of storytelling.

Mansfield, Katherine – The Garden Party and Other Stories

Innovative, startlingly perceptive and aglow with colour, these fifteen stories were written towards the end of Katherine Mansfield's tragically short life. The collection includes The Daughters of the Late Colonel, a classic short story, one of her finest, both poignant and comic.

Matthews, Helen – After Leaving the Village (New April 2019)

Odetta is persuaded to move from her Abanian home to London for a better life. Londoner Kate is also looking for something. She longs to escape from her insular world and enjoy an

'offline' life, making real human connections. The lives of these two women come together in a gripping and thought-provoking novel which powerfully tackles the subject of modern slavery

Mantel, Hilary - Wolf Hall

Henry VIII is on the throne, but has no heir. Cardinal Wolsey is his chief advisor, charged with securing the divorce the pope refuses to grant. Into this atmosphere of distrust and need comes Thomas Cromwell. Winner of many prizes including the Man Booker.

Mantel, Hilary - Bring Up the Bodies

Thomas Cromwell is Chief Minister to Henry VIII, his fortunes having risen with those of Anne Boleyn, the king's new wife. But Anne has failed to give the king an heir, and Cromwell watches as Henry falls for plain Jane Seymour. Cromwell must find a solution that will satisfy Henry, safeguard the nation and secure his own career. Another epic Man Booker prize winner novel from Mantel.

Miller, A. D. - Snowdrops

This remarkable debut novel was shortlisted for both the Crime Writers Association Gold Dagger and the Man Booker prizes in 2011. A chilling atmospheric portrait of modern Russia - where the bodies of drunks and homeless, the displaced and the murdered emerge like snowdrops as the winter snows begin to thaw.

Miller, Andrew - Pure

Winner of the Costa Book of the Year 2011. The story of a young engineer in pre-revolutionary Paris who is ordered by the king to demolish an ancient cemetery overflowing with the dead.

Miller, Andy - The Year of Reading Dangerously

A father whose life no longer feels like his own discovers the transforming powers of great and bad literature in this hilarious memoir. Andy Miller had a job he liked, a family he loves and no time at all for reading. Or so he kept telling himself. But, no matter how busy or tired he was, something kept niggling at him. Books he'd always wanted to read. Books he'd said he'd read, when he hadn't. And so began a year of reading that was to transform Andy's life completely.

Miller, Madeline - Song of Achilles

Winner of the Orange Prize 2012. An extraordinary retelling of the Iliad it focuses on the romance between disgraced prince Patroclus and the brave warrior Achilles.

Mistry, Rohinton - A Fine Balance

It is 1970 and India is reeling under the harsh conditions of Indira Gandhi's 'Emergency' powers. Into this turmoil, Mistry throws his four central characters – an impoverished widow, her boarder, and two Hindu tailors she employs to make dresses for export in her crumbling apartment. The minutiae of their lives together, their struggles to survive, and the bonds between them are beautifully and sometimes humorously described. But against the background of the shockingly extreme political situation - with its horrific police brutality, compulsory sterilisation, mass political imprisonment, and even torture - tragedy inevitably strikes. And when bad things happen to these characters you really care; perhaps the most reliable mark of a truly great novel.

Mitchell, David – The Bone Clocks

This multi-layered novel from David Mitchell is a brilliant and skilful feat of imagination and storytelling. The book is essentially a set of stories centring on the life of Holly Sykes, but it has anything but a conventional narrative structure. The author deftly weaves together the banal and the surreal, skips effortlessly between genres and moves backwards and forwards through time with dazzling results. An exciting, intriguing and rewarding read.

Moggach, Deborah - These Foolish Things

(10 copies)

When faced with his father-in-law coming to stay, Ravi has a brainwave – he will open a nursing home in Bangalore for British ex-pats. Moving, sincere, and funny, this book is a truthful view of old age and what it brings.

Montefiore, Santa - The French Gardener

Married couple, Miranda and David, move out of London into a beautiful country house with an idyllic garden. But reality turns out to be very different from their rural dream. A wise and winsome and powerfully moving novel.

Moran, Caitlin - How to Be a Woman

Part memoir, part comic rant, Moran asks the questions that all women would like the answer to. A life-affirming book, which anyone who has ever wondered why pants are getting smaller should definitely read.

Morpurgo, Michael - War Horse

During World War I a horse witnesses the battle from both sides of the trenches. A powerful story of the truest friendships surviving in terrible times.

Mortenson, Greg - Three Cups of Tea

An inspirational story of how, one person can really make a difference. Greg built more than sixty schools in Pakistan and Afghanistan, and he has dedicated his life to establishing literacy, peace, and understanding.

Mosse, Kate - The Winter Ghosts

In the winter of 1928, Freddie is travelling through the French Pyrenees - a region that has seen too much bloodshed over the years. During a snowstorm, his car spins off the mountain road. Shaken, he stumbles into the woods, where he meets the beautiful FabriSSa, a woman in mourning for a lost generation.

Mosse, Kate - Citadel

1942, Nazi-occupied France. Sandrine, a spirited and courageous nineteen-year-old, finds herself drawn into a Resistance group in Carcassonne - codenamed 'Citadel' - made up of ordinary women who are prepared to risk everything for what is right. And when she meets Raoul, they discover a shared passion for the cause, for their homeland, and for each other.

Mukherjee, Neel – The Lives of Others

Calcutta, 1967. Unnoticed by his family, Supratik has become dangerously involved in extremist political activism. Compelled by an idealistic desire to change his life and the world around him, all he leaves behind before disappearing is a note. At home, his family slowly begins to unravel. Poisonous rivalries grow, the once-thriving family business implodes and destructive secrets are unearthed. And all around them the sands are shifting as society fractures, for this is a moment of turbulence, of inevitable and unstoppable change.

Mulvagh, Jane - Madresfield: The Real Brideshead

Madresfield Court is a romantic stately home in the Malvern Hills in Worcestershire. It has been continuously owned and lived in by the same family, the Lygons, since the time of the Domesday Book. The house and the family were the real inspiration for *Brideshead Revisited*: Evelyn Waugh was a regular visitor, and based his story of the doomed Marchmain family on the Lygons.

Munro, Alice - Dear Life

Alice Munro, winner of a multitude of prestigious literary prizes, is justly renowned for her effortlessly perfect short stories. Like all great short story writers, she can make 'ordinary' life beautiful and convey in 20 pages a whole novel's worth of meaning, insight and emotion. This recent collection is no exception and includes pieces that are likely to stay in the reader's mind long after they are finished. She is now in her 80s and *Dear Life* also includes four fascinating short 'autobiographical' pieces.

Murakami, Haruki - Norwegian Wood

In his native Japan, Murakami is revered as something of a literary superstar and his books have also been international bestsellers. In *Norwegian Wood*, 30-something Toru Watanabe thinks back to his student days in Tokyo in the 1960s, when events and his relationships with two different women, changed his life for ever. Dealing with his recurrent themes of alienation and loneliness, this is a beautifully sad love story. It is also a fascinating insight into aspects of everyday life and society in Japan told in a distinctive pared down style which draws the reader in and creates a great atmospheric feel.

Murray, Tiffany - Diamond Star Halo

Set on a Monmouthshire farm in 1977, and narrated by Halo, a small girl growing up in a family who run a recording studio visited by bands. For Halo, life takes a new turn when Fred is born to one of the visitors and their lives become entwined. Tiffany Murray has created a wealth of characters that make up Halo's extended family in a story which spans nearly 30 years

Nemirovsky, Irene - Suite Francaise

(includes LP)

Written in occupied Paris, tracing the lives of ordinary French people in extraordinary times.

Nesbo, Jo - The Leopard

In the depths of winter a killer stalks the streets of Oslo. Two women are found drowned in their own blood. A third woman is hanged from a diving board. Inspector Harry Hole is called to investigate. Here, as in his other bestselling novels, Jo Nesbo proves he is not only a master of the tensely plotted twisty thriller, but he also gives us truly believable characters, unflinchingly visceral details of torture and death and a social commentary on the state of modern Norway.

Nicholls, David - Starter for Ten

(10 copies plus SW)

Comic novel set in the 1980s. Brian has just started his first term at university. But he is harbouring a dark secret - a long-held, burning ambition to appear on "University Challenge".

Nicholls, David - Us

Douglas Petersen, a relentlessly organised biochemist, marries Connie, a flamboyant artistic type. The novel tells of how they first meet and have a child and struggle to understand each other. Eventually they take their now teenage son Albie on a "Grand Tour" of the great art

museums of Europe, one last fling for the family as a nuclear unit. A brilliant, bitter-sweet novel depicting the complexity of contemporary relationships and family life.

Obama, Barack - Dreams from My Father

The son of a black African father and a white American mother, Obama was only two years old when his father walked out on the family. Many years later, Obama receives a phone call from Nairobi: his father is dead. This sudden news inspires an emotional odyssey, determined to learn the truth of his father's life and discover his roots.

O'Connor, Joseph - Star of the Sea

A ship sets sail in the freezing winter of 1847 to New York, those on board are escaping the famine in Ireland. In this spellbinding tale of tragedy and mercy some of those on board will discover shocking secrets, seek vengeance and even lose their lives.

O'Flynn, Catherine - What Was Lost

Winner of the Costa first novel award 2007. This clever haunting mystery reveals the pathos in 21st-century consumerist Britain.

Ozeki, Ruth - A Tale for the Time Being

Ruth discovers a Hello Kitty lunchbox washed up on the shore of her beach home. Within it lies a diary that expresses the hopes and dreams of a young girl. She suspects it might have arrived on a drift of debris from the 2011 tsunami. With every turn of the page, she is sucked deeper into an enchanting mystery.

Passarlay, Gulwali – The Lightless Sky

Gulwali Passarlay was sent away from Afghanistan as a young boy, fleeing the conflict that had claimed his father's life. After an extraordinarily tortuous journey across eight countries, Gulwali arrived in the UK a year later and has devoted his new life to education.

A harrowing but necessary must-read about the experience of a refugee giving a human perspective that is so often missing from news reports.

Patch, Harry - The Last Fighting Tommy

A unique and compelling memoir. At the time of his death in 2009, aged 111, Harry Patch was the last surviving veteran of the Great War. In the Last Fighting Tommy he tells the story of what war was like for those who actually fought in it. He also offers a sharp and witty perspective on life over the last century.

Penfold, Rosemary - A Field Full of Butterflies

(includes SW)

An enchanting memoir of a Romany life, in the rural English, west country. Full of hilarious anecdotes this is a tale of an idyllic way of life, in a Gypsy wagon.

Perry, Sarah – The Essex Serpent

1893. Cora Seaborne, recently widowed, moves from London to Essex. There she is intrigued by tales of the Essex Serpent, a mythical beast which is said to roam the local marshes claiming human lives. Cora, an amateur naturalist, believes the serpent could be an undiscovered species, while local vicar William thinks it is the manifestation of an irreligious moral panic. William and Cora, drawn together by their shared interest, eventually and unexpectedly change each other's lives for ever.

This book has been described as a literary sensation, likened to Dickens and Stoker. It has been widely praised for, among other things, its writing style, evocation of place and insight into Victorian mores. But plenty of others think it's all hype! Read and decide

Picoult, Jodi – The Storyteller

Josef Weber decides to confess his disturbing past, to Sage Singer, a young woman who trusts him as her friend. What she hears shatters everything she thought she knew and believed. A twisting tale of the darkest horrors of the holocaust, a story of betrayal and revenge, hope and love.

Rayner, Sarah - One Moment One Morning

A stunning novel about love and loss, secrets and lies, family and - above all - friendship. Memorable and moving, from the very first it's a stark reminder that sometimes, one moment is all it takes to shatter everything.

Rebanks, James – The Shepherd's Life

James Rebanks and his family have lived and worked in and around the Lake District for generations. Their way of life is ordered by the seasons and the work they do has been the same for hundreds of years. This highly-readable book has been a nature writing sensation. It is part local history lesson and part family memoir and describes in detail what it is really like to work as a shepherd in the Lake District.

Rickman, Phil - The Wine of Angels

The first Merrily Watkins book set in the picturesque Herefordshire Village of Ledwardine. Merrily finds herself in the middle of a local disagreement about the possibility of using the church to stage a new play - about a previous incumbent who was accused of witchcraft. An intricate plot with fabulous characters, splashes of Herefordshire history and some nail biting moments.

Rickman, Phil - The Cure of Souls

A supernatural mystery set in Herefordshire, and full of sub-plots, featuring a thoroughly modern female vicar and some very true-to-life teenagers.

Robinson, Marilynne – Lila

Lila, homeless and alone after years of roaming the countryside, steps inside a small-town Iowa church - the only available shelter from the rain - and ignites a romance and a debate that will reshape her life. In Lila, the author revisits the characters of her earlier books, Gilead, and Home and brings a completeness to their journeys. However the book stands well on its own as a powerful search for the meaning of life as well as a touching and unlikely story of love and hope.

Roy, Arundhati - The ministry of Utmost Happiness (New July 2018)

Another epic Indian novel from the author of The God of Small Things. Here we meet three male friends from university and the woman they all loved and continue to love. Like pieces of a puzzle, their lives come together in a complex and compelling saga. These characters get under the reader's skin in a story where of humour, horror, poetry and humanity are brilliantly woven together. Arundhati Roy's voice is like no other.

Russo, Richard - On Helwig Street

An hilarious and heartbreaking memoir of life with an ambitious single mother in mid 20th century America. Heartbreaking and at times laugh out loud funny, Pulitzer prize winner

Richard Russo is a master story teller who brings all his expertise to this his first non-fiction work.

Ryan, Donal - The Spinning Heart

In the aftermath of Ireland's financial collapse, dangerous tensions surface in an Irish town. As violence flares, the characters face a battle between public persona and inner desires. Through a chorus of unique voices, each struggling to tell their own kind of truth, a single authentic tale unfolds. Winner of the Guardian First Book Award 2013

Sahota, Sanjeev – The Year of the Runaways

The Year of the Runaways tells of the bold dreams and daily struggles of an unlikely family thrown together by circumstance. Thirteen young men live in a house in Sheffield, each in flight from India and in desperate search of a new life. A compelling story with well-drawn characters, detailing life in the harsh underbelly of contemporary Britain.

Saunders, Jennifer - Bonkers: My Life in Laughs

Witty, warm and entertaining autobiography of the successful comedian, actress and writer Jennifer Saunders.

Schwalbe, Will - The End of Your Life Book Club

Mary Anne Schwalbe is waiting for her chemotherapy treatments when her son Will casually asks her what she's reading. The conversation they have grows into tradition: soon they are reading the same books so they can have something to talk about in the hospital waiting room. Their choices range from classic (Howards End) to popular (The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo), from fantastic (The Hobbit) to spiritual (Jon Kabat-Zinn), with many in between. We hear their passion for reading and their love for each other in their intimate and searching discussions.

Seethaler, Robert – A Whole Life

Like John Williams' recently re-discovered treasure Stoner, A Whole Life by Robert Seethaler is a tender book about finding dignity and beauty in solitude. An exquisite novel about a simple life, it has already demonstrated its power to move thousands of readers with a message of solace and truth. It looks at the moments, big and small, that make us what we are.

Selbourne, Raphael - Beauty

Winner of the Costa First Novel award 2009. A, shocking, touching, sometimes funny, glimpse into multicultural, inner city life in Wolverhampton.

Shaffer, Mary Ann - The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society

A charming tale of wartime occupied Guernsey, a popular book for readers' groups.

Shaw, Fiona - Tell it to the Bees

The 1950s are brought evocatively to life in this novel that has fine details about beekeeping. The story centres around Charlie and his Mum and a scandalous love affair which has the whole town talking, and a small boy very worried.

Sheers, Owen - Resistance

Set in the Black Mountains during World War II, The Nazi's have invaded and have taken over, the local men disappear overnight to join the resistance, leaving their wives to carry on.

Simonson, Helen - Major Pettigrew's Last Stand

Major Pettigrew and Mrs Ali the Pakistani local village shopkeeper find their new friendship blossoming into a late life romance. A whimsical, quintessentially English love story and comedy of manners.

Simsion, Graeme – The Rosie Project

This word-of-mouth bestseller is a wonderfully funny and endearing modern fairy tale about one man's search for love. Handsome 30-something geneticist Don is fed up with never making it beyond the first date. So he devises a scientific test to find himself the perfect partner. But when Rosie walks into his life he gets more than he bargained for!

Smith, Ali – Public Library and Other Stories

The stories in Ali Smith's new collection are about what we do with books and what they do with us. How they travel with us; how they shock us, change us, challenge us, banish time while making us older, wiser and ageless all at once. How they remind us to pay attention to the world we make. This book is a timely celebration of books and libraries a reminder of what we stand to lose as more and more libraries are closed.

Spufford, Frances - Golden Hill

New York in 1746 is a small town on the tip of Manhattan Island. When a stranger from England lands here wanting to cash what is in effect a very large cheque, the counting house in Golden Hill Street is put in a bit of a difficult spot. Is this man to be trusted, turned away, befriended, seduced or perhaps even killed? A vivid and entertaining picture of 18th century New York in the days when it was far less sophisticated than London. Winner of the 2016 Costa First Novel prize.

Steinbeck, John - The Grapes of Wrath

This landmark of American literature captures the horrors of the Great Depression as it probes into the nature of equality and justice in America, describing the lives of ordinary people striving to preserve their humanity in the face of social and economic desperation, as they follow their dream of a piece of land to call their own.

Steinbeck, John - Of Mice and Men

(includes LP)

Steinbeck touches the quick in this evocative, beautifully rendered portrait of outsiders struggling to understand their own unique places in the world.

Stempel, John Lewis - The Running Hare

Beautiful and poetic, yet also a practical and insightful account of one man's bid to farm a field in an historic and sustainable way. Stempel's passion for the Herefordshire countryside is clear, as is his anger towards the ravages that modern agriculture has inflicted on the land.

Stockett, Kathryn - The Help

(includes SW)

A hugely popular book, chronicling the lives of black maids, during the early 60s, in the American south.

Stott, Rebecca - In the Days of Rain (New July 2018)

The author was born into the 'Brethren', a closed Christian sect which believed the world was ruled by Satan. Members lived by strict rules (especially the women) and could expect severe

punishments for disobedience. This memoir is an intriguing and chilling insight into a hidden world. It is also a thoughtful portrait of her father who – as he was dying - asked his daughter to help write their family's story.

Summerscale, Kate - The Suspicions of Mr Whicher

(includes SW)

A true story that inspired a generation of writers such as Wilkie Collins, Charles Dickens and Arthur Conan Doyle, this has all the hallmarks of the classic murder mystery - a body; a detective; and, a country house steeped in secrets.

Tammet, Daniel - Born on a Blue Day

A remarkable memoir of a man who has a rare form of Asperger's – Savant Syndrome. Daniel sees numbers as shapes, colours and textures and can perform stunning feats of mental arithmetic. A charming, honest and tender account from someone who views the world in a unique way.

Tan, Twan Eng - The Garden of Evening Mists

(includes SW)

In the highlands of Malaya, a woman sets out to build a memorial to her sister, killed at the hands of the Japanese during the brutal occupation of their country. A beautiful, dark and wistful exploration of loss and remembrance.

Thubron, Colin - To a Mountain in Tibet

Thubron joins Hindu and Buddhist pilgrims to Mount Kailas the most sacred of the world's mountains in Tibet. Having recently witnessed the death of the last of his family, his trek around the great mountain awakens an inner landscape of love and grief, restoring precious fragments of his own past.

Toibin, Colm - Nora Webster

A heartbreaking novel from one of the greatest novelists writing today. It is the late 1960s in Ireland. Nora Webster is living in a small town, looking after her four children, trying to rebuild her life after the death of her husband. Short-listed for the 2014 Costa Novel Award and the 2015 Folio Prize.

Torday, Paul - The Girl on the Landing

Married to a very dull man for 10 years Elizabeth is surprised by his sudden unsettling and then inspiring behaviour. Elizabeth gradually uncovers disturbing secrets from his past, which, in a heart-pounding climax, put her life in danger. This is an exciting novel – part love story, part psychological thriller – which confounds your expectations as it tightens its grip.

Tremain, Rose - The Colour

This is an intense and passionate story of love falling apart, guilt, broken dreams and obsessive desires in the harsh, unforgiving landscape of 19th century New Zealand.

Tremain, Rose - The Gustav Sonata

Gustav grows up in a small town in Switzerland, where the horrors of the Second World War seem a distant echo. But Gustav's father has mysteriously died, and his adored mother Emilie is strangely cold and indifferent to him. Gustav's life is a lonely one until he meets Anton. An intense lifelong friendship develops, but Anton fails to understand how deeply and irrevocably his life and Gustav's are entwined until it is almost too late. Rose Tremain's beautifully written novel asks the question, what does it do to a person, or to a country, to pursue an eternal quest for neutrality, and self-mastery, while all life's hopes and passions continually press upon the borders and beat upon the gate.

.Tremain, Rose - The Road Home

Winner of the Orange Prize 2008- a heart-wrenching story of an Eastern European migrant worker.

Trevor, William - Love and Summer

In a characteristically masterful way, Trevor evokes the passions and frustrations in an Irish town during one long summer.

Trollope, Joanna - Sense and Sensibility

An entertaining, contemporary reworking of Jane Austen's Sense and Sensibility.

Trollope, Anthony - The Warden

Septimus Harding is the Precentor of Barchester Cathedral. He is held in great respect by his Bishop. He is also the Warden of an alms house, set up by a past benefactor to take care of the needs of the twelve old men who are its residents. They are very fond of Septimus. He is a good man. But discontent is stirring. Reformers – like his (prospective) son-in-law - are outraged about corrupt clergy shamefully living lives of supposed luxury while those they are meant to be looking after are kept in poverty, reliant on meagre handouts. There are accusations of mismanagement of church funds. When his (actual) son-in-law, the bossy Archbishop, wades in and newspapers and expensive lawyers get involved Septimus is driven to despair. A very readable and likeable story about Victorian morals and the power struggle between privilege and the common man, with some modern parallels.

Tyler, Anne - Breathing Lessons

The Pulitzer Prize winning author spins a humorous, off-beat story set in a single day, with quirky and endearing characters; this shows us all there is to know about a marriage.

Tyler, Anne - Noah's Compass

With her usual poignant, humorous style, Tyler tells the story of 61 year old Liam Pennywell, whose life is coming adrift while he struggles with memory loss, aging and love.

Tyler Anne- The Beginner's Goodbye

A story about two ordinary people so intertwined they cannot be separated - even by death. A deeply rewarding novel about grief and hope, infused with Anne Tyler's unique, gentle humour.

Tyler Anne – A Spool of Blue Thread

This is the way Abby Whitshank always begins the story of how she and Red fell in love that summer's day in 1959. The whole family on the porch, half-listening as their mother tells the same tale they have heard so many times before. Another gentle, insightful story from Anne Tyler of ordinary, fallible people.

Van Emden, Richard - Meeting the Enemy

Van Emden specialises in first-person testimonies of the Great War and here he uses his considerable knowledge and resources to illustrate the depth of the tragedy which befell the people of Britain and Germany when their countries went to war in 1914.

Vargas, Fred - The Ghost Riders of Ordebec

Fred Vargas' novels featuring Commissaire Adamsberg have made her the bestselling crime writer in France. But this is definitely not your average crime novel. An archaeologist and historian by profession, she has an appealingly individual style, bringing together elements of myth, humour, mystery and superstition. Here we find her quixotic Commissaire in Paris rescuing a pigeon in distress and attempting to solve a case of arson and murder, as well as being called to Normandy to investigate a series of grisly deaths linked to visions of ghostly horsemen. This is an engaging read full of great Gallic atmosphere and a cast of gloriously quirky characters.

VARIOUS – A Culinary Cornucopia (New August 2018)

A set with a difference - 15 slim volumes (all different) from a series called 'Great Food'. With works by well-known food writers like Eliza Acton, Hannah Glasse and Elizabeth David alongside some more esoteric selections on subjects including 'roast pig', 'everlasting syllabub' and 'murder in the kitchen' there is something for everyone here. And it's not just about food; these selections from the last 400 years show that the best 'food writing' is really about love, family, travel, civilisation, entertainment and much more besides. Try this set for some great 'short reads', or even a tasty 'pick-and-mix' perhaps?.

Viner, Brian - Tales of the Country

Viner, very entertainingly describes how he and his family upped sticks from north London to deepest Herefordshire, chasing a rural idyll.

Viner, Brian - The Pheasants' Revolt

This book continues in the same vein as Tales of the Country, telling of their trials trying to develop some of the cottages attached to the manor as holiday lets. Neither Brian nor Jane had any experience in the tourist industry, and this quickly showed as they encountered their share of "Fawlty Towers"-type disasters - and guests. A wonderfully warm follow-up to the first volume, and full of the same delightful humour and digressions.

Watson, S. J. – Before I Go to Sleep

Psychological thriller about a woman who wakes up every morning with no memory of the day before, or anything that's happened in the last twenty years.

Webb, Mary - Precious Bane

Set in the early nineteenth century in rural Shropshire this melodrama is told by Prue Sarn a simple country girl who is afflicted with a hare lip and a greedy ambitious brother. Skillfully woven through this story is the aura of the English countryside, its flora and fauna anticipating every twist and turn of the plot.

Wharton, Edith - The House of Mirth

Lily Bart is a 29 year old 'Society' beauty in late 19th century New York. But she also has no money. The only way for her to support her precarious social position and expensive habits is to find the right husband. But where Lily goes wrong is to insist on finding love as well. The decline she suffers as a result of chances missed and compromises rejected is almost unbearably painful to read. Yet you keep on cheering inwardly for Lily, a victim of both her own

principles and the superficiality of her social circle. An absorbing read with a brilliantly drawn heroine.

Wharton, Edith - The Age of Innocence

(Includes SW)

1870s New York. Upper class socialite Newland Archer is engaged to be married to May Welland. But then May's cousin Ellen returns from Europe planning to divorce her aristocratic Polish husband the Count Olenska. Soon Newland starts to see May in a new and unfavourable light, as a tedious product of her class, with no opinions of her own. Countess Olenska, on the other hand, is an exciting, unconventional free spirit. But despite falling love with Ellen, Newland is ultimately trapped by his own sense of duty. So, instead of upsetting the 'established order' he marries May anyway. Has he made the right choice?

White, Antonia – Frost in May

Frost in May is set just before the First World War and based on the author's own experiences. Nine year old Nanda, daughter of a catholic convert, is sent to a convent boarding school. In her search for acceptance, she tries to fit in and conform, but at the same time questions the nuns' sometimes extreme attitudes to discipline, friendships and many other things. An engaging, evocative, thought-provoking and disturbing story, perfectly capturing the essence of convent school life.

Williams, John - Stoner

First published in 1965 this book has recently been hailed as the one of the great novels of the century. It is the quiet tale of a man born at the end of the 19th century. He escapes a hard life on a farm in Missouri by falling in love with English literature.

Winterson, Jeanette - Why Be Happy When You Could Be Normal?

A very open and honest memoir of a difficult life, often painful but darkly funny. Jeannette goes on a personal journey to find her real mother. A brilliant and brave book that describes how literature and poetry have ultimately saved her life.

Woolf, Virginia - Mrs Dalloway

Written in 1925 this is a classic, groundbreaking example of stream of consciousness storytelling. Describing the events of a single day, and revealing the interior worlds of her characters, it tells the parallel stories of Clarissa Dalloway, who getting ready to throw a party, and Septimus Warren Smith, a shell-shocked World War One veteran.

Worth, Jennifer - Call the Midwife

A moving memoir of life as a midwife in 1950s London Docklands, made into a surprisingly successful BBC TV series.