

# Herefordshire Readers' Group Book Sets

Last website update December 2023

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

Some titles are also available as ebooks and/or eaudiobooks via our BorrowBox app. For more details go to <https://herefordshire.borrowbox.com/>

## **Ali, Monica - Love marriage (New October 2023)**

Yasmin Ghorami has a lot to be grateful for: a loving family, a fledgling career in medicine, and a charming, handsome fiancé, fellow doctor Joe Sangster. But as the wedding day draws closer, Yasmin is forced to dismantle her own assumptions about the people she holds most dear and ask herself what she really wants in a relationship and what a 'love marriage' actually means.

## **Allende, Isabel – Violeta (New October 2023)**

The remarkable story of the long and eventful life of Violeta de Valle as told in letters to her grandson. Born in 1920, her life is marked by extraordinary events in her South American homeland and the wider world. We follow Violeta through the ups and downs of her family's fortunes and her own personal life as Isabel Allende weaves another of her beautifully written sagas with a strong and passionate woman at its heart.

## **Allende, Isabel - The long petal of the sea**

Victor Dalmau is a young doctor when he is caught up in the Spanish Civil War, a tragedy that leaves his life - and the fate of his country - forever changed. Together with his sister-in-law, the pianist Roser Bruguera, he is forced out of his beloved Barcelona and into exile. When the opportunity to seek refuge in Chile arises, they take it, boarding a ship chartered by the poet Pablo Neruda to the promised 'long petal of sea and wine and snow'

## **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**

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.

### **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 – Shrines of gaiety (New October 2023)**

1920s London after the Great War has become the focus for a delirious new nightlife. In the clubs of Soho, peers of the realm rub shoulders with starlets, foreign dignitaries with gangsters, and girls sell dances for a shilling a time. The notorious and ruthless queen of this glittering world is Nellie Coker, ambitious to advance her six children, including the enigmatic eldest, Niven whose character has been forged in the crucible of the Somme. But beneath the dazzle of Soho's gaiety, there is a dark underbelly, and Nellie finds her empire under threat

### **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**

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 ramblers, whisky-drinking widowers. In Walking Home she shares these stories and tells of more misadventures with her family and her wayward terrier Archie.

### **Barker, Pat – The silence of the girls**

A re-working of The Iliad told from the viewpoint of the women at the centre of the story. Caught in the bloody conflict between Greeks and Trojans, captured queen Briseis finds herself condemned to be the bed-slave of Achilles, the very man who butchered her family.

### **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.

### **Barry, Sebastian - A thousand moons**

This novel continues the story of former soldiers Thomas McNulty and John Cole who we first met in Barry's earlier book 'Days Without End'. Winona, their adopted daughter, now lives and works with them on a Tennessee farm. She is educated and loved, forging a life for herself beyond the violence and dispossession of her past. But the fragile harmony of her unlikely family unit, in the aftermath of the Civil War, is soon threatened by a further traumatic event, one which Winona struggles to confront, let alone understand

### **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.

### **Blythe, Ronald - Next to nature: a lifetime in the English countryside (New October 2023)**

From his home on the Suffolk-Essex border, Blythe has spent almost half a century observing the slow turn of the agricultural year, the church year, and village life in a series of rich, lyrical rural diaries. Beginning with the arrival of snow on New Year's Day and ending with Christmas carols sung in the village church, 'Next to Nature' invites us to witness a simple life richly lived. With gentle wit and keen observation Blythe meditates on his life and faith, on literature, art and history, and on our place in the landscape.

### **Boyd, William – A good man in Africa**

Morgan Leafy is a reluctant representative of Her Britannic Majesty in tropical Kinjanja. But his love of women, fondness for drink, and loathing for the country prove formidable obstacles on his road to any kind of success. Then, in pursuit of a rare opportunity to achieve real professional recognition and, more importantly, reassignment, he finds himself being blackmailed, diagnosed with a venereal disease, attempting bribery, and confounded with a dead body. As usual, Morgan finds that very little is going according to plan.

### **Boyd, William -The romantic: the real life of Cashel Greville Ross (New October 2023)**

A novel set in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The eponymous Cashel Greville Ross is a man of many faces. He is variously a soldier, a lover, a husband, a father, a friend of famous poets, a writer, a bankrupt, a jailbird, a farmer, an African explorer - and many other manifestations - before, finally, he becomes a minor diplomat and plans to see out the end of his days in well-deserved tranquillity. But this is not to be.

### **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'

### **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 17<sup>th</sup> 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.

### **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.

### **Chadwick, Elizabeth - The Templar Silks**

Historical novel from master storyteller Elizabeth Chadwick. It is 1219, and great English knight William Marshall is dying. As he sends for the precious Templar silks he brought back from Jerusalem 35 years before to be his shroud, he reminisces on his youthful adventures in the Holy Land. The sights, sounds, smells, horrors dangers and intrigues of the 12th century are brought to life as we follow William's dramatic story.

### **Chase, Eva - The Birdcage (New October 2023)**

Three half-sisters return to a Cornish house remembered from their childhood. In this house, twenty years before, they were models for their father's celebrated painting Girls and Birdcage. But when they arrive back at Rock Point they know they are not alone. Someone is lurking in the shadows watching their every move.

### **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.

### **Choma, Anne – Gentleman Jack: the Real Anne Lister**

The remarkable and fascinating true story of Yorkshirewoman Anne Lister. Fearless, passionate, charismatic and compelled to explore her sexuality, she forged her own path in a society that had no language to define her. A landowner, an industrialist, an independent traveller and a prolific diarist, she made history in 1834 by entering into the first ever recorded lesbian marriage. In an era when women had virtually none of the rights enjoyed today, she was truly ahead of her time.

### **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 – The Seagull**

Detective Vera Stanhope investigates a crime from the past. Links between the case and her own dead father force her to confront uncomfortable memories.

### **Coe, Jonathan – Middle England**

Benjamin Trotter and his friends and relations are not having an entirely easy time trying to cope with mid-life, changing family dynamics and Brexit. Insightful and funny, Jonathan Coe chronicles not only the lives and sense of bewilderment of his lovingly-drawn characters, but also the state of British society during a period of huge change and disruption.

## **Conlin, Juliet - The uncommon life of Alfred Warner in Six Days**

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.

## **Cox, Sara - Til the cows come home: a Lancashire childhood (New October 2023)**

Sara Cox, the youngest of five siblings, grew up on her father's cattle farm surrounded by dogs, cows, horses, fields and 'lots of cack'. Her writing conjures up a time of wagon rides and haymaking and agricultural shows, alongside chain-smoking pensioners, cabaret nights at the Conservative club and benign parenting. This funny, big-hearted and often moving telling of Sara's upbringing is not what you'd expect from the original 'ladette', and one of radio's most enduring and well-loved presenters.

## **Dare, Abi - The girl with the louding voice**

Adunni is a 14-year-old Nigerian girl who knows what she wants: an education. But instead she is sold off – first in marriage to a much older man, then as a domestic servant in a household where no one will speak about the strange disappearance of her predecessor Rebecca. Though others treat her as 'nothing' Adunni refuses to be silenced and is determined to speak for herself, for the girls like Rebecca who came before, and for all the girls who will follow.

## **Davies, Alan – Just Ignore Him**

Alan Davies recalls his 1970s boyhood and adolescence with great insight and humour. From sibling dynamics and the loss of his mother, to his voiceless, misunderstood progression through school, sexuality and humiliating 'accidents', Davies inhabits his younger mind with spectacular accuracy, sharply evoking an era when Green Shield Stamps, Bob-a-Job week and Whizzer and Chips loomed large, a bus fare was 2p - and children had little power in a world of adults

## **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.

## **De Waal, Kit – My Name is Leon**

Leon is nine, and lives with his baby brother Jake and their foster mother Maureen.. But Jake is white and Leon is not. Then one day a social worker tells Leon that Jake is going to be adopted but he will be left behind. Leon's first person narrative powerfully describes the pain of separation, the harsh injustices of the 1980s care system, and the sense of being an outsider searching for love and belonging.

## **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.

### **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.

### **Duffy, Carol Anne - The World's Wife**

A humorous, accessible collection of poems from former Poet Laureate.

### **Dunmore, Helen - Birdcage Walk**

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?

### **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**

(includes SW)

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.

### **Evaristo, Bernadine, Girl, Woman, Other**

'Girl, Woman', 'Other' follows the lives and struggles of twelve very different characters. Mostly women, black and British, they tell the stories of their families, friends and lovers, across the country and through the years

### **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.

### **Fowler, Karen Joy – We Are All Completely Beside Ourselves**

(includes SW)

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.

### **Franzen, Jonathan – Freedom**

An epic tale of contemporary love and marriage, freedom, love, lust, family rivalry, betrayal, and things just plain going wrong despite our best efforts. Through his intensely realized characters, struggling to learn how to live in an ever more confusing world, Franzen gives his reader an indelible and deeply moving portrait of our time.

### **Fraser, Eugenie - The House by the Dvina: a Russian Childhood**

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.

### **Freedland, Jonathan - The escape artist: the man who broke out of Auschwitz to warn the world (New October 2023)**

In April 1944 a teenager named Rudolf Vrba planned a daring and unprecedented escape from Auschwitz. After hiding in a pile of timber planks for three days while 3,000 SS men and their bloodhounds searched for him, Vrba and his fellow escapee Fred Wetzler would eventually cross Nazi-occupied Poland on foot, as penniless fugitives. Their mission: to tell the world the truth of the Final Solution. A thrilling history with enormous historical implications.

### **Freeman, Hadley – House of Glass**

When Hadley Freeman found a shoebox filled with her French grandmother's treasured belongings, it started a decade-long quest to dig deep into the extraordinary lives of her Jewish family. The search takes Hadley from Picasso's archives in Paris to a secret room in a farmhouse in Auvergne to Long Island and to Auschwitz.

### **Galbraith, Robert - The Cuckoo's Calling**

The acclaimed first crime novel by J.K. Rowling, writing under the pseudonym Robert Galbraith. War veteran Cormaran 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 - Lethal White (New October 2023)**

After Billy, a troubled young man, comes to private eye Cormoran Strike's office to ask for his help investigating a crime he thinks he witnessed as a child, Strike is left deeply unsettled. There follows a chain of events which leads him through the backstreets of London, into a secretive inner sanctum within Parliament, and to a beautiful but sinister manor house deep in the countryside.

### **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.

### **Galgut, Damon – The Promise**

This novel charts the crash and burn of a white South African family, living on a farm outside Pretoria in the mid-1980s. As the book opens, the Swarts are gathering for Ma's funeral. The younger generation, Anton and Amor, detest everything the family stands for. In particular, Amor cannot forget the promise she witnessed her father Manie make to her dying mother. A promise that he would give their black maid Salome the deeds to the annexe she occupies. But Manie's obstinate failure to keep his word after Ma is dead falls like a curse as we follow the lives of the family down the next 4 decades.

### **Garmus, Bonnie - Lessons in chemistry (New October 2023)**

A huge word of mouth bestseller. It is the early 1960s and Elizabeth Zott does not have a happy working relationship with her male research colleagues at Hastings Scientific Institute. Except with one of them - Calvin Evans – who falls in love with her mind and true chemistry results. Then a terrible tragedy sees Elizabeth struggle with single motherhood, until eventually becoming known to the whole of America as the outspoken hostess of a TV cookery show!

### **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.

### **Gibson, Mary - The Bermondsey Bookshop**

After the death of her mother and the disappearance of her father, 14 year old Kate lives unhappily with her cruel aunt and cousins. But when she loses her factory job, an unexpected opportunity comes her way – a job cleaning a most unusual bookshop, where anyone, from factory workers to dockers, can learn to read and then buy books cheaply. A new world opens up, but with it come new dangers, too. This novel was inspired by the true story of The Bermondsey Bookshop founded on idealistic principles in the 1920s.

### **Godber, John – Bouncers and Shakers**

Two classic short plays from John Godber Bouncers is about night life with a no-holds-barred description of the urge to drink, fight and reproduce! Shakers, a companion piece in a way, offers further nuggets of social commentary, the subject this time being party-goers

### **Godber, John – Teechers**

Another play by John Godber. Fast-moving and highly entertaining, Teechers evokes life at a modern school. Using the format of an end-of-term play, the new drama teacher's progress through two terms of recalcitrant classes, synical colleagues and obstructive caretakers is reviewed. Disillusioned, he departs for a safer private school.

## **Golding, William – Lord of the Flies**

Classic and much celebrated novel first published in 1954. A plane crashes on an uninhabited island and the only survivors, a group of schoolboys, assemble on the beach and wait to be rescued. But the traditional adventure story form is given a twist here as the well-behaved party of schoolboys turns into a tribe of faceless, murderous savages.

## **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.

## **Grenville, Kate – A Room Made of Leaves**

It is 1788. When twenty-one-year-old Elizabeth marries the proud, scarred soldier John Macarthur, she soon realises she has made a terrible mistake. Forced to travel with him to New South Wales, she arrives to find Sydney Town a brutal, dusty, hungry place of makeshift shelters, failing crops, scheming, and rumours. Here, in the vast landscapes of an unknown continent, Elizabeth has to discover a strength she never imagined, and passions she could never express. Inspired by the real life of a remarkable woman, this is an extraordinarily rich, beautifully wrought novel of resilience, courage, and the mystery of human desire.

## **Griffiths, Elly – The Stone Circle**

Part of a very successful series of crime novels featuring forensic archaeologist Dr Ruth Galloway set against the atmospheric backdrop of the windswept North Norfolk coast.

## **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

## **Halls, Stacey – The Familiars**

Based on a true story, this historical novel set in 1612 Lancashire, has been described as doing for the Pendle Witch Trials what Hilary Mantel has done for Thomas Cromwell. In this - her first book - Stacey Hall's packs in plenty of period detail and puts a brave heroine at its heart.

## **Halls, Stacey - The Foundling (New October 2023)**

1700s London. Six years after leaving her illegitimate daughter Clara at London's Foundling Hospital, Bess Bright returns to reclaim the child she has never known. But she is horrified to discover that someone else has already claimed Clara. Bess' world is turned upside down. Who has taken her little girl and why?

### **Hancock, Sheila - Old Rage (New October 2023)**

Sheila Hancock is one of Britain's best loved actors. Here she opens up about her ninth decade. Funny, feisty and honest, she talks about her life as a daughter, a sister, a mother, a widow, an actor, and a friend in an era miles apart from the wartime world of her childhood. And yet - despite age, despite rage - she finds there are always reasons for joy.

### **Harari, Yuval Noah – Sapiens: a brief history of humankind**

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**

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.

### **Harris, Robert - Act of oblivion (New October 2023)**

1660. Colonel Edward Whalley and his son-in-law, Colonel William Goffe are on the run - wanted for the murder of Charles I. Under the provisions of the Act of Oblivion, they have been found guilty in absentia of high treason. In London, Richard Nayler, secretary of the regicide committee of the Privy Council, is tasked with tracking down the fugitives. A reward hangs over their heads - for their capture, dead or alive

### **Hawkins, Paula - 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.

### **Herron, Mick - Slow Horses**

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.

### **Herron, Mick – Dead Lions**

Book 2 in Mick Herron's popular Slough House series. This time we find we find Jackson Lamb and the other washed-up MI5 spies involved in investigating the suspicious death of an old Cold War era spy, found dead on a bus near Oxford.

### **Higashino, Keigo, The devotion of suspect X (New October 2023)**

Yasuko lives a quiet life. But when her ex-husband appears at her door without warning one day, her comfortable world is shattered. When Detective Kusanagi tries to piece together the events of that day, he finds himself confronted by the most puzzling, mysterious circumstances he has ever investigated.

### **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**

(includes SW)

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 20<sup>th</sup> 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**

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

### **Horowitz, Anthony – The House of Silk**

A well-pitched homage to the Sherlock Holmes novels of Arthur Conan Doyle. The first in a successful series.

### **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.

### **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 100<sup>th</sup> 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 - Miss Benson's beetle (New October 2023)**

It is 1950. Margery Benson abandons her dead-end job and advertises for an assistant to accompany her on an expedition. She is going to travel to the other side of the world to search for a beetle that may or may not exist. Margery and her unlikely companion Enid Pretty duly embark on a thrilling adventure and discover so much more than either expected about themselves and about true friendship against the odds.

### **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, Sanjida – My Mother's Secret**

The lives of three women, a crime and a secret come together in a story rated by readers as 'gripping' and 'twisty'. This psychological thriller by Crime Writers' Association Award nominated author Sanjida Kay explores the lies we tell to protect the people we love

### **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 near Hay-on-Wye. 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 of the best descriptions ever written of this beautiful county.

### **Kingsolver, Barbara - Demon Copperhead (New October 2023)**

This is the tale of our hero Demon Copperhead. Demon is a boy with no assets beyond his dead father's good looks and copper-coloured hair, bucket-loads of charm and a talent or two the world is yet to discover. Born to a teenaged single mother in a single wide trailer, life is not set fair for Demon as he escorts us on this, his journey through the modern perils of foster care, athletic success and addiction, the dizzying highs of true love, and the crushing losses that can accompany it. A clever re-telling of David Copperfield set in the era of the highly controversial drug oxycontin.

### **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.

### **Le Carre, John - The Constant Gardener**

Tessa Quayle has been horribly murdered on the shores of Lake Turkana in Northern Kenya. Her putative African lover, a doctor with one of the aid agencies, has disappeared. Her husband, Justin, a career diplomat and amateur gardener sets out in pursuit of the killers and their motive, not anticipating that his greatest discovery at the end of his quest will be the woman he barely had time to love

### **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.

### **Lefteri, Christy - The Beekeeper of Aleppo**

Nuri, a beekeeper, and his wife Afra live a simple life in the beautiful Syrian city of Aleppo. But then war forces them to leave their home and embark on a perilous journey through Turkey and Greece to a new life in Britain. Waiting for them there is Nuri's cousin, Mustafa, who is running an apiary in Yorkshire where he is teaching fellow refugees to keep bees. But first Nuri and Afra must survive the refugee trail to Europe.

### **Liptrot, Amy - The Outrun**

(includes SW)

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.

### **Macintyre, Ben – Agent Sonya**

Sonya Burton - devoted mother-of-three, attentive wife and friendly neighbour - seemed to epitomise 1940s rural British domesticity to all in the quiet Cotswold village where she lived. But far from being an obedient homemaker, Sonya Burton was a dedicated communist, a decorated colonel and a veteran spy who risked her life to gather secrets that would enable the Soviet Union to build the atomic bomb. In 'Agent Sonya', Ben Macintyre reveals the astonishing story behind the most important woman spy in history.

### **MacLaverty, Bernard - Midwinter Break**

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 – Machines Like Me**

In an alternative 1980s London, Britain has lost the Falklands war, Margaret Thatcher battles Tony Benn for power and Alan Turing achieves a breakthrough in artificial intelligence. Charlie is drifting through life and dodging full-time employment. He is in love with Miranda, a bright student who lives with a terrible secret. When Charlie comes into money, he buys Adam, one of the first batch of synthetic humans, and an unusual love triangle begins to form.



### **McGregor , Jon - Reservoir 13**

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.

### **Mcllvanney, William - Laidlaw**

Classic Glasgow crime from the author who inspired Ian Rankin's Rebus novels. When a young woman is found brutally murdered in Kelvingrove Park, only one man stands a chance of finding her killer. Jack Laidlaw. He is a man of contrasts, ravaged by inner demons but driven by a deep compassion for the violent criminals in Glasgow's underworld. But will Laidlaw's unorthodox methods get him to the killer in time, when the victim's father is baying for blood?

### **Mcllvanney, William - The papers of Tony Veitch**

Part two of the Laidlaw trilogy, featuring Mcllvanney's eponymous maverick detective. Eck Adamson, an alcoholic vagrant, summons Jack Laidlaw to his deathbed. Probably the only policeman in Glasgow who would bother to respond, Laidlaw sees in Eck's cryptic last message a clue to the murder of a gangland thug and the disappearance of a student. With stubborn integrity, Laidlaw tracks a seam of corruption that runs from the top to the bottom of society.

### **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.

### **Magnusson, Sally - The Sealwoman's gift**

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.

### **Malik, Ayisha - Sofia Khan is Not Obligated**

Described as the Muslim 'Bridget Jones' Sofia Khan has been unlucky in love. But then her boss at the publishers where she works persuades her to write a tell-all expose about the undercover world of Muslim dating, and she finds that love may not be a lost cause after all..

### **Mansfield, Katherine – The Garden Party and Other Stories**

(includes LP)

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.

### **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.

### **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.

### **Matthews, Helen – After Leaving the Village**

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

### **Matthews, Helen – Lies Behind the Ruins**

A novel inspired by the author's experience of what happened when her family buy a tumbledown farm building in France in 2000 and renovate it over two decades. In a pre-Brexit Europe, what happened to the people – retirees, young families, escapers-from-unhappiness – who followed their dreams and moved to another country? In Lies Behind the Ruins, English couple Emma and Paul seek escape from their troubles in France. But they find it is hard to build a new life on toxic foundations,

### **May, Peter - The Lewis man**

A body is recovered from a peat bog on the Isle of Lewis. The male Caucasian corpse is initially believed by its finders to be over 2000 years old, the victim of an ancient ritual killing - until they spot the Elvis tattoo on his right arm

### **Miller, Andrew - Pure**

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.

### **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.

### **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.

### **Morris, Heather – The Tattooist of Auschwitz**

Based on true events. Auschwitz-Birkenau prisoner Lale is the tattooist who scratches indelible numbers on the arms of his fellow detainees. When Gita presents herself to be tattooed, Lale is immediately smitten. So begins a story of love and survival against the odds.

### **Morrison, Toni – Beloved**

1874 Ohio. Escaped slave Sethe is haunted by the ghost of her baby who died nameless and whose tombstone was engraved with the single word "Beloved". A powerful and profound story widely regarded as a true modern classic.

### **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.

### **Nemirovsky, Irene - Suite Francaise**

(includes LP)

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

### **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, Michelle - Becoming**

Michelle Obama has emerged as one of the most iconic and compelling women of our era. As First Lady of the United States of America - the first African-American to serve in that role – she stood with her husband through some of America's most harrowing moments. She helped create the most welcoming and inclusive White House in history and is recognised worldwide as a powerful advocate for women and girls. In her memoir, a work of deep reflection and mesmerising storytelling, Michelle Obama invites readers into her world

### **Maggie O'Farrell, Hamnet**

On a summer's day in 1596, a young girl in Stratford-upon-Avon takes to her bed with a fever. Her twin brother, Hamnet, searches everywhere for help. Why is nobody at home? Their mother, Agnes, is over a mile away, in the garden where she grows medicinal herbs. Their father is working in London. Neither parent knows that one of the children will not survive the week

### **O'Farrell, Maggie - I Am, I Am, I Am: Seventeen Brushes with Death**

An unusual and original memoir/autobiography from prize-winning novelist Maggie O'Farrell. In 17 chapters, she describes 17 different times when her life has been in danger - from childhood illness to a chance encounter on a remote path and more - naming each of these 'brushes with death' after the organ or body part which was in jeopardy. Through these highly personal and sometimes visceral snapshots we begin to understand what has shaped both her character and her writing. A life-affirming book about death.

### **O'Farrell, Maggie - The marriage portrait (New October 2023)**

Winter, 1561. Lucrezia, the sixteen-year-old Duchess of Ferrara, thinks her husband Alfonso has brought her to his remote country villa to kill her. 'The Marriage Portrait' is a masterly reimagining of the life of a young woman whose proximity to power places her in mortal danger

### **Osman, Richard – The Thursday Murder Club (New May 2023)**

In a peaceful retirement village, four unlikely friends meet up once a week to investigate unsolved murders. But when a brutal killing takes place on their very doorstep, the members of the Thursday Murder Club find themselves in the middle of their first live case. Elizabeth, Joyce, Ibrahim and Ron might be pushing 80 but they still have a few tricks up their sleeves. Can our unorthodox but brilliant gang catch the killer before it's too late?

### **Osman, Richard – The Man Who Died Twice (New May 2023)**

A second outing for The Thursday Murder Club. An old friend of Elizabeth's writes to say he is being hunted and he needs her help. His story involves stolen diamonds, a violent mobster, and a very big mistake. As bodies start piling up, Elizabeth enlists Joyce, Ibrahim and Ron in the hunt for a killer.

### **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.

### **Penny, Louise – Still Life**

Introducing Chief Inspector Armand Gamache - the Canadian detective who has gained a worldwide following and multiple awards for his creator, Louise Penny. Thanksgiving Weekend. A body is found dead in the woods, an arrow wound in the heart. Who would want to kill well-loved local artist Jane Neal? The village of Three Pines is about to give up its secrets.

### **Penny, Louise - All the devils are here**

Inspector Gamache investigates a deliberate attempt on the life of his godfather, the elderly billionaire Stephen Horowitz.

### **Perry, Grayson - Portrait of the artist as a young girl**

Grayson Perry, the controversial winner of the 2003 Turner prize, is one of Britain's most talented and provocative artists. In this funny and unsettling biography, Wendy Jones tells the

story of his childhood and youth, until at last, in his early twenties, he steps out as a potter and transvestite

### **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

### **Peterson, Jordan – Twelve Rules for Life: an Antidote to Chaos**

The 'public philosopher' Jordan Peterson here puts forward his advice on living well in a world of chaos and uncertainty. From "stand up straight with your shoulders back" to "pet a cat when you encounter one on the street" and "do not bother children when they are skateboarding" the result is an intriguing and thought-provoking meditation on navigating life and staying sane.

### **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.

### **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.

### **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.

### **Ross, L. J. - Holy Island and Impostor**

This set includes 2 different titles from international bestselling author L J (Louise) Ross, praised by her readers for the sense of atmosphere she creates in her thrillers. Choose to read one or both.

In *Holy Island*, Detective Chief Inspector Ryan is taking sabbatical leave from his duties as a homicide detective. Then a young woman is found dead amongst the ancient ruins of the nearby Priory and the hunt for a killer begins.

*Impostor* introduces readers to forensic psychologist Doctor Alexander Gregory. He enjoys a reputation for being able to step inside the darkest minds to uncover whatever secrets lie hidden there, so when a killer is on the loose in the beautiful hills of County Mayo, can he refuse to help?

### **Roy, Arundhati - The Ministry of Utmost Happiness**

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.

### **Ryan, Jennifer - The Chilbury Ladies' Choir**

It is 1940 and war is looming. When the men of Chilbury swap rural Kent for the front, the vicar decides to give up on the village choir. But the women have other ideas. Enter music professor Primrose Tent, and the Chilbury Ladies' Choir is born. Through a series of fictionalised letters and diary entries we find out how the choir helps the village come together but also threatens to tear it apart.

### **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.

### **Sangera, Sathnam – The boy with the topknot**

An hilarious and heart-rending account of growing up in Wolverhampton in the eighties – the era of George Michael mix-tapes, Dallas on TV and, on a good day, perhaps even a Bounty Bar. Distracted by the ongoing challenge of how to tie the perfect top-knot, and other concerns of youth, Sathnam learned to accept his family's strange and often difficult behaviour as normal. Then, at the age of twenty-four, he makes a discovery that changes everything he ever thought he knew about them and embarks on a journey into their extraordinary past.

### **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**

A tender book about finding dignity and beauty in solitude. Exquisitely depicting 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.

### **Shafak, Elif - The island of missing trees (New October 2023)**

In 1974 on the island of Cyprus two teenagers, Kostas (Greek and Christian) and Defne (Turkish and Muslim) meet in secret in a tavern. In the centre of the tavern, growing through a cavity in the roof, is a fig tree. This tree will witness their hushed, happy meetings, their silent, surreptitious departures; and the tree will be there when the war breaks out, when the capital is reduced to rubble, when the teenagers vanish and break apart. Decades later in north London, sixteen-year-old Ada Kazantzakis has never visited the island where her parents were born. Desperate for answers, she seeks to untangle years of secrets, separation and silence. The only connection and clue she has is a *Ficus Carica* growing in the back garden of their home

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

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

### **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 this 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. It's a timely celebration of books and libraries and 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.



### **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.

### **Stott, Rebecca - In the Days of Rain**

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.

### **Stuart, Douglas - Shuggie Bain**

Glasgow 1981. Agnes Bain dreams of a house with its own front door and a life free from debt.. But, abandoned by her philandering husband, struggling to raise her family alone, she descends deep into drink. One by one her children leave to save themselves – but her son Shuggie refuses to give up hope. Fastidious and fussy, he shares his mother's sense of snobbish propriety. The miners' children pick on him and adults condemn him as “no' right” But Shuggie believes that if he tries his hardest, he can be normal like the other boys and help his mother escape this hopeless place.

### **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.

### **Timon, Mara - City of Spies**

Lisbon, 1943. After escaping from Nazi-occupied France, SOE agent Elisabeth de Mornay, codename Cecile, receives new orders: she must infiltrate high society in neutral Lisbon and find out who is leaking key information to the Germans about British troop movements. As Solange Verin, a French widow of independent means, she will be able to meet all the rich Europeans who have gathered in Lisbon to wait out the war. One of them is a traitor and she must find out who before more British servicemen die.

### **Toibin, Colm - Nora Webster**

(Includes SW)

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

### **Tolle, Eckhart – The Power of Now**

Subtitled 'A guide to spiritual enlightenment' this book puts forward the simple idea that, to be healthier and happier, we need to live in the present moment.

### **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**

A heart-wrenching story of an Eastern European migrant worker.

### **Tremain, Rose – Rosie**

This memoir of her own childhood is Rose Tremain's first work of non-fiction. Young Rosie is raised in a dysfunctional middle class family in the post-war years. When her father dies she is sent to boarding school. Her mother is cold and distant and largely indifferent to her children – though she does thwart Rosie's ambitions to go to university in Oxford, forcing her to go to finishing school instead. This is a book with a lot to say about the events and influences that shaped the author as a writer and a person.

### **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**

(includes SW)

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 – 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.

### **Vance, J D - Hillbilly Elegy**

A deeply moving memoir about growing up in 'white trash' Kentucky where families routinely struggled against abuse, alcoholism, poverty and trauma. This is also a fascinating and compelling exploration of how Trump politics came to appeal to a generation of white working class people who felt left behind and found themselves at breaking point.

### **VARIOUS – A Culinary Cornucopia**

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?.

### **Wade, Claire – The Choice**

An unusual take on the dystopian novel – based on a society where 'bad' foods are banned and exercise is mandatory. Government-sanctioned health fascism means that every step you take is counted, schoolchildren are subjected to daily weigh-ins and neighbours report on neighbours who break the rules. A shocking imaginative creation of a world without cake!

### **Webb, Justin, The gift of a radio: my childhood and other train wrecks (New October 2023)**

Well-loved radio presenter Justin Webb's childhood in the 1970s was far from ordinary. Between his mother's un-diagnosed psychological problems, and his step-father's untreated ones, life at home was dysfunctional at best. But with gun-wielding school masters and sub-standard living conditions, Quaker boarding school wasn't much better. Candid, unsparring, and darkly funny, this is both a memoir and also a portrait of a troubled era marked by strikes, inflation and IRA bombings.

### **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.

### **Westover, Tara – Educated**

A memoir of an unusual childhood in a 'survivalist' Mormon family in the US state of Idaho. None of the children are allowed to go to school, and their ailments are treated exclusively by her mother's herbal concoctions because contact with hospitals and doctors is forbidden. Mentally and physically abused, Tara – against all odds - does eventually break free, going on to gain a PhD from Cambridge University. An inspiring read on the transformative power of education and the possibility of surviving family life scarred by mental illness.

### **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. Absorbing 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**

A story based on the author's own experiences just before the First World War. 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**

(1 set of 2 includes LP and SW)

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**

(Includes SW)

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.

## **Youngson, Anne - Meet me at the museum (New October 2023)**

Professor Kristian Larsen – recently widowed - sees a bleak future ahead. Then a query from a Mrs Tina Hopgood about a world-famous antiquity in his museum alters the course of his life. Oceans apart, an unexpected correspondence flourishes as they discover shared passions: for history and nature; for useless objects left behind by loved ones; for the ancient and modern world, what is lost in time, what is gained and what has stayed the same. Then, when Tina's letters suddenly cease, Kristian is thrown into despair.

## **Youngson, Anne - Three women and a boat**

Meet Eve, who has abandoned her thirty-year career to become a Free Spirit; Sally, who has waved goodbye to her indifferent husband and two grown-up children; and Anastasia: defiantly independent narrowboat-dweller, suddenly vulnerable as she awaits a life-saving operation. Together they embark upon a journey through the canals of England. As they glide gently - and not so gently - through the countryside, the eccentricities and challenges of canal boat life draw them inexorably together, and a tender and unforgettable story unfolds

## **Zusak, Marcus -The Book Thief**

International bestseller set in Nazi Germany about a little girl who steals books and is ultimately saved by stories.