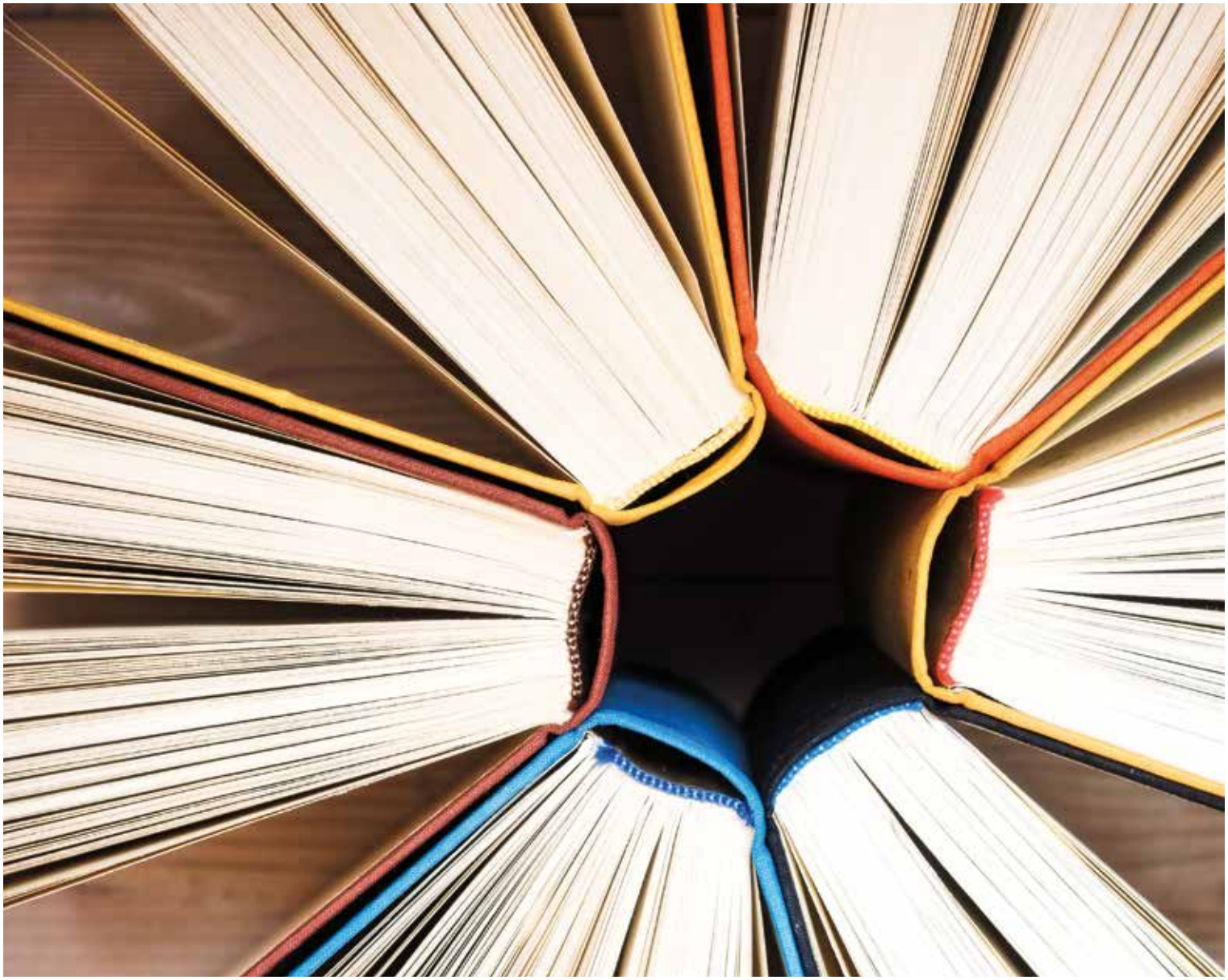

CAE Book Groups Catalogue

Dialogue 2018

CENTRE FOR ADULT EDUCATION
9652 0611 I CAE.EDU.AU
CITY I BOX HILL I LILYDALE

Book Discussion Service. 527 Collins Street

Contact Us

Level 2, 253 Flinders Lane
Melbourne VIC 3000
P (03) 9652 0620
F (03) 9654 7840
E bookgroups@cae.edu.au
W www.cae.edu.au

Sign up to our newsletter and like us on Facebook to keep informed about upcoming literary events, book reviews, book and movie giveaways and lots more.

Start your own group

See page 4 for more information about starting a group.

Join an existing group

Some of our existing groups are looking for new members. Please contact CAE Book Groups, and we will help you find a group in your area.

Centre for Adult Education
www.cae.edu.au

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Introduction

Centre for Adult Education

CAE is a leading provider of Adult and Community Education and has been providing lifelong learning opportunities to Victorians for 70 years. CAE has a strong focus on delivering nationally recognised and accredited training as well as non accredited short courses, and connects with the community through socially inclusive practices that recognise diversity and creativity. Located in the heart of the arts and café area of Melbourne's CBD, CAE offers a vibrant and supportive adult learning environment, flexible learning options, skills recognition, practical training and supervised work placements.

CAE Book Groups

The program has significant autonomy: members of CAE Book Groups select their own pool of titles for their year's reading list; decide on monthly meeting times; choose their own members; and pick a place to meet such as a private home, café or library. CAE Book Group members can also suggest titles for inclusion into the program. From international award winners to debut and Australian authors, there are over 1000 books to choose from. Reading guides accompany each box of books and the questions provided can be used to frame each group's discussion.

CAE Book Groups has a long history that can be seen in our selection of titles, or even in the way the discussion notes are written. We like to think of it as a great trip down memory lane; we hope you do too.

Using Dialogue

A selection of Reactions (feedback on the books that our members have read) from group members as well as our staff favourites are included to provide a broad perspective on the titles in the program. The Reactions we receive from all our book groups provide vital feedback to CAE Book Groups staff.

There are four indexes: Author Index, arranged alphabetically by author surname, Title Index, Large Print Index and Box Number Index.

Please ensure all members of your group have access to *Dialogue*, which can also be downloaded as a PDF via our website at www.cae.edu.au. If you would like to receive a copy as a PDF, just email us and we will send you one.

The titles are grouped thematically, with fiction and nonfiction titles often sitting side by side. You will find a description of the themes in the content list.

Borrow an eBook

As part of your CAE Book Groups membership, you can borrow an eBook version – in addition to the print copy – absolutely free! To receive eBooks, please ensure you have filled out the online form to Register Your Interest. The form is available on the eBook section of the Book Groups website. When there is an eBook available to match the book selected for your group's next meeting, you will be notified by email in advance of the meeting.

Theme Icons

- (F) Fiction
- (N) Nonfiction
- (S) Short Stories
- (L) Large Print
- Adapted Books
- Book Group Favourite

Join or Start a Book Group

Starting a Book Group

CAE Book Groups is a great way to connect with other readers in your local community. Get together with friends, neighbours or colleagues to discuss the sort of books that might appeal to you as a group and choose a suitable time and venue. Once you have between 8-15 people and have decided on the number of discussion meetings you would like to have, you are ready to take the next step of electing a CAE Book Group Secretary.

Contact CAE Book Groups today via phone, email or through our website to receive a New Group Pack so you can begin selecting your books. Your first book will arrive within two weeks of receipt of membership payments and book selections.

Joining a Book Group

If you would prefer to join an existing group, please contact CAE Book Groups via phone, email or through our website, and we will help you find a group in your area and confirm the appropriate pro-rata fee. To ensure you and the new group are the right match, your first meeting with a new group is free.

Running a Book Group

The CAE Book Group Secretary

CAE Book Group Secretaries provide a permanent delivery address for books and liaise with CAE staff on book selections, payments and enquiries from potential new members. Secretaries are vital to the success of book groups and ensure CAE keeps in touch with the needs of each group. The role of secretary can rotate between group members from year to year.

Where do CAE Book Groups meets and how often?

CAE Book Groups meet whenever they want through the year and choose to receive CAE books 6, 9 or 11 times a year. Groups choose the time, place and format of their meetings and direct their own discussions.

Books available for loan

Each month, CAE selects a book from the list of possible titles your group has chosen from *Dialogue*. Groups have the option of requesting books in priority or random order. We will only ever send books on your selected list.

CAE discussion notes

Kick-start your meeting with CAE discussion notes. While there is no formal tuition or assessment, all books are accompanied by specially commissioned notes written by our experienced note writers, complete with discussion questions. More than just a book review, the notes are guaranteed to get your group talking.

How much time do we have to read the book before the discussion?

One month. Books are delivered to the Group Secretary prior to the scheduled meeting. Members collect their copy of the book from the secretary then meet again the following month to discuss the book they've just read and collect their next book.

How do we receive and return books?

CAE sends a box in advance of each meeting to the delivery address nominated by the Group Secretary. Books are returned to CAE by the Group Secretary via courier or post. Reply paid slips are included in all boxes. Groups operate most efficiently when books are returned to and collected from the Group Secretary by each individual member at the scheduled meeting.

What do I get for my fee?

Fees cover the delivery and return of book boxes each month and access to eBooks when available. Each box contains copies of the selected book (maximum 15 copies) and notes on loan for each individual member. Group Secretaries should only distribute books to paid members. Group members can also sign up for CAE Book Groups Newsletter to receive timely news on events and competitions, as well as book reviews by CAE Book Groups staff.

Victorian Annual Membership Fees 2018 (per member)

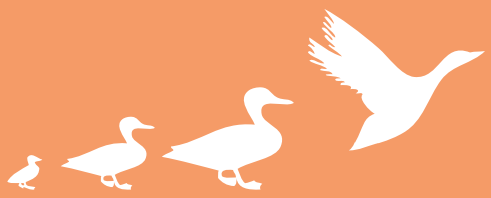
No of meetings	Full Fee	Seniors	Concession	Secretary
11	$149	$135	$99	$85
9	$138	$125	$92	$79
6	$109	$99	$73	$63

Interstate Annual Membership Fees 2018 (per member)

No of meetings	Full Fee	Seniors	Concession	Secretary
11	$172	$150	$117	$96
9	$155	$135	$106	$87
6	$118	$103	$81	$66

Enrolment form

Please see page 91 for an enrolment form, or download it via our website www.cae.edu.au/book-groups/. The enrolment process can be handled by post, email or phone. If you are eligible for a seniors or concession fee, you will need to provide a photocopy of your senior or concession card. Students are also eligible for a discount (same as the seniors fee). For more details on discount eligibility, please see our website or contact us.



Growing Up, Moving On

Exploring the experience of childhood and finding one's way in the world. This chapter celebrates both fiction and nonfiction coming-of-age stories.

A

About a Boy

Nick Hornby

Will, a 36-year-old bachelor who is delighted to be child free, gets mixed up with 12-year-old Marcus and his newly separated mother. This entertaining novel is about families, being a man, being a kid ... and the importance of being cool.

F 1998 286pp B1706

All the Pretty Horses

Cormac McCarthy

FINALIST
National Book Award

While not a formula western or a 'man's book', this novel has very American themes. At 16, John Grady Cole leaves the Texan ranch where he grew up but has no future, to ride into the Mexican frontier: into adventure, romance and rough male justice. Strong masculine point of view, powerful landscapes and distinctive style.

F 1992 302pp B1481

An Australian Son

Gordon Matthews

An extraordinary life story without literary pretensions. Adopted into a Melbourne family in the 1950s, Matthews' distinctive colouring set him apart at school and in adolescence he lost the sense of where he belonged, until he identified as an Aborigine. His search to uncover his origins opens up questions of adoption, colour and Aboriginality.

N 1996 230pp B1503

Enjoyed *Barracuda*?

Try *Eyrie* by Tim Winton [B2210]

B

Bad Blood

Lorna Sage

In Lorna's bizarre upbringing in a North Wales town her dissolute vicar grandfather and furious grandmother are dominating figures. 'A totally unexpected book ... rackety, painful, sometimes menacing and mad. Out of it all she has made something devastatingly funny, full of characters and full of exhilarating resilience and sly wit,' said reviewer Anthony Thwaite.

N 2000 281pp B1663

Balzac and the Little Chinese Seamstress

Dai Sijie

During Mao's Cultural Revolution, two sons of doctors are sent to the country for 're-education'. To keep their sanity, they have their sense of humour and also some distraction from the charming daughter of the local tailor. When they discover a suitcase full of forbidden literature, new worlds are opened to them. Delightful, funny and unexpected.

F 2001 172pp B1671

We all enjoyed this charming, enchanting and highly descriptive 'fable'. It read more like a movie as the descriptive and emotive tone was so delightful. Although many found the ending a little abrupt, it still gave us all an interesting sense of insight into the times and the characters. We tend to be hard markers and a wildly disjoint group for opinions, but all of us enjoyed this book.

Warrandyte 5

Barn Blind

Jane Smiley

This is a striking study of a woman of powerful will. Entirely focused on the world of horses and riders, Kate has conscripted all four of her children in the service of her vision. But their own adolescent natures assert themselves, and events move to a conclusion the family has never imagined. Written with superb insight into human nature and the young.

F L 1980 218pp B1433

Barracuda

Christos Tsiolkas

From the author of *The Slap* comes an exploration of class, identity and the meaning of success. Danny is from a working class background, and when he obtains a scholarship to a prestigious college he builds his identity on becoming an Olympic swimming champion. But what happens when things comes crashing down? Strong language and explicit content may offend some readers.

F 2013 516pp B2202

The Bean Trees

Barbara Kingsolver

Young Taylor Greer has grown up poor in rural Kentucky and achieved her first two aims – to avoid becoming pregnant and to get away from her home town. She buys an old car and heads West, but before long she acquires an unexpected responsibility, and when car troubles lead her to stop somewhere in Arizona, Taylor begins a surprising new life.

F 1988 246pp B1869

The Bell Jar

Sylvia Plath

The only novel by this well-known poet. A brilliant treatment of the effect of society's expectations on a sensitive young woman who went to England, married the poet Ted Hughes, had two children and committed suicide seven years later.

F 1963 260pp B0188

The Boy in the Green Suit

Robert Hillman

WINNER
National Biography Prize

In 1965, 16-year-old Robert Hillman boarded a boat for Ceylon, wearing a green suit and carrying a suitcase of books and a typewriter. When the ship arrived in Athens instead, Hillman, with no money and no return ticket, began an adventure that led him to Istanbul, Tehran and Kuwait. Punctuated by tales of growing up in rural Victoria, this is a tender, funny memoir of a young writer-in-the-making.

N 2003 232pp B1872

Breath

Tim Winton

WINNER
Miles Franklin Literary Award

When paramedic Bruce Pike arrives too late to save a boy found hanged in his bedroom, he senses this lonely death is an accident. Pike, too, was once addicted to extremes, barely knowing when to stop. Winton's ninth novel returns to the remote West Australian coast and the fictional universe of Sawyer. Simple yet profound, Breath is a moving story of youth's reckless compulsion to oblivion.

F 2008 216pp B1992

Butterfly

Sonya Hartnett

SHORTLISTED
Miles Franklin Literary Award

Plum Coyle is nearly fourteen and on the fringe of her peer group. When her glamorous next-door neighbour Maureen, a young wife and mother, befriends her, Plum feels herself reinvented. But Maureen has an ulterior motive for taking Plum under her wing. Gripping, disquieting and beautifully observed.

F 2009 215pp B2045

C

The Catcher in the Rye

J.D. Salinger

FINALIST
National Book Award

Holden Caulfield, is a 16-year-old American boy who has just flunked out of his third smart school. His own values reveal that he has a deep intuitive sense of what has gone wrong with the culture to which he belongs, and the book is written from his point of view and in his American period slang.

F 1951 224pp B0257

Cat's Eye

Margaret Atwood

A Canadian painter, returning to Toronto for a retrospective exhibition of her work, is caught up in a reflection of her life and of the driven relationship with her 'best friend', Cordelia. Comic, mind stretching, terrible in its grasp of children's needs and cruelties, hopeful – and a compulsive read!

F 1988 421pp B1249

The Chosen

Chaim Potok

Two young Jewish boys growing up in Brooklyn around the time of the Second World War study Talmud together, but differences in upbringing, attitude and belief create tension in their friendship. Will Danny, the Rabbi's son, become a Rabbi himself or will he break with tradition? Zionism, the birth of the state of Israel and the destruction of the European Jews are important themes in this novel.

F 1966 281pp B0121

Coda

Thea Astley

Kathleen's memory and body show signs of failing, but she is still her feisty, independent self, wanting to lead her own life. How long, she wonders, before she becomes a dumped granny? In this brilliant small book, with its glittering satiric wit and aching poignancy, Astley is at her best.

F 1993 188pp B1436

A Complicated Kindness

Miriam Toews

This Canadian novel examines a family whose life within their fundamentalist Mennonite community has reached a crisis point. Narrator, teenaged Nomi, is superbly sustained, her voice is funny, dark, and piercing. Tuned in to every hypocrisy yet barely conscious of her own confusion, she is torn by her love of those who have left and the father who remains.

F 2004 246pp B1920

D

David Copperfield

Charles Dickens

This partly autobiographical novel wonders 'whether I shall turn out to be the hero of my own life'. A wonderful blend of comedy and pain, with Dickens' unforgettable characters: the Micawbers and Murdstones, Mrs Gummidge, Uriah Heep, Miss Betsey and Mr Dick. Two month book.

F 1850 920pp B0224

Drinking Coffee Elsewhere

ZZ Packer

FINALIST
PEN/Faulkner Award for Fiction

Surprising, witty and involving, these eight stories follow characters on the brink of change. Their stories are connected by themes of race, black identity, religion and belonging. They range from a teenager who flees the Pentecostal fanaticism of her hometown, finding herself in a dangerous world of drugs and sexual exploitation, to a girl who stages a political sit in at a local café.

S 2003 243pp B1829

Enjoyed *Great Expectations*?

Try *Fingersmith* by Sarah Waters [B1807]

E

Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close

Jonathan Safran Foer

Foer explores grief through the eyes of 9-year-old Oskar, whose father died in the 9/11 World Trade Center disaster. Oskar is an intelligent, sensitive and creative kid, whose business card lists Inventor, Amateur Entomologist, and Origamist as some of his interests. When he finds a mysterious key in his father's wardrobe, he embarks on an investigation to help him understand his loss.

F 2005 326pp B1922

F

For Today I Am a Boy

Kim Fu

As the only son of Chinese immigrants, Peter struggles with the strong patriarchal expectations of his parents – especially as he has always felt he should have been born a girl. This delicately handled coming of age novel follows Peter and his sisters as they journey into the wider world, finding their places and conquering the shadows of the past.

F 2014 256pp B2203

A Fortunate Life

A.B. Facey

Abandoned as a child by his widowed mother in the late 1890s, Facey endured extraordinary hardships in the pioneering days of the Western Australian wheatbelt, experienced Gallipoli, survived the Depression and, having taught himself to write, set about this powerful autobiography.

N 1981 326pp B0360

Fresh Fields

Peter Kocan

With little money, an indifferent mother and no home, a shy 14-year-old boy drifts between city and bush, slowly becoming alienated and distrustful. *Fresh Fields* is a dark portrait of the evolution of a loner sustained only by a potent inner life, where love and death are increasingly confused. As a lonely, silent teenager in 1966, award winning novelist Kocan shot and injured Arthur Caldwell, the federal opposition leader of the day.

F 2004 373pp B1880

G

A Gate at the Stairs

Lorrie Moore

Tassie, a 20-year-old college student from the American Midwest, gets a job as part time nanny for an affluent middle aged couple who harbour a dark family secret and are in the process of adopting a bi racial child. Tassie's time away has changed her perspective and during a visit home, she sees her family differently, including her brother Robert, who is being approached by the military.

F 2009 322pp B2068

The Getting of Wisdom

Henry Handel Richardson

A semi autobiographical account of Laura, a Victorian country girl whose quirky individuality creates awkwardness in the conformist atmosphere of a girls' private boarding school.

F 1910 240pp B0131

Ghost River

Tony Birch

WINNER
Victorian Premier's Literary Award for Indigenous Writing

Ren and Sonny dedicate their free time to exploring the Yarra River and its secrets, stories and adventures. The Yarra winds itself through their lives as the boys grow, and they must eventually find the courage to face the threats to their river – but at what cost? An atmospheric and haunting novel from the bestselling author of *Shadowboxing* and *Blood*.

F 2015 305pp B2230

The Go Between
L.P. Hartley

A study of early adolescence, as an old man recalls his boyhood in a country house in the 1920s. His life has been shaped by his involvement then in the relationships and traumas of three adults. A profound novel about social stratification, adolescence and the sometimes destructive effects of love.

F L 1953 280pp B0187

We all enjoyed this book immensely. The descriptive language successfully recreated a period in time. Our discussion covered the changing times and experience of a teenage crush, the period in which it was set, and the beautifully described characters.

Bendigo Free Spirits

Great Expectations
Charles Dickens

Late, great Dickens. An anonymously given fortune takes Pip, a blacksmith's apprentice, fromt his pre industrial world to a gentleman's life in 19th century London. The rich cast of characters includes Miss Haversham, Magwitch, Jaggers, and Wemmick – incomparable figures of comedy, terror and human and social insight.

F L 1861 493pp B0063

H

The Hanging Garden
Patrick White

Critics have hailed this posthumously published novel as an unfinished masterpiece. It is WWII, and two children are sent to a house with a wild garden overlooking Sydney Harbour. White tenderly explores the Sydney of his childhood, the nature of war, and the ceaseless human yearning for connection. This is an unexpected opportunity to re connect with an iconic Australian novelist.

F 2012 240pp B2161

The Highest Tide
Jim Lynch

13-year-old Miles O'Malley is an avid beachcomber who discovers a rare giant squid washed up on the mudflats of the Washington coast. Miles becomes an overnight sensation, attracting attention from scientists, spiritual healers, and media vultures. This charming coming of age story is funny and well paced, and raises lots of material for discussion.

F 2005 246pp B1924

His Illegal Self
Peter Carey

Che is the precocious son of radical student activists. Raised in isolated privilege and denied access to television and news, his timely rescue pitches him into a hippy commune in the jungle of tropical Queensland. Here he slowly confronts his life, learning that nothing is as it seems. Carey lends his narrative wizardry to a beautiful story of love between mother and son.

F 2008 288pp B2020

Hoi Polloi
Craig Sherborne

This boyhood memoir has a startling vividness, its comedy and pathos deriving partly from the remorseless candour with which Sherborne portrays his social climbing parents and the sexual fumblings of adolescent boys. His parents move to Sydney from a small New Zealand town, where they hope to join the 'hoi polloi', as his mother mistakenly calls the upper crust.

N 2005 197pp B1908

How the Light Gets In
M.J. Hyland

SHORTLISTED
Commonwealth Writers' Prize

A bright 16-year-old cannot wait to escape from the poverty of her family life in Sydney. Living as an exchange student with an American family seems like a dream come true, but things quickly begin to unravel. A masterly study of adolescent spirit, defiance and longing for acceptance, as well as the complexities of family dynamics.

F 2003 317pp B1820

The Hundred Secret Senses
Amy Tan

SHORTLISTED
Orange Prize

Two half sisters link the Chinese and American cultures when the life of 5-year-old Olivia is taken over by her older sister's traditional Yin world of ghosts and stories. For thirty years she struggles to get away from them and live a 'normal', American life. But the marvellous story unfolds to surprise her, and us, into other ways of seeing life in both countries.

F 1995 345pp B1468

I

I for Isobel
Amy Witting

SHORTLISTED
Miles Franklin Literary Award

The small but unrelenting cruelties of Isobel's unloving parents make her life a misery, but her struggle for creative self knowledge is sustained by glimpses of kinder adults and by the enchantment of words and writing. A shapely and vivid evocation of day to day Australian life.

F 1989 158pp B1246

J

Jasper Jones
Craig Silvey

SHORTLISTED
Miles Franklin Literary Award

Summer, 1965. Charlie Bucktin, a bookish boy of thirteen, is startled by an unexpected visitor: Jasper Jones, an outcast in the regional mining town of Corrigan. Rebellious and solitary, Jasper represents danger and intrigue, so when he begs for Charlie's help, Charlie nervously follows and witnesses Jasper's horrible discovery.

F 2009 368pp B2061

Johnno
David Malouf

David Malouf's first novel is set mainly in the Brisbane of the 1940s and '50s. It is the story of two men who spend much of their time together, although they seem to have little in common. Distinguished by its fine depictions of people and places and its deep personal feeling.

F 1975 170pp B0277

K

The Kite Runner

Khaled Hosseini

Amir and Hassan have an eventful childhood set against a backdrop of tumultuous Afghan history, from the fall of the monarchy and Soviet intervention, to the flight of refugees to America. When unforeseeable events take Amir back to Afghanistan in the rise of the Taliban regime, he must right old wrongs in this poignant, moving exploration of love and responsibility.

F 2003 324pp B1860

L

The Life and Times of the Thunderbolt Kid

Bill Bryson

In 1950s Des Moines, Iowa, Bill Bryson is the thunderbolt kid. Via this superhero persona (with a handy death ray for zapping morons) he vividly recalls the experiences of his childhood in baby boomer America, and draws on a fascinating breadth of social history to bring alive an era of unprecedented affluence and downright weirdness.

N 2006 309pp B1970

Lilian's Story

Kate Grenville

The exuberant but painful story of a child born in Sydney in 1901, who bursts beyond constraining stereotypes to make herself as large and unique as her own sense of life. Lilian will stay with you long after you finish this moving, exceptional and unique novel. A must-read for any Grenville fan.

F L 1985 211pp B0819

Enjoyed *For Today I Am a Boy?*

Try *Middlesex* by Jeffrey Eugenides [B1792]

M

Middlesex

Jeffrey Eugenides

WINNER
Pulitzer Prize

Because of a rare genetic deficiency, the narrator is a hermaphrodite. The book covers a startling family history of Greek-American migrant experience and moves into an evocation of Callie/Cal's predicament: in this either/or world, what does it mean to discover that one is both and neither?

F 2002 529pp B1792

Miss Gymkhana, R.G. Menzies and Me

Kathy Skelton

Skelton was born in 1946 and grew up in seaside Sorrento, Victoria. Subtitled '*Small Town Life in the Fifties*', this book is a portfolio of snapshots and anecdotes evoking a world of red hot commos, the young Queen, strict Catholics, the Petrovs, Billy Graham, the Olympic Games and the Saturday matinée. Sure to provide laughs of recognition and a wave of reminiscences.

N 1990 153pp B1278

Mister Pip

Lloyd Jones

SHORTLISTED
Man Booker Prize

After civil war trouble reaches Matilda's tropical island, one white man remains. When Mr Watts begins to read aloud from *Great Expectations*, Dickens' hero Pip comes alive for Matilda, but on an island at war, imagination can be a dangerously provocative thing. This is a moving, uplifting love letter to books and reading.

F 2006 220pp B1959

Modern Interiors

Andrea Goldsmith

After forty-one years of prosperous marriage, Philippa Finemore is widowed. Hoping to be not only a grandmother and babysitter, she makes major changes in her life - but the family circle responds with indignation and fury.

F 1991 242pp B1414

Mudeye

Bary Dowling

Dowling's memory is precise and detailed, and his clear, sensuous writing brings to life the highly individual past of the boy and his family; the provincial city of Ballarat – its lake, shops, schools, churches; the surrounding farms; the people. An emotional and powerful autobiography.

N 1995 266pp B1465

O

Old School

Tobias Wolff

FINALIST
PEN/Faulkner Award for Fiction

In an American boys' school in 1960 where a strong culture of literature and writing prevails, writers Robert Frost, Ayn Rand and Ernest Hemingway visit to judge a literary competition, the prize a private audience with the writer. This exploration of adolescent identity, writing and the complexities which surround ambition, offers much to discuss.

F 2003 195pp B1889

One of the Wattle Birds

Jessica Anderson

In the days before her exams, Cecily is more concerned with questions about the recent death of her mother than with study. Her need to make sense of things provides the action in this funny and engaging study of the brio and independence of the young.

F 1994 192pp B1419

Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit

Jeanette Winterson

A young girl's world is forever changed when she falls in love with another girl. Winterson skilfully portrays the ensuing emotions and confrontations common to all human experience - but particularly acute in an evangelical household.

F 1985 171pp B1312

I loved this honest coming-of age novel! It really brought to light religious hypocrisy from a teenage girl's perspective.

Jess Z, Book Groups Staff

The Outcast

Sadie Jones

In 1957, 19-year-old Lewis travels home from prison in the south of England. His return echoes his father's return from war a decade earlier, before his mother died in a tragic accident. Her death strained the relationship between Lewis and his father, and as time blends Lewis' grief with anger, childhood friend Kit's attempts to help will release dark secrets.

F 2008 345pp B2040

Out Stealing Horses

Per Petterson

WINNER
Independent Foreign Fiction

15-year-old Trond witnesses the a sudden breakdown of his friend, the first in a series of incidents in the fateful summer of 1948 leading to the destruction of his family. This coming of age tale explores the relationship between father and son, and the impact of war. Winner of the International IMPAC Dublin Award.

F 2005 264pp B1993

An intimate insight into the complicated dynamics of the father-son relationship, this book is told from a boy's perspective over a summer period. As a female reader, the male point of view was very fascinating, especially in regards to how they view the main women in their life.

Larriana M, Book Groups Staff

Over the Top with Jim

Hugh Lunn

Journalist Hugh Lunn was born in Brisbane in 1941. This engagingly down to earth book evokes his boyhood in the 1940s and '50s and is a breath of fresh air. Full of resonances for anyone who knew Australia in those years.

N L 1989 272pp B1311

P

Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha
Roddy Doyle

Through his virtuoso rendering of the voice of the 10-year-old Paddy, we are taken into the world of north Dublin's working class suburbs. Idiomatic episodes reveal the impact on the boy of the deprivation, vitality and violence of his family and school, the media and the community.

F 1991 282pp B1420

Past the Shallows
Favel Parrett

SHORTLISTED
Miles Franklin Literary Award

A deceptively simple story about two brothers growing up on the wild Tasmanian coast, and the tragedy that fractured their family beyond repair. The raw island landscape frames this story, where the austere prose belies a book of great sensitivity and power. This debut novel is effortless and commanding, and the last third absolutely shattering. You will not forget Harry and Miles.

F 2011 254pp B2127

I don't think we have given a book five star, but we have for this one. It was a very moving emotional story about the love and loyalty between three Brothers.
Black Forest

A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man
James Joyce

Joyce is one of the great 20th century novelists. This book is largely autobiographical, and traces Stephen Dedalus' boyhood and progressive isolation in Ireland and commitment to art: his education, the growth of his creative powers, and his religious and sexual consciousness.

F 1916 256pp B0276

Enjoyed *Past The Shallows?*

Try *Sing Fox to Me* by Sarah Kanake [B2248]

Purple Hibiscus
Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

WINNER
Commonwealth Writers' Prize

15-year-old Kambili grows up in sheltered privilege in a Nigeria ravaged by political unrest. She lives in fear of her fanatically religious and tyrannical father, a charismatic Catholic patriarch. When Nigeria is shaken by a military coup, Kambili and her brother are sent to live with their aunt, which allows Kambili to blossom in a new life amid the turmoil of the old.

F 2004 307pp B1933

The Puzzles of Childhood
Manning Clark

The author of the six volume History of Australia undertakes the history of his own early years, from his infancy to his Melbourne Grammar days. His memories focus on his intensely religious parents whose existence together was riven by various conflicts. Moves between Sydney, Kempsey, Phillip Island and Belgrave.

N 1989 213pp B1258

R

Ride on Stranger
Kylie Tennant

Written with a sly humour, this novel tells of the trials of the 'impossible' Shannon Hicks sent off to a doughty aunt at a tender age. The aunt is impossible too, so Shannon makes her own way in the world of the unskilled, conmen, eccentrics and losers, the world of Sydney in the 1930s.

F 1943 301pp B0928

The Road from Coorain
Jill Ker Conway

This evocative, readable autobiography of the author's life to her mid-twenties conveys day-to-day detail – the smells, sounds, weather, plants, people. Why did she leave Australia for a distinguished intellectual career, and how did her family and the drought vulnerable plains of their sheep property in New South Wales shape her sensibility?

N 1989 238pp B1289

Romulus, My Father
Raimond Gaita

From a life whose events were often historically terrible and personally tragic emerges an extraordinarily brave and dignified man. Deep gratitude infuses his son's frank, truthful biography. It allows us to see how wisdom, compassion and an ethical sense are developed in a growing child.

N 1998 208pp B1554

Roundabout at Bangalow
Shirley Walker

This Australian memoir moves from a childhood in the lush rainforests of the Byron Bay hinterland to farming a sugarcane property in north Queensland; from the restrictive small town life of Grafton to an enjoyable time as a mature age student at university. Walker has a keen eye for her human and natural surroundings and writes unfolds in a dryly amusing voice.

N 2001 232pp B1805

S

Saving Jessie
Imogen Clark

Only names have been changed in this true story of a Canberra family who discover that their youngest child is addicted to heroin. Intelligent, talented and loved, Jessie did not fit the stereotype of the young person who turns to drugs to escape from pain or abuse. A candid, unsensational account of a family trying to learn how far it is possible to help.

N 1999 277pp B1741

Shadowboxing
Tony Birch

A collection of ten linked stories about the life of a boy growing up in Melbourne's Fitzroy during the 1960s. Michael's world is one of simple pleasures, family life and love, punctuated by random acts of brutality. The reader follows as he matures into a sensitive adult who can forgive, but never quite forget, the past. A fascinating snapshot of working class life in inner city Australia.

S 2006 178pp B1912

NEW

Sing Fox to Me
Sarah Kanake

In 1986, 14-year-old Samson and his twin brother Jonah are abandoned by their father and sent to live with Clancy, the grandfather they've never met. As Samson, who has Down syndrome, begins to understand the situation both Jonah and Clancy fall into a wild obsession to find the Tasmanian tiger, a mystery linked to the disappearance of Clancy's long-missing daughter. An atmospheric exploration of abandonment and madness set in Tasmania's lush bushland.

F 2016 264pp B2248

NEW

Skylarking
Kate Mildenhall

Based on true events, the novel revolves around the friendship between Kate and Harriet, two daughters of lighthouse keepers in an isolated coastal town of late 19th century Australia. As the pair approach womanhood, the arrival of fisherman McPhail finds Kate torn by jealousy for McPhail's attention toward Harriet. Then, one moment at McPhail's hut, Kate's life is forever changed. A heartbreaking novel that explores the complexity of adolescent friendships and the price we pay for our mistakes.

F 2016 288pp B2249

The Smallest Color
Bill Roorbach

In this fast paced, funny, dark first novel, Roorbach builds an engaging portrait of the turbulent '60s in the States: free love and drug experiments, the naïve innocence of some and the restless violence of others. Gradually, the entwining tales join – strands of the present and past, the man of 45 and the boy of 15, the '60s and the '90s.

F 2001 325pp B1810

Solid Bluestone Foundations
Kathleen Fitzpatrick

Former Associate Professor of History at the University of Melbourne, Kathleen Fitzpatrick evokes her South Melbourne girlhood, with its tensions between Protestant grandfather and Irish Catholic grandmother, trade and public service, her schooling and early university experiences. Full of Australian people and places.

N 1983 210pp B1290

Spies
Michael Frayn

WINNER
Commonwealth Writers' Prize

Set in Britain during World War II, Spies takes us into a world under threat, but a threat situated in the imaginings of two small boys living out the Blitz in a middle class suburb. Superbly written, this novel combines suspense, anguish, humour and surprising twists.

F 2002 213pp B1691

T

Tell Me I'm Here
Anne Deveson

When her son Jonathan was 17, Deveson realised he had schizophrenia. Here she traces seven years of his illness, showing the fear and anguish which this condition produces in patients and in those close to them. An important book – informative, warm, humane, and deeply moving.

N 1991 269pp B1342

The Tin Moon
Stephen Lacey

'We had the rocket up on three house bricks and were ready to light the petrol,' begins this nerve fraying account of young boys' doings in a small town outside Sydney. From a 10-year-old's viewpoint we take in kaleidoscopic impressions of school, family, new words and a world which offers endless scope for getting into everything – including trouble. A cliff hanging novel in which hilarity blends into darker comedy.

F 2002 300pp B1693

Tirra Lirra by the River
Jessica Anderson

WINNER
Miles Franklin Literary Award

Nora Porteous returns as an old lady to the Queensland town of her girlhood. With an ironic eye she reviews her experiences there and tries to place them amongst the various strands of her life. A brilliant and unillusioned novel.

F 1978 141pp B0120

Too Close to the Falls
Catherine Gildiner

Growing up in respectable 1950s Lewiston, Catherine Gildiner had a highly unusual childhood. Probably today's hyperactive child, Cathy was set to work in the family pharmacy at age four under the doctor's orders. Prescription delivery rounds provided a fund of anecdote and escapade that Gildiner uses to brilliant effect in this captivating memoir.

N 1999 350pp B1798

Tuvalu
Andrew O'Connor

Outsider Noah exchanges his directionless life in Melbourne for a dead end teaching job in Tokyo. His absent girlfriend and inability to speak Japanese are perfect excuses for isolation, until the gorgeous, manipulative Mami Kaketa crashes into his life. This intriguingly offbeat debut explores love, lust, honesty and commitment. Perceptive and droll, O'Connor captures the darker side of the expatriate experience.

F 2006 347pp B1957

U

Uncle Tungsten
Oliver Sacks

Best known for his writings on neurological abnormalities, Sacks now takes a look at himself, unearthing the source of his scientific curiosity in a sometimes troubled childhood in wartime Britain. He was born into a distinguished, scientifically oriented London family, and developed a fascination with metals, gases, chemistry and the discoveries of pioneer chemists. An unusual, warm and witty book.

N 2001 337pp B1661

Under My Skin
Doris Lessing

An outstanding 20th century autobiography, this first volume takes Lessing from her African childhood to London in 1949. Her freedom in the African landscape, her turbulent relationship with her parents, her intense involvements with people, politics, and everything around her are conveyed with keen intelligence. Small print.

N 1994 419pp B1565

Unpolished Gem
Alice Pung

Set in Melbourne's western suburbs, this documents the arrival of Pung's Cambodian Chinese family to Australia in the 1970s. Populating her pages with eccentric characters, she captures the essence of the Asian immigrant experience. This meditation on cultural difference is also a coming of age story of a talented woman struggling to balance her parents' dreams with her own.

N 2006 282pp B1958

V

The Voluptuous Delights of Peanut Butter and Jam
Lauren Liebenberg

In Rhodesia in the late 1970s, sisters Nyree and Cia's father is conscripted to fight against the black freedom fighters. The girls inhabit an innocent world, roaming their run down colonial farm, until their damaged, orphaned cousin Ronin arrives. A beautiful, sad story about childhood in a time of civil war.

F 2008 245pp B2015

W

What Was Lost
Catherine O'Flynn

WINNER
Costa Biography Award

10-year-old junior detective Kate follows 'suspects' at a shopping centre and befriends a man called Adrian. But when she disappears, Adrian falls under suspicion. Years later, Adrian's sister Lisa and security guard Kurt glimpse a little girl on the centre's security cameras. Could it be Kate?

F 2007 242pp B1996

When the Night Comes
Favel Parrett

LONGLISTED
Miles Franklin Literary Award

Isla and her brother see the world in grey until Bo enters their lives. A cook on a Danish ship bound for Antarctica, Bo lodges with them while his ship is in port, expanding Isla's world with his stories. This is an enchanting tale about the magic of the ocean, the mysteries of the universe, and of life and death, darkness and light.

F 2014 256pp B2225

When We Were Orphans
Kazuo Ishiguro

A celebrated detective is driven to solve the mystery of the disappearance of his parents when he was a child. The novel becomes a disturbing, challenging exploration of the relationship between the colonial British, China, and Japan, and of the way simplistic ideas of oneself and the world might distort reality. Set in England and Shanghai in the early and mid 20th century, this is an ironic, complex and deeply moving tragi comedy.

F 2000 368pp B1652

Wildlife
Richard Ford

In the summer of 1960, the town of Great Falls, Montana, is ringed by fires. When young Joe's father loses his job and goes off fire fighting, his mother meets Warren Mitchell. In spare, understated prose Ford evokes a young male making his way in a world of adult upheaval which he only partly comprehends. This is a moving, memorable read.

F 1990 162pp B1293

Exceptional Women

These titles celebrate strong women in fiction, biography and other nonfiction, from intrepid and wise female detectives to Helen Garner's razor-sharp essays.

A

Animal, Vegetable, Miracle
Barbara Kingsolver

When bestselling author Barbara Kingsolver and her family move from suburban Arizona to rural Appalachia, they take on a new challenge: to spend a year eating locally produced food. Part memoir, part journalistic investigation, and complete with original recipes, Kingsolver makes a passionate case for putting the kitchen back at the centre of family life, and diversified farms at the centre of our diet. Small print.

N 2007 352pp B2006

Are You Somebody?
Nuala O'Faolain

Roddy Doyle said of this remarkable memoir: 'Writing about herself, Nuala O'Faolain has also written about Ireland. It is a cruel, wounded place – and this book has become an important part of the cure'. This extended 1998 edition, subtitled *The Life and Times of Nuala O'Faolain* also includes almost 200 pages of her lively and perceptive journalism.

N 1996 434pp B1591

B

The Bloody Chamber
Angela Carter

Carter's retelling of familiar fairy tales restores their power to surprise and even to shock. Female or feminist? This sensual, daring and varied collection can provoke strong reaction and discussion. Small print.

F 1979 126pp B1318

One of the most controversial feminist texts of the 20th century, this book raised so much discussion around fairy tales and women reclaiming their sexuality. The book is well-written, lyrical, chilling and filled with symbolism and metaphor. Our discussion unearthed some fascinating explorations of the narrator's unconscious motives.

Melbourne City Readers

C

The Chase
Ida Mann

To be female, born in England in 1893, and to leave school at 16 without university entrance qualifications: these seem unlikely beginnings for Oxford's first woman professor. The rare account of a woman whose passion for her medical work is central in a dauntless and long life which included travelling, a passionate marriage in her fifties and her work documenting and treating trachomas in Aborigines.

N 1986 217pp B1197

Chocolat
Joanne Harris

SHORTLISTED
Whitbread Novel Award

'We came on the wind of the carnival.' So begins this magical tale of Vianne, her daughter Anouk, and a chocolate boutique nestled in the tiny French village of Lansquenet – seductive, sensual and just a little mischievous. It's the Church versus chocolate when the locals are tempted, the priest outraged. Try me ... test me ... taste me ... Who can resist?

F 1999 394pp B1633

Beautifully written, this book stayed with me. Set in a small-town in rural France, with small-town beliefs, this book featured an interesting love story and a moving tale of mother and child as they struggled to fit in. And chocolate, what more do you want?

Larriana M, Book Groups Staff

Enjoyed *The Signature of All Things?*

Try *The People in the Trees* By Hanya Yanagihara [B2209]

The Courtesan's Revenge
Frances Wilson

Born in 1786, Harriette Wilson became one of the celebrated courtesans of Regency London. She entranced men with her wit and character as much as her beauty. Her conquests included royalty, at least three Prime Ministers and the Lord Chancellor. When her rich former lovers refused to pay her an annuity Harriette exacted her own revenge on the aristocracy, eliciting the Duke of Wellington's famous retort: 'publish and be damned'. Small print.

N 2003 359pp B1815

D

Desert Flower
Waris Dirie & Catherine Miller

Waris Dirie tells her life story in this co-authored book. A Somali desert child, she suffered her people's customary genital rituals, but aged 12 ran away from an arranged marriage. After years of domestic service, Waris is now an international model and Special Ambassador with the United Nations. Direct and without introspective profundity, this is genuinely 'the extraordinary journey of a desert nomad'.

N 1998 369pp B1744

The Diaries of Jane Somers
Doris Lessing

The editor of a successful women's magazine, Jane Somers is elegant, competent, self assured and self contained until her attention is claimed by a tiny, fierce old woman who lives nearby, ill and in poverty. A difficult alliance develops between the two.

F 1984 510pp B1270

Divine Secrets of the Ya Ya Sisterhood
Rebecca Wells

SHORTLISTED
Orange Prize

When an utterly original mother daughter team get into a savage fight over a *New York Times* article that refers to the mother as a 'tap dancing child abuser,' the fall out is felt from Louisiana to New York to Seattle. But Vivi's intrepid gang of life long girlfriends, the Ya Yas, unforgettable Southern belles, sashay in and conspire to bring everyone back together.

F 1996 356pp B1682

Drawn from Life
Stella Bowen

During her art school years in England Stella Bowen met the *avant garde* artists of her day and, eventually, the writer Ford Madox Ford. The two lived together for 10-years, first in Sussex where their daughter was born, and later in France. Witness the literary and artistic world of Paris in the 1920s and 1930s, the difficulties of doing work of your own while a handmaid to the genius of another, the struggle to bring up a daughter and the break up after Ford's affair with Jean Rhys.

N 1941 303pp B1811

E

Edna Walling and Her Gardens
Peter Watts

Peter Watts describes the life, career, style and influence of Edna Walling. A writer as well as a gardener, generations of Australians have been able to absorb the Walling philosophy on plant groupings, colour, pathways, rockwork, and the integration of house and garden.

N 1991 136pp B1988

Elizabeth David
Lisa Chaney

England was still in the grips of post-war food rationing when Elizabeth David's first books appeared, *French Country Cooking* and *A Book of Mediterranean Food*. With her evocations of vibrant colours and flavours she captured the imagination of a generation of cooks. Daughter of a Conservative MP, David was courageous and independent, a complex character whom one reviewer called 'an elegant, witty, charming minor monster'.

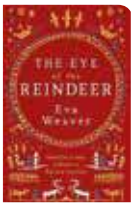
N 1998 482pp B1734

Excellent Women
Barbara Pym

'... practically anything may be the business of an unattached woman with no troubles of her own, who takes a kindly interest in those of her friends.' Set in the shabby genteel world of flats, academic societies and tea rooms of London after the Second World War, with an Austen like ear for dialogue.

F 1952 238pp B0776

NEW



The Eye of the Reindeer
Eva Weaver

In 1913 Ritva is only sixteen when she is shipped off to Seili, an asylum for troubled women on an island in southern Finland. Her only hope comes in the form of Martta, a headstrong indigenous Sami woman with whom she embarks on a bold escape to the North, a mythical place of reindeers where freedom is possible. The novel explores love, family and betrayal and an exploration of the indigenous Sami people of Scandinavia.

F 2016 384pp B2257

Enjoyed *The Bloody Chamber?*

Try *From the Beast to the Blonde* by Marina Warner [B1444]

F

A Fence Around the Cuckoo
Ruth Park

WINNER
The Age Nonfiction Book of the Year

A lively account of Ruth Park's early years in New Zealand. We see the dense bush of that country's isolated regions, the Maori people whose lives intersected with hers, the dramas within a battling Irish Catholic family, and the intense poverty during the Depression years.

N L 1992 294pp B1372

First Lady
Kay Cottee

Making this voyage was Kay Cottee's dream. Following her triumphant return after 189 days at sea, she was named 1988 Australian of the Year. Here is her detailed account of the voyage – its highs and lows, the extremes she endured, and the dangers presented by icebergs, whales, rocks and huge seas.

N 1989 226pp B1373

Fishing in the Styx
Ruth Park

This second volume of Ruth Park's popular autobiography is set in Australia. Her warm, frank record reveals an admirably productive life – as writer of 'everything', wife of D'Arcy Niland, mother of five, and, above all, a getter of wisdom in work, trouble, loss and joy.

N L 1994 302pp B1406

Follow the Rabbit Proof Fence
Doris Pilkington & Nugi Garimara

Nugi Garimara tells the story of three young girls who in 1931 escaped from the Moore River Native Settlement north of Perth intending to walk home to the northern desert. We see the realities of social policy at that time, but the focus is on an extraordinary effort of willpower, knowledge, strategy and stamina.

N 1996 133pp B1756

Friends, Lovers, Chocolate
Alexander McCall Smith

The second novel in the Sunday Philosophy Club series. Isabel Dalhousie is an Edinburgh philosopher, and when her niece Cat decides to take a holiday, Isabel agrees to help out at her delicatessen. One of her customers has recently had a heart transplant and is being haunted by memories he feels are not his own. Isabel soon finds herself following another risky investigation.

F 2005 297pp B2051

From Strength to Strength
Sara Henderson

Marriage to a glamorous American soon became life in a tin shack in a sea of red dust on a remote Northern Australian cattle station. On Charlie's death Sara discovered he had left her with massive debt and a failing property which she managed to rebuild.

N L 1992 337pp B1376

From the Beast to the Blonde
Marina Warner

Warner's book explores the origin of fairy tales in women's culture, using symbolic means such as magic castles, impossible tasks, beasts and blondes to address urgent life issues. A difficult, stimulating and sumptuously illustrated book.

N 1994 458pp B1444

The Full Cupboard of Life
Alexander McCall Smith

The fifth book in the No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency series. Mma Ramotswe has been approached by a wealthy lady to investigate several suitors. Are these men just interested in her money? Alexander McCall Smith's "novels are … extremely funny: I find it impossible to think about them without smiling" – Mail on Sunday (UK).

F 2003 212pp B2049

G

Getting Equal
Marilyn Lake

This 'History of Australian Feminism' is an eye opener, full of lively, sharp and generous portraits of significant (often forgotten) women and telling (often amusing) anecdotes. Can a mother be an independent woman? Do you want to be equal? Hugely readable and discussable.

N 1999 316pp B1759

The Girls
Robin Levett

Levett draws on an amazing memory and a sprightly, comic, forceful disposition to restore her part of the Australia of the 1920s and '30s and her war service in the '40s. You'll find it all here: Sorrento, South Yarra, the Hermitage, Toorak College, the National Gallery School, the WRANS and WAS(B), post war England; the adventurous freedoms and startling constraints of her girlhood.

N 1997 264pp B1533

Everybody loved the book - the first one in ages that everyone agreed on. Because of the material it contained all felt a sense of connection with the contents and so a good discussion ensued.
Mt Eliza 6

H

Hanna's Daughters
Marianne Fredriksson

From 1871 three generations of a Swedish family live through marked social change: from primitive rural life to industrialised society to the information age. A complex chronicle of women's lives, unsentimental about the burdens of family history, gender and character.

F 1994 299pp B1617

Hidden Lives
Margaret Forster

Which lives are significant, and why? Forster's 'family memoir' traces three generations of women: her grandmother, her mother and herself – of working class background, born and raised in Carlisle, an industrial town in north England, each experiencing radically different circumstances and opportunities. 'Let no one say that nothing has changed, that women have it as bad as ever,' Forster concludes.

N 1995 309pp B1510

The House of the Spirits
Isabel Allende

This is the beautiful, touching story of the Trueba family, following their lives through the post colonial social and political upheavals in Chile in the Latin American magic realism style. Follow volatile patriarch Esteban, his wife Clara, their daughter Blanca and their granddaughter Alba in this epic novel of love, magic and fate.

F 1985 491pp B1176

I

I Don't Know How She Does It
Allison Pearson

Oh, the chaos of life, balancing a job as a fund manager, two small children, a husband and a nanny who never listens. A young mother juggles time for her family while struggling with the 'old boys' network'. Will she cope? Often hilarious, sometimes sad, this novel portrays working motherhood in the 21st century.

F 2002 357pp B1785

In the Company of Cheerful Ladies
Alexander McCall Smith

The sixth book in the No.1 Ladies Detective Agency series. Precious Ramotswe is now married to Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni, but life is still full of mishaps, mysteries and personality clashes. "The story unfolds at a familiar gentle pace … evoking a powerful but simple morality: that sharing our hearts with each other improves us all" – *Sunday Times*.

F 2004 264pp B2050

The Invisible Woman
Claire Tomalin

This biography opens up the world of Ellen 'Nelly' Lawless Ternan, an actress who at eighteen met the older, married Charles Dickens. Tomalin makes a strong case for their parenting illegitimate children. She follows Nelly's life through the decades after Dickens' death.

N 1990 333pp B1512

J

Jane Austen: A Life
Claire Tomalin

The heroines in Austen's six novels inhabit a world of stability and continuity, yet Tomalin sees Jane Austen as a woman living on the margins of a competitive, money oriented world, part of a lively, chaotic family and a more volatile character than previously thought.

N 1997 358pp B1583

Jane Eyre
Charlotte Brontë

Jane Eyre moves from a harsh, orphaned childhood to Thornfield Hall, where, as governess, she falls in love with Mr Rochester, and is menaced by the madwoman in the attic. Her quest for independence, in romantic circumstances, has exceptional emotional power.

F L 1847 560pp B0024

Joan Makes History
Kate Grenville

The several Joans whose stories animate this book put women into the action of the last two centuries of Australian history. Vivacious, diversified vignettes are set into the narrative of Joan and Duncan, who also appear in *Lilian's Story*.

F 1988 285pp B1202

Enjoyed *Hanna's Daughters?*

Try *Hidden Lives* by Margaret Forster [B1510]

K

The Kalahari Typing School for Men
Alexander McCall Smith

The Kalahari Typing School for Men is the fourth volume of the bestselling No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency series. Precious Ramotswe has competition from a new EX CID, EX NY, EX cellent detective agency and Mma Makutsi, who believes in 'enterprise with compassion', runs evening classes for men.

F 2002 210pp B2009

L

The Little Coffee Shop of Kabul
Deborah Rodriguez

Sunny, café proprietor, needs a plan to keep her customers safe; Halajan, her 60-year-old landlady, is willing to risk all for love; young, pregnant Yazmina needs protection; Isabel is a journalist with a story of her own; Candace, a wealthy American, follows her Afghan lover to Kabul. This novel captures the fears and longings of each as the women make a life under the watchful eyes of the Taliban.

F 2011 304pp B2124

The book was voted very readable and informative, shocking and appalling in the treatment of women. This aspect generated lively discussion. The author's responses to her questions were a bonus.
Geelong Gardeners

M

Madeleine
Helen Trinca

WINNER
Prime Minister's Literary Award

Late blossoming author Madeleine St John (*The Women in Black*) was brilliant and troubled. This biography follows her childhood in Sydney to years in London council flats, culminating with the publication of four acclaimed novels in the last decade of her life.

F 2013 272pp B2194

Malinche's Conquest
Anna Lanyon

The gifted young woman who translated for Cortes in his 16th century conquest of Mexico is remembered by the Mexican elite as a traitor, but is celebrated in popular legend. Lanyon uncovers her 'survival amid catastrophe' to see the luminous traces of a woman who was among the founders of modern Mexico.

N 1999 233pp B1739

Morality for Beautiful Girls
Alexander McCall Smith

The third in the bestselling No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency series. Precious Ramotswe has financial worries, puzzling cases to solve and the ethical dilemma of a beauty pageant.

F 2001 246pp B1987

Mrs Cook
Marele Day

Before James Cook departed on his final voyage, he had been at home with his wife Elizabeth for only four of their 14 years of marriage. She raised their six children, only to outlive them. This 'non fiction novel' imaginatively reconstructs the domestic life of the sea captain's wife.

F 2002 357pp B1775

N

The Natural Way of Things
Charlotte Wood

WINNER
Stella Prize

Two women wake to find themselves held captive in the desert with a group of eight others, and slowly realise they all have something in common: in each of their pasts is a sexual scandal with a powerful man. But who is punishing them, and what for? This is a stark exploration of contemporary misogyny and corporate control – and the beauty (and courage) of sisterly love.

F 2015 320pp B2237

Nine Parts of Desire
Geraldine Brooks

Working in the Middle East, Brooks learned a lot about what life is like for Islamic women. Focusing on individuals in different countries and in various roles, professional and domestic, she traces the origins of today's practices, showing that oppression of women is inconsistent with Islam in its purest form. Informative, readable, discussable.

N 1995 255pp B1543

The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency
Alexander McCall Smith

Expansive middle-aged female detective Precious Ramotswe brings her intelligence and intuition to bear on problems and mysteries in her small town. Far removed from the darkness and blood of many crime novels, this is a book full of humour, good heart and gently ironic observation.

F 1998 235pp B1794

No Place for a Nervous Lady
Lucy Frost

Lucy Frost edits the diaries of 19th century women pioneers in Australia's outback. Compelling and absorbing reading from a fascinating time in our history, which will lead to much discussion.

N 1984 279pp B0018

O

One Life
Kate Grenville

One of our favourite storytellers is back with this moving tribute to her mother, Nance, a woman who was in many ways revolutionary. Grenville's voice punctuates her warm and heartfelt account which is partly crafted from Nance's own diaries. This is a story about Australian consciousness, and how the patterns of the past can be seen in the present.

N 2015 272pp B2216

The Orchard
Drusilla Modjeska

How does a woman grow into her own life? Filled with stories people, and Modjeska's own meditations and life questions framed by women gardeners, and returning to the English spring of Modjeska's boarding school.

N 1994 268pp B1452

Out of the Silence
Wendy James

At the turn of the last century, three women's lives are on a collision course: Vida, the fiery Melbourne suffragist; Elizabeth, far from home and grieving for her lost love; and the courageous young country girl, Maggie. Their experiences revolve around issues that still touch us deeply today: single motherhood, post natal depression, and the role of women in public life.

F 2005 351pp B1932

Over My Tracks
Evelyn Crawford & Chris Walsh

The 65-year-old Evelyn Crawford, born into the Baarkanji tribal group, goes back over her tracks to tell us her eye opening life story. Crawford lived in the red sandhills back of Bourke: her years of hard work droving and mustering, the varying contacts she made with white Australians, and the ups and downs of coping with her fourteen children. Involvement in her youngest son's schooling takes her into the training of Aboriginal teachers.

N 1993 319pp B1385

P

Paradise
Toni Morrison

The all black town of Ruby was founded by ex-slaves, determined to pass on the unchanging pure faith which had enabled them to survive in the antagonistic American South. Morrison's explosively imagined novel focuses on the lives of the women in and outside this fictitious town, confronting the difficult issues of black male violence.

F 1999 318pp B1700

The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie
Muriel Spark

Miss Brodie is a school teacher; in the 1930s, and in her prime, she decides to inculcate 'progressive' ideas about politics, sex and art into her pupils, much to the consternation of her conservative school.

F 1961 128pp B0925

Q

Quicksands
Sybille Bedford

From WWI Germany to 21st century England via Europe and America, Bedford evokes a world of writers and diplomats, the dispossessed and the powerful. An elegant mosaic of lovers and tragedy, this is a spellbinding reflection on the intersection between history and personal experience.

N 2005 369pp B1955

R

Rebecca West
Victoria Glendinning

West lived from 1892 to 1983 and was both an agent and a victim of change. She marched with the suffragettes, and had a ten year liaison with H.G. Wells. An accomplished and affectionate portrayal of a complex woman.

N 1987 288pp B1578

NEW

Reckoning: A Memoir
Magda Szubanski

WINNER
NSW Premier's Literary Awards

WINNER
Winner ABIA Book of the Year

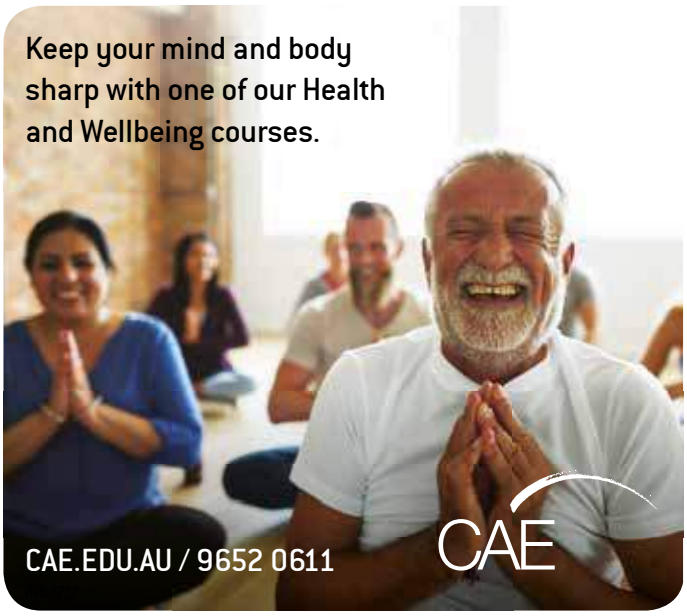
Magda Szubanski, one of Australia's most beloved comedic performers, recounts her life from growing up in the suburb of Croydon, her career as an actor, to the quest to find out the truth about her father, a Polish assassin during World War 2. This multi-award winning memoir is a serious exploration on finding courage, acceptance, and a daughter's love for her father.

N 2016 384pp B2266

Return to the Little Coffee Shop of Kabul
Deborah Rodriguez

In this much anticipated sequel, six women remain linked by their experiences in a café in Kabul. Now on opposite sides of the world, each will deal with the past in different ways as she faces the future. This delightful and poignant novel explores the legacy of war, the trouble with culture clash, and the importance of friendship.

F 2016 400pp B2238



The Rooms in My Mother's House
Olga Lorenzo

Driven from Cuba after the revolution, Dolores, Consuelo and Ana settle in an old farmhouse in Miami, where they battle with each other and the ghosts that remain in their hearts. The spirit world blends fabulously with their material one in this vibrant novel. Contains themes that may disturb.

F 1996 405pp B1582

S

A Scandalous Life
Mary S. Lovell

At 17, a beautiful English girl married an older aristocrat who kept his mistress. Lady Jane Digby responded to this indignity with unusual spirit and a highly publicised divorce. The Austrian prince with whom she eloped was succeeded by a baron, a count, and a brigand, before she married a Bedouin sheikh 20 years her junior, and lived among the Syrian desert tribes.

N 1995 365pp B1552

Most members enjoyed this book and we had a stimulating discussion. All were amazed at such an adventurous spirit in the Victorian era of the 19th century. We were all interested in the descriptions of the cultural differences between the Western and Bedouin way of life and had great admiration for the work Jane Digby did while living in Syria. As a biography it was factual, but easy to read and enjoyable.

Toowoomba 1 U3A

The Secret Life of Bees
Sue Monk Kidd

In the deep south in the 1960s, Lily lives with her strict father and servant Rosaleen. When racial tensions explode, Lily comes to Rosaleen's aid and the two run away together, finding sanctuary with three beekeeping sisters. A heart warming and life affirming tale.

F 2001 374pp B2005

The Signature of All Things
Elizabeth Gilbert

Born in Philadelphia in 1800, Alma Whittaker's remarkable mind and questing spirit reflect both the rigours of 19th century scientific curiosity and the exploration of a dimension beyond the empirical. *The Signature of All Things* is simultaneously a book of ideas, a travelogue, an unconventional love story and a testament to female achievement.

F 2013 501pp B2208

The Stone Diaries
Carol Shields

WINNER
Pulitzer Prize

Daisy is born on a kitchen floor in 1905 in Canada, and the ordinariness of her ordinary life is made remarkable in this original and enjoyable novel. The unforgettable first chapter opens the way to further surprises and delights.

F 1993 361pp B1460

Stravinsky's Lunch
Drusilla Modjeska

WINNER
The Age Nonfiction Book of the Year

Stella Bowen and Grace Cossington Smith were born in the 1890s. One left Australia before the First World War and remained in Europe, the other lived for decades on the outskirts of Sydney. Their lives and work are the focus of this moving meditation on the friction between creative and domestic life.

N 1999 364pp B1623

The Summer Without Men
Siri Hustvedt

Poet Mia Fredrickson has a severe breakdown when her husband leaves her. Returning to the prairie town of her childhood, she rents a house just down the road from her mother's retirement home and spends a summer in the company of some extraordinary women. Hustvedt has successfully combined the cerebral with the visceral to create this small gem.

F 2011 224pp B2136

The Sunday Philosophy Club
Alexander McCall Smith

Amateur sleuth Isabel Dalhousie hosts the Sunday Philosophy Club and uses her philosophy training to solve murder and mayhem in Edinburgh. Warm hearted with gentle humour, it is "the literary equivalent of herbal tea and a cosy fire" – *The New York Times*.

F 2004 281pp B1979

T

Tears of the Giraffe
Alexander McCall Smith

This second in the No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency series starts with the engagement of Mma Ramotswe and Mr J.L.B. They deal with the ups and downs of domestic life and find themselves with unexpected additions to their family. Mma Ramotswe and her secretary must also deal with questions of right and wrong in their Botswanan detective agency business.

F 2000 217pp B1847

True North
Brenda Niall

SHORTLISTED
Victorian Premier's Literary Award

This fascinating biography of sisters Mary and Elizabeth Durack looks beyond the legacy of Mary's classic book *Kings in Grass Castles* to examine the dynamics of the Durack pastoralist dynasty and the personal lives of these two creative, but very different, women. In particular, it focuses on their strong, life long ties to the Kimberley region and its people.

N 2012 275pp B2147

Enjoyed *The Secret Life of Bees*?

Try *Paradise* by Toni Morrison [B1700]

True Pleasures
Lucinda Holdforth

Ready for a change in direction, Holdforth abandoned a career in politics and diplomacy for time in Paris, reading deeply about the lives of French women she had long admired and exploring the Paris locales with which they were linked. She reflects on the lives of women such as Marie Antoinette, Germaine de Staël, Coco Chanel, and writers such as Nancy Mitford, Edith Wharton, Gertrude Stein and Colette. Intelligence and lightness of touch makes her book a pleasure to read.

N 2004 227pp B1940

True Stories
Helen Garner

This evocative collection is drawn from a quarter of a century of Garner's non-fiction writing. The topics range from the (1970s) four letter words sex lesson in a secondary school – she was sacked – to her accounts of 1980s marriages at the Mint in Melbourne and of autopsies at the morgue in 1992, to births in a labour ward in Penrith (1995). A treasure chest.

N 1996 242pp B1501

U

The Unusual Life of Edna Walling
Sara Hardy

Independent and unconventional, Edna Walling was one of the first women to graduate from the Burnley School of Horticulture in 1917 and went on to become one of Australia's finest landscape designers. Though her gardens are well documented, Hardy draws on memories, anecdotes, facts and documents to explore Edna's private world – her family, friends, passions and sexuality, creating a tribute to a woman who was, in retrospect, way ahead of her time. A must read for green thumbs as well as lovers of Australian biography.

N 2005 304pp B1945

W

Walking in the Shade

Doris Lessing

Following *Under My Skin*, this second volume of Lessing's autobiography begins with her 1949 arrival in grey post war London (with the manuscript of her first novel and one of her three children) and takes us through to 1962. It offers a wonderful sense of those times as well as insights into Lessing herself. She speaks with candour about bringing up her son on her own, her love affairs, years of psychotherapy, the realities of living by her writing and her growing disillusionment with the Communist Party.

N 1997 369pp B1705

Watched by Ancestors

Kathy Golski

It's one thing for trained anthropologists to do their adventurous work, but here an artist and her four children accompany her second husband to the remote highlands of Papua New Guinea where they live for two years, giving other, often surprising, dimensions to the lives of all concerned.

N 1998 270pp B1732

The Whole Woman

Germaine Greer

This sequel to *The Female Eunuch*, the book Germaine said she would never write, is vintage Greer: intelligent, wide ranging, energetic, provocative, humorous, tender. Her angry thesis is that 'real women are being phased out', and it is certain to stimulate strong discussion.

N 1999 350pp B1720

Wicked But Virtuous

Mirka Mora

One of Melbourne's best known artists, Mirka Mora arrived in Australia from Paris in 1951 with her husband and baby. Their restaurants were a magnet for the artistic life of the city. The book glows with examples of her work and splendid photographs. This account of an eccentric life lived to the utmost celebrates Mirka's lovers, work, family – and the rich array of characters who were drawn into her world.

N 2000 331pp B1653

Wild Swans

Jung Chang

WINNER
Australian Literature Society Gold Medal

Three generations, three women's stories in a period when the world's most populous nation endured almost unimaginable change. One way to begin to comprehend the recent history of China is through individuals who find the courage to experience and to voice the enormities which are the stuff of their everyday lives. Long, but compulsively readable.
Two month book.

N 1991 696pp B1397

Enjoyed *A Wild Sheep Chase?*

Try *The Explosion Chronicles* by Yan Lianke [B2262]

Artist, Maker, Thinker

This chapter deals with the creative and cerebral, examining the lives of artists, writers and performers, and the spiritual, ethical and philosophical aspects of life.

A

Affluenza
Clive Hamilton

Looking at Australian society, Hamilton sees a binge of consumption, associated with a trend towards overwork, the stuff we accumulate and send to landfill, financial over commitment, the medications we use to help us cope. Accompanying this he identifies a range of ills such as lack of time, stress, tiredness, depression, health problems. Instead he offers an alternative path: less attention to material goods, and greater connection with community and the things that matter.

N 2005 224pp B1916

An Artist of the Floating World
Kazuo Ishiguro

Ishiguro's elegant, restrained prose evokes the personality, career, family and society of Masuji Ono, an ageing painter, living through the turbulent post war shift from militarism to an Americanised democracy in Japan in 1948.

F 1986 206pp B1228

Author, Author
David Lodge

A great writer, but a fiercely private man: Henry James seems an unlikely subject for a biographical novel by a comic writer. But Lodge's novel is immensely lively, readable and discussable, as he focuses on the last decades of James' life. A fascinating and informative account of the crowded setting of the English literary, theatrical and social world, of sibling rivalries and love, and of the refined and dedicated life within.

F 2004 389pp B1870

Autumn Laing
Alex Miller

SHORTLISTED
Prime Minister's Literary Award

Inspired by the relationship between iconic artist Sidney Nolan and his muse, Sunday Reed, this is a skilfully drawn fiction of how such a person as Sunday might have become, having outlived the artists who were her peers in the 1930s. Through 85-year-old Autumn's reflections on the lives of the gifted, Miller explores the passions and ambitions of Australian art.

F 2011 464pp B2157

B

The Boyds: The Art of the Boyds
Patricia Dobrez & Peter Herbst – ART BOOK

Six generations of Boyds have been involved in the arts. This folio of lavish illustrations reflects the diversity of talent – pottery, writing, architecture, painting, sculpting, ceramics – in 'Australia's most visible and distinguished artistic family'.

N 1990 232pp B0656

C

Cézanne: Paul Cézanne, 1839–1906
Hajo Düchting – ART BOOK

A recluse who shunned the art world of Paris, Cézanne never identified himself with the Impressionist group. This beautiful, full colour text explores Cézanne's great achievements in his ever more subtle analysis of colour and tone, and synthesis of reality and abstraction.

N 1991 239pp B0678

Charles Dickens: A Life
Claire Tomalin

This rich biography of 'the inimitable' Charles Dickens examines the many contradictions of his divided character. Tomalin's psychological analysis observes with an unblinking eye the virtues and failings of both writer and man; capturing the indomitable imagination which hid a tormented, tragic, brilliant man.

N 2011 528pp B2164

Cider with Rosie
Laurie Lee

Chronicling the traditional village life which disappeared with the advent of developments such as the motor car, this enduring classic is the English Cotswolds of years ago, with Lee's bucolic childhood rendered in a bright and wryly humorous manner. A must-read.

N L 1959 240pp B0395

Clarice Beckett
Rosalind Hollinrake – ART BOOK

After her death in 1935, Clarice Beckett was a forgotten artist. One of Australia's great modernist painters, Beckett's lyrical, delicate studies evoke the spirit of a past Melbourne – its city, suburbs and beaches – in an application of colour, tone and form beyond anything of her time.

N 1999 77pp B1615

Consolations of Philosophy
Alain de Botton

Philosophy is not just for the ivory tower. Alain de Botton unfolds the thinking of six philosophers on six of life's real issues: Socrates on unpopularity (he died for it); Epicurus on not having enough money; Seneca on frustration; Montaigne on inadequacies various; Schopenhauer on a broken heart; and Nietzsche on the struggle. Occasional coarse language.

F 2000 265pp B1635

The Crane Wife
Patrick Ness

A crane lands one day in middle aged George's back garden in London. The next day, he meets artist Kumiko, and together their art causes a public sensation. The importance of family, love, and the power of storytelling are all explored in this reimagined Japanese folk tale that merges the magical with the real. Contains strong language.

F 2013 320pp B2189

D

Death Sentence
Don Watson

Watson defends the language he loves (the kind with bite, with flavour, with life) against the verbal sludge which now threatens us from every side. Managerial language has infiltrated the English of politics, bureaucracy, education and the media. Read, laugh, discuss, repent, abstain!

N 2003 198pp B1828

E

The Elegance of the Hedgehog
Muriel Barbery

Renée is the concierge of a grand Parisian apartment building on the Left Bank. Beneath her conventional facade she is passionate about culture and the arts. Meanwhile, several floors up, 12-year-old Paloma Josse is determined to avoid the predictably bourgeois future laid out for her. The death of one of their privileged neighbours brings dramatic change and alters their lives forever. An international bestseller.

F 2008 320pp B2046

We all loved this book. It was funny, sentimental and beautifully written. We had a great discussion. Glad we read this book!
Yarrawonga 3

Elizabeth Costello

J.M. Coetzee

SHORTLISTED
Miles Franklin Literary Award

In the form of lectures given by an elderly Australian writer on tour, this challenging novel of ideas opens up questions of the systematic cruelties involved in farming animals for food; the Holocaust; the nature of belief and reason, of writing and of humanity; spirituality and morality; Kafka and the absurd. Nobel Prize winner Coetzee shares with his fictional character a reluctance to make public appearances.

F 2003 230pp B1830

Elizabeth Costello is packed full of philosophical questions, layered into fragments of a fictionalised author's life. If you like philosophy, this might be for you.

Jess Z, Book Groups Staff

F

Facing the Music

Andrea Goldsmith

For more than 50-years, Duncan Bayle's glorious talent as a composer was fed by the women in his life. Then his daughter Anna left Melbourne for London. While her father's gift faltered, her creativity flowered. Goldsmith portrays a toxic struggle between them, and family and friends are caught in their destructive creativity as the work moves to its conclusion.

F 1994 263pp B1441

Feet of Clay

Anthony Storr

Subtitled *A Study of Gurus*, this sets some of the most notorious gurus, including Jim Jones and David Koresh beside some of the most respected leaders in the western world (Ignatius of Loyola, Jesus) to show they have more in common than meets the eye. Why do we view some of them as legitimate thinkers or spiritual leaders and others as madmen? Other 'gurus' considered in the book are Gurdjieff, Steiner, Freud and Jung. A rich field for reflection and discussion.

N 1996 254pp B1569

G

The Gift of Asher Lev

Chaim Potok

In this sequel to My Name is Asher Lev, the painter is drawn back to the Ladover Hasidic community in Brooklyn. Again, he experiences the tension between his gift and the community, now facing the death of its revered Rebbe, and making strong claims on his family.

F 1990 370pp B1323

Girl with a Pearl Earring

Tracy Chevalier

This fine historical fiction evokes the mid 17th century Netherlands. Griet, a young servant girl, sits for the painter Vermeer, her employer, and soon finds herself surrounded by rumour. Deeply revealing about the process of painting and haunting in its passion, outrage and perceptions about human nature.

F 1999 248pp B1621

Glass After Glass

Barbara Blackman

Married for 27 years to the painter Charles Blackman, also artist's model, muse, writer, mother, Blackman writes of the people she has known in Australia's art world and of day to day living. The circle of artists at Heide, her friendships with Joy Hester and with others, and her adaptation to increasing blindness from a young age are all part of these memoirs.

N 1997 403pp B1573

Gogh: Vincent van Gogh, 1853–1890

Ingo Walther – ART BOOK

A complex and obsessive man, van Gogh was one of the great forerunners of the modern age. This text presents van Gogh's paintings as testimony to a heroic quest for new colour, line and life.

N 1987 96pp B0679

The Golden Mean

Annabel Lyon

Told in earthy and contemporary prose, this is a story of Aristotle's relationship with the young and gifted Alexander whom he tutors from boyhood. Aristotle strives to impart his philosophy of the golden mean – a balance between extremes – to young Alexander.

F 2009 282pp B2107

The Goldfinch

Donna Tartt

WINNER
Pulitzer Prize

When Theo is thirteen, a traumatic experience inextricably entwines his fate with a 17th century Dutch painting. An engaging cast of characters moves between high society, the world of antiques, and a murky criminal underground in this beautifully readable exploration of love, loss and the messy business of being alive. Two month book

F 2014 771pp B2211

Grace Crowley: Being Modern

Elena Taylor

Crowley played a central part in introducing modern art to Australia. Rejecting the expectations of her Edwardian upbringing, she pursued a career as an artist, leaving the parochial confines of Australia and replacing the convention of marriage with a series of close friendships. In this beautifully illustrated edition, Taylor paints an evocative portrait of Crowley.

N 2006 54pp B1950

Great Writers, Great Loves

Ann Marie Priest

A fascinating, revealing journey through the love lives of eight famous writers: Sylvia Plath, Virginia Woolf, Vita Sackville West, D.H. Lawrence, Katherine Mansfield, Charmian Clift, Dylan Thomas and Frank O'Hara. Priest delves into their letters and their writings. Their stories anticipated and reflected the revolutionary rethinking of love, sex and marriage that occurred during the course of the 20th century.

N 2006 298pp B1918

H

Half a Lifetime

Judith Wright

One of Australia's finest poets, Judith Wright was born into a family of New South Wales pastoralists. Jack McKinney, the philosopher who became her lover, partner, and the father of her daughter, was also her intellectual companion in her passionate lifelong commitment to environmental causes and justice for the Aboriginal peoples of Australia. A poem by Wright stands as preface to each of the chapters in this luminous memoir, an added pleasure for the reader.

N 1999 296pp B1760

The Hare with Amber Eyes

Edmund de Waal

WINNER
Costa Biography Award

After inheriting a collection of Japanese carvings (netsuke), de Waal felt compelled to trace its journey through the years. In doing so, he discovered his family's history from 19th century Odessa to modern Tokyo. An engrossing and moving blend of art and social history.

N 2010 354pp B2140

Harland's Half Acre

David Malouf

The life story of Frank Harland, an artist whose first drawings are made at night on his family's struggling dairy farm in Queensland. Malouf writes with insight about many themes: family life; the pressures of poverty and temperament; the vocation of the artist; the changing patterns of Australian social history; the natural world of Australia, rendered with poetic precision.

F 1984 230pp B1043

Here on Earth
Tim Flannery

From an ecological viewpoint, we have left a trail of destruction as human civilisation spreads across the Earth. We will face climate changes, decreasing biodiversity, and scarcity of water and food. Flannery, a palaeontologist and former Australian of the Year, suggests solutions to these problems. From the Stone Age to the modern globalised world, he presents a view of how sustainability can be achieved through cooperation rather than competition.

N 2010 316pp B2114

The Hours
Michael Cunningham

WINNER
Pulitzer Prize

Cunningham takes Virginia Woolf's life and work as inspiration for this exquisite and subtle novel. He interweaves Woolf's struggle to begin her novel *Mrs Dalloway* with that book's effects on two subsequent readers in 1940s Los Angeles and in contemporary New York.

F 1998 228pp B1642

How Are We to Live?
Peter Singer

The distinguished Australian philosopher argues that in affluent Western society, the pursuit of material self interest is the norm, trapping people into the sense that life is meaningless. Is there anything to live for? Likely to prompt unstoppable discussion.

N 1993 262pp B1411

I

I Am Melba
Ann Blainey

WINNER
National Biography Prize

A biography of Australia's first musical superstar, Nellie Melba. From an early age Nellie dreamed of fame. Her independent spirit took her from Melbourne and the Queensland cane fields to London and Europe. *I Am Melba* captures an extraordinary life.

N 2009 400pp B2063

The Imperfectionists
Tom Rachman

This collection of stories told from the viewpoints of different staff members, from the Editor in Chief to the copy editor, at an international English language newspaper, based in Rome. Their private lives overlap with work and world events. Alternately hilarious and heart wrenching.

F S 2010 274pp B2089

Inside Out
Robert Adamson

Sydney poet Robert Adamson grew up in Neutral Bay and on the Hawkesbury River in the 1950s and '60s. Bewitched by the natural world, fishing and birds, his later escapades led him to incarceration in boys' homes. Finally, his prison encounter with the work of writers and poets set him on the path of writing. Full of event, sensation, movement and life, his memoir makes wonderful reading.

N 2004 342pp B1833

Isobel on the Way to the Corner Shop
Amy Witting

SHORTLISTED
Miles Franklin Literary Award

Determined to make her way as a writer, Isobel has resigned from her job with very little to live on. Acute illness brings her to a sanatorium where she remains for a long time, maintaining her autonomy as best she can in these claustrophobic surroundings.

F 1999 352pp B1737

K

Kandinsky: Wassily Kandinsky, 1866–1944
Hajo Düchting – ART BOOK

Kandinsky was one of the most important pioneers of abstract art, expressing feelings through a distinctive use of geometric shapes, brilliantly coloured and superbly disposed in space.

N 1991 96pp B0716

Killing Me Softly
Philip Nitschke & Fiona Stewart

Nitschke and Stewart take the view that people should have the right to make informed end of life decisions. Their book provides information about the current practice of slow euthanasia; what is wrong with palliative care; anguishing decisions concerning the life or death of very ill babies. These writers envisage a world where a 'peaceful pill' could be relied on to provide a peaceful, dignified death. An opportunity to reflect on and discuss the many questions presented by the euthanasia debate.

N 2005 354pp B1885

Klimt: Gustav Klimt, 1862–1918
Gottfried Fliedl – ART BOOK

The apocalyptic atmosphere of Vienna's upper middle class society at the turn of the century found expression through the art of Gustav Klimt. Klimt's art and the Viennese Secession movement are explored in this richly illustrated book.

N 1991 239pp B0683

L

The Lacuna
Barbara Kingsolver

WINNER
Orange Prize

Told in a mix of narrative forms including diary entries, memoir, letters and newspaper articles. Born in America and raised in Mexico, Harrison Shepherd finds himself working for Mexican muralist Diego Rivera. He meets and befriends the artist Frida Kahlo, goes to work for the Communist Lev Trotsky, and becomes caught up in a world of art and revolution. The second half of the novel shifts to the United States where Harrison is dragged into the public arena through the House Un American Activities Committee.

F 2009 507pp B2065

NEW

The Life and Death of Sophie Stark
Anna North

Told through the six different perspectives of the people closest to her, the novel explores the life of an unapologetic film director who values art over people. Sophie Stark uses her genius to make movies from the lives of people who fascinate her, destroying the relationships with those that love her most and results in her shocking end. The novel explores the lengths you go for art and the cost of artist integrity.

F 2015 304pp B2247

A unique book that generated a lot of discussion about how much can we really know someone, and when ethics and art are at odds with each other. The unique pespectives gave us a lot to explore, as they showed different sides to the same person.
CAE Staff Book Groups

Lola Bensky
Lily Brett

Lily Brett drew on her own experiences as a music journalist in the 'Swinging Sixties' to create 19-year-old Lola. When not meeting rock icons such as Mick Jagger and Janis Joplin, Lola worries about her hair, or her weight. Like many of Brett's characters, she also carries the legacy of her Holocaust survivor parents. Funny and touching, this novel evokes a time of unique social change.

F 2012 267pp B2176

The Lost Dog
Michelle de Kretser

Set in contemporary Australia and 20th century India, de Kretser's third novel is a love story entwined with a haunting mystery. Tom Loxley, an academic, is writing a book on Henry James in a remote bush shack when his dog goes missing. While searching for his dog, Tom revisits his emotional past and explores his troubled present.

F 2007 368pp B2028

The Lost Mother
Anne Summers

In 1933, Anne's mother had her portrait painted by a mysterious artist. Anne inherited the portrait after her mother died and is compelled to unravel its mystery, exploring the difficult relationship she had with her mother. Anne's detailed research encompasses Paris, Cairo, Latvia and Russia and evokes memories of Melbourne's art scene in the 1900s.

N 2010 385pp B2123

M

Mao's Last Dancer
Li Cunxin

This is the true story of Li Cunxin, a peasant boy from rural China who became a world class ballet dancer. We follow him through his early training in Beijing to a summer school in the US, his defection to the West, and his later transition to a new life in Australia. Memories of his family in China are an important thread in his story.

N 2003 447pp B1821

Martin Boyd: A Life
Brenda Niall

Martin Boyd was a member of the talented Boyd family which included Arthur, Merric, Guy and Robin. Both in background and inclination Martin Boyd was Anglo Australian: many of his novels were written during the restless expatriate years. A readable account of this complex and private man.

N 1988 268pp B1262

Monet: Claude Monet, 1840–1926
Karin Sagner Düchting – ART BOOK

Monet was both the most typical and the most individual French Impressionist painter. His long life, extraordinary capacity for work and furious perfectionism are explored in this large volume.

N 1990 228pp B1609

More Please
Barry Humphries

Does this reveal the man behind the actor, with his vulnerabilities including alcoholism? Or is it another great performance, in which there is less generosity than sharpness? Readable and often very funny.

N 1992 334pp B1381

NEW

The Museum of Modern Love
Heather Rose

WINNER
Stella Prize

WINNER
NSW Premier's Literary Awards

When New York film composer Arky Levin is asked by his terminally ill wife to keep a promise, it throws Arky into a devastating search for meaning. Arky discovers Marina Abramovic in *The Artist is Present*, and is drawn to her performance. As the performance continues, he questions what it means to love and to be an artist. The novel explores relationships, illness and how art shapes us.

F 2016 296pp B2253

My Brilliant Career
Miles Franklin

The first novel from one of the major Australian writers of her time, Stella Maria Sarah Miles Franklin, who wrote under the name Miles Franklin. Written as a romance to amuse the author's friends, the novel follows imaginative heroine Sybylla growing up in rural Australia in the 1890s, and many of the issues it raises are still relevant to women writers today.

F 1901 232pp B0062

N

Nice Work
David Lodge

When Dr Robyn Penrose, temporary lecturer at the University is volunteered by the English Department to shadow Vic Wilcox, a managing director in the industrial town of Rummidge, it's a culture shock for them both. An astute account of Thatcher's England, particularly of its business and intellectual theory and practice. We laughed out loud.

F 1988 348pp B1252

North Face of Soho
Clive James

The fourth in James's autobiographical series, this covers 1968 to the 1980s as James sets out to establish himself in literary London. In his trademark style, blending wisecracks with serious observation, he depicts the unrelenting deadlines involved in his work as reviewer, critic, essayist and commentator. An entertaining read with insights about writing.

N 2006 264pp B1973

O

O'Keeffe: Georgia O'Keeffe
Nancy Frazier – ART BOOK

O'Keeffe is best known for her near abstract paintings based on enlargements of flower and plant forms – works of great elegance, rhythmic vitality and sensuality. This book captures the haunting quality of her unique vision.

N 1992 112pp B0694

Oscar Wilde
Richard Ellmann

Wilde's witty comedies made him the darling of London theatre goers, but at the height of his success he was imprisoned due to homosexual practices. Physically and financially ruined, he declined into an early death. Ellmann's account is full of understanding and humanity.

N 1987 632pp B1585

Other People's Words
Hilary McPhee

The story of a friendship between two women, the publishing company they built, and its contribution to literature in Australia. Helen Garner, Tim Winton and Drusilla Modjeska were part of McPhee Gribble's impressive list. A readable book with much to discuss about the local, the global and the future of publishing.

N 2001 312pp B1630

P

The Philosopher's Dog
Raimond Gaita

Focusing on the creatures who are part of our domestic lives and telling stories about animals he has known, the author of Romulus, My Father asks questions about how animals think and feel. This gentle enquiry into the connection between people and animals needs careful reading and discussion.

N 2002 214pp B1689

R

Reading by Moonlight
Brenda Walker

WINNER
Victorian Premier's Literary Award

In 2005, Brenda was diagnosed with breast cancer. This book follows her treatment, along with meditations on books that helped her on her road to recovery. Referencing authors from Dante to Donna Tartt, she writes about the consolation a of the written word. This is a moving book that resonates deeply.

N 2010 240pp B2133

Religion for Atheists
Alain de Botton

The issue is not whether or not God exists, but where to go from here. Alain de Botton makes a case for the usefulness of religion in our lives, regardless of whether it is believable or not. This read will challenge your way of thinking and is guaranteed to spark a great discussion!

N 2012 320pp B2144

Right & Wrong
Hugh Mackay

This is a humane, thoughtful book about the personal, family, sexual, legal, business, consumer, social and political choices we all face. Mackay's experience as a social researcher who uses focus groups has given him an enviable capacity to open up complex moral issues in a way which makes them accessible for reflection and group discussion.

N 2004 244pp B1841

The River
Patrice Newell

Newell's family lives in a close relationship with the river Pages which runs past their New South Wales property. She looks at the river's rich history (geological, and in Aboriginal and settler times) and its future (with competing demands from big business through to organic farms like her own). The condition of our waterways and life on the land is a topic of great national relevance.

N 2003 244pp B1891

A Room of One's Own
Virginia Woolf

This book arose from two lectures presented to Oxford women's colleges in 1928 on the subject of 'women and fiction'. Woolf believed that only privacy (a room of one's own) and independence (five hundred a year) would allow women to write freely and well.

N 1929 176pp B0381

S

The Secret Life of Money
Valerie Wilson

This book focuses on money in our everyday lives and how ordinary people think and feel about it. This is a look at the complex and contradictory role money plays in our social world.

N 1999 224pp B1719

A Short History of Richard Kline
Amanda Lohrey

Richard Kline has always felt that something in his life was missing. Now middle aged and facing cycles of boredom and despair, he finds himself awakening to alternative spiritual pursuits and philosophies despite his natural cynicism, searching for 'bliss' in the midst of chaos. Lohrey probes the relationship between devotion and dependence in this comic yet moving exploration of masculinity and meaning.

F 2015 272pp B2224

The Sitters
Alex Miller

SHORTLISTED
Miles Franklin Literary Award

An ageing artist's meeting with an older woman opens the enigmas of his childhood and returns him to painting. A complex, subtle story touching on theoretical art questions, the connections between loss and creativity, and absence and presence in words and images.

F 1995 131pp B1459

The Spiral Staircase
Karen Armstrong

Having left the religious life after seven difficult years, Karen Armstrong found herself in a changed world and was troubled by panic attacks and strange mental states. Her memoir explores these years of transition, a long period of unbelief, and the unusual path by which she became a respected commentator on major world religions, matters of faith and fundamentalisms of different kinds.

N 2004 342pp B1894

Status Anxiety
Alain de Botton

'This is a book about an almost universal anxiety ... about what others think of us; about whether we're judged a success or a failure, a winner or a loser.' In it the author examines lovelessness, snobbery, expectation, meritocracy, dependence; and offers some 'solutions'. Is this philosophy or does the book fall into the self help genre? The central subject of keeping up with the Joneses provides plenty to discuss.

N 2004 314pp B1845

Enjoyed *The Bell Jar*?

Try *The Women's Pages* by Debra Adelaide [B2241].

T

A Tale for the Time Being
Ruth Ozeki

SHORTLISTED
Man Booker Prize

When 16-year-old Nao's diary washes ashore on a lonely Canadian coastline, Ruth feels compelled to read it. Nao's life is turbulent: her father is suicidal, she is tortured by schoolyard bullies, and her only friend is her grandmother, a Buddhist nun. Ozeki weaves together philosophy, the nature of time, cultural identity and the true meaning of courage in this absorbing, beautifully written novel.

F 2013 422pp B2204

Toulouse Lautrec: Henri de Toulouse Lautrec
Matthias Arnold – ART BOOK

Toulouse Lautrec's bold and arresting images were instrumental in gaining acceptance for both lithography and the poster as major art forms. This tells Lautrec's story and gives a vibrant picture of Parisian life.

N 1988 96pp B0715

W

Waging Peace
Anne Deveson

Waging Peace is a thematic memoir. Anne Deveson looks back on a long life, from her childhood during WW2 to her experiences as a filmmaker and social commentator. She questions our species' urge to wage war, and discusses with hope the promotion of peace and conflict resolution. Whether or not you agree with her views, this book is bound to promote lively discussion.

N 2013 238pp B2184

Walking on Water

Chester Porter

This Sydney defence lawyer's memoir covers controversial Australian cases and Royal Commissions of the last fifty years, but more than this, through the many unpublicised cases with which its author was involved, it reveals a life in the Law as experienced by a good man. Porter's humbleness and humanity, shining through his simple prose, is a bonus, likely to raise the law, the police and legal practitioners in the reader's estimation.

N 2003 310pp B1898

The Waterlily

Kate Llewellyn

'A book that captures perfectly the exact pace and feel of life – the fine tuning of one moment and one mood into the next' (Grenville). This 'Blue Mountains Journal' covers a year of Kate Llewellyn's life in the mountains, making a garden and determined to be happy.

N 1987 192pp B1345

The Weather Makers

Tim Flannery

Flannery's flair for writing for a general readership is put to excellent use here. We are the weather makers, and Flannery wants to inspire all of us to do something about climate change. He is insightful and inspiring as he suggests steps we can take to reduce our carbon footprint at the level of our own households and decisions.

N 2005 332pp B1943

The Women's Pages

Debra Adelaide

Having read *Wuthering Heights* to her dying mother, Dove finds she cannot forget the novel's power. Instead of returning to normal life, she clings to a story she has begun writing: Ellis is a normal '60s suburban housewife – until she decides to leave her husband. A beautiful magic emerges as Dove teases out the secrets of Ellis's life, while she attempts to live in her own.

F 2015 305pp B2241

As an avid reader this book was a great insight into the act of writing, and how writing can be transforming and consuming. If you've read Wuthering Heights, you'll find plenty of references to it!

Larriana M, Book Groups Staff

Relationships

Mainly fiction, but with a few biographies, this chapter contains books that tackle the myriad aspects of human connection – from grand tragedy to light and witty.

A

The Accidental Tourist
Anne Tyler

Sharing a common grief, Macon Leary and his wife Sarah now find their differences too great and they part. Macon makes world trips to write a series of travel guides which reflect his need of defensive routines. Funnier than *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant* but with that unmistakable ache and tenderness.

F 1985 355pp B1193

Addition
Toni Jordan

Grace Vandenburg counts. She counts the number of poppy seeds on her piece of cake, she counts the number of steps it takes her to reach her local café, she even counts the letters in her name. Then she meets Seamus O'Reilly. Addition is a quirky love story with a witty and unconventional heroine.

F 2008 256pp B2036

Light-hearted and funny, we thought the portrayal of a women with OCD was well-done! It was an easy read but generated a lot of discussion on mental health, anxiety, control and relationships. We highly recommend to any groups looking for a funny and unique read.
CAE Staff Book Group

Aftermath
Rachel Cusk

Subtitled 'On Marriage and Separation'. Cusk is not telling us how to live; this is her narrative on marriage, separation, the difficulties of motherhood, loss of identity, feminism and more. It is an honest exploration of the aftermath of her divorce and is guaranteed to spark a discussion in your group.

N 2012 152pp B2169

The Age of Innocence
Edith Wharton

Newland Archer has chosen a conventional and rather limited young woman for his wife. Now Countess Olenska appears on the scene, refreshingly different in outlook and separated – shockingly – from her European husband. Wharton presents an unillusioned view of 1870s New York, where a constricting social code puts individual lives under great pressure.

F 1920 301pp B1313

One of my favourite classics! Set in New York, the language was unique, the exploration of the intricacies of high societies, gossip and intrigue stayed with me.
Larriana M, Book Groups Staff

Ali and Nino
Kurban Said

This little known masterpiece follows the cross cultural marriage of a young Muslim prince and a rich Christian girl. Love does not run easily, but it works powerfully to try to overcome ancient tribal differences. Considered the *Romeo and Juliet* of Azerbaijan, it is a book for Western readers.

F 1937 237pp B1658

The Amateur Marriage
Anne Tyler

Pauline and Michael marry in haste. Slowly and painfully, they realise they are completely unsuited. A sensitively handled portrayal of family dysfunction and of lives lived always wondering how things 'could have been'. Tyler's look at one family and at American family life from the 1940s to the present is incisive and poignant.

F 2004 306pp B1817

American Wife
Curtis Sittenfeld

Alice is a quiet, bookish only child from small town Wisconsin, who experiences an event which shatters her identity and makes her understand the fragility of life. A decade later, Alice, a Democrat and school librarian, meets and marries Charlie, the outgoing wealthy son of a Republican family. When Charlie becomes President of the United States, Alice finds herself in a position of power, influence and privilege.

F 2008 555pp B2044

April Fool's Day
Bryce Courtenay

The emotive biography of Courtenay's son Damon, who was born with haemophilia and acquired AIDS through transfusion with contaminated blood. Told mainly in his father's words, but including passages from his mother, brother and partner, it is a heart stirring account. Whilst there is much love and fortitude, there is also an angry indictment of some institutions and individuals in Australia's medical system.

N 1994 666pp B1432

Atonement
Ian McEwan

WINNER
Commonwealth Writers' Prize

A story that begins with three young people in the garden of a country house on the hottest day of 1935, and ends with three profoundly changed lives. A depiction of love, war, class, childhood and England, exploring shame and forgiveness, atonement and the possibility of absolution.

F 2001 372pp B1668

B

Bel Canto
Ann Patchett

WINNER
Orange Prize

A group of international guests in an unnamed Latin American country are taken hostage, but the target, the President, is not present. Among the hostages are a famous American opera singer, and a Japanese businessman. A charming, unconventional story unfolds as *Bel Canto* explores the themes of art, politics and love.

F 2001 318pp B1991

Between a Wolf and a Dog
Georgia Blain

WINNER
Victorian Premier's Literary Award

SHORTLISTED
Stella Prize

As the rain beats down one sodden Sydney day, four people will slowly come to terms with their pasts – and their futures. Ester is finally moving forward from her divorce from estranged husband, Lawrence. Her sister, April, wonders how she can heal the deep rift between her and Ester, while their mother Hilary considers the momentous decision she is making. Subtle, poignant and immersive.

F 2016 320pp B2242

Enjoyed *Madame Bovary*?

Try *The Age of Innocence* by Edith Wharton [B1313]

Big Brother
Lionel Shriver

Pandora, a chef and entrepreneur, must deal with both her morbidly obese brother and her exercise and nutrition fanatic husband when circumstances bring the three of them under the same roof. In her distinctive style, the author of *We Need to Talk About Kevin* tackles family dynamics, addiction and our image conscious society, asking the question: is blood really thicker than water?

F 2013 373pp B2191

Billie's Kiss
Elizabeth Knox

A novel for almost anyone, carrying the reader easily across an extraordinary range of concerns: a murder mystery, a traditional community faced with Edwardian modernisation, a sexy love story, pride and prejudice, family and community loyalties and divisions. A New Zealand view of reality, set in a small island off Scotland.

F 2002 280pp B1669

Breakfast at Tiffany's
Truman Capote

When Fred's new neighbour Holly crawls through his window, he is captivated by the glamorous 19 year old. The wildly successful Audrey Hepburn movie sanitised the novella's complex narrative about sexual ambiguity and the struggle between the need for stability and the longing for freedom. Contains three short stories.

F S 1958 168pp B2018

The Bride Stripped Bare
Anonymous

A novel about the psychological and physical aspects of a young woman's extramarital affair. This candid, fictional memoir raises questions of trust, betrayal, secrecy, cultural expectation and obsessiveness. It contains sexually explicit material and may not be suitable for everyone.

F 2003 376pp B1814

C

Captain Corelli's Mandolin
Louis de Bernières

WINNER
Commonwealth Writers' Prize

During WWII, Italian troops occupy the Greek island of Cephallonia. Billeted with the local doctor and his daughter, Captain Corelli, musician and comedian, tries to stay aloof. But it is no use: the two young people fall in love.

F 1994 436pp B1472

A Change in the Lighting
Amy Witting

From its brilliant opening scene, Witting's novel takes us into the feelings and decisions of a woman whose life changes when her husband leaves her suddenly for a younger woman. An insightful study of a woman in her fifties and her adult children. A must for appreciators of Amy Witting.

F 1994 291pp B1401

Childish Things
Robin Jenkins

After the death of his much loved wife, 72-year-old Gregor McLeod becomes the focus of several women in his Scottish village and again in California, where he escapes for a break. Greed, selfishness and goings on are the stuff of this ironic, light hearted, well paced comic novel.

F 2001 248pp B1778

NEW

City of Friends
Joanna Trollope

When high-powered career woman Stacey is made redundant from her job, her life is thrown into crisis and cracks begin to form in her tightly knit friendship group. As tension increases, secrets come out and their friendships are pushed to the limit. A light and relatable read, the novel showcases various forms of working women and the juggle between their personal and professional lives.

F 2017 336pp B2259

Cold Mountain
Charles Frazier

SHORTLISTED
National Book Award

A man, wounded in the Civil War, deserts from the army and travels home, while a 'lady' learns to be a woman on the frontier. As they journey towards their destinies, Frazier evokes the times and the southern Appalachians setting with great immediacy in this beautiful story of love and war.

F L 1997 357pp B1557

Crossing to Safety
Wallace Stegner

When Larry and his wife settle in to their new home in Wisconsin in the late 1930s, they begin a friendship with the Langs that will echo through their lives. Exploring the mysteries of friendship, Stegner traces the bond that develops between the families in this eloquent, powerful narrative from this Pulitzer Prize-winning author.

F 1987 288pp B1522

D

The Deep Field
James Bradley

Anna flees the political situation in Hong Kong for Sydney, where she is drawn to Seth, a blind paleontologist, and they begin an affair; she also begins a search for her missing brother. Bradley's future evokes a subtle air of menace and decay, but finally this is a sensual love story about love, touch, time and loss.

F 1999 412pp B1743

Dirt Music
Tim Winton

WINNER
Miles Franklin Literary Award

Winton's West Australian coastland is physically and psychologically perilous for the people who live by it, but its beauty still compels. Each member of the trio at the story's centre is differently damaged and dangerous. Winton's narrative tension is extraordinary: he draws us into their struggles to break with the past and regain hope and love.

F 2001 465pp B1664

E

Eligible
Curtis Sittenfeld

Seeking out the 'classic romance' in modern life, this *Bridget Jones* style adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* is fresh, fun and wholly enjoyable. After their father's heart surgery, Liz and Jane Bennet return home to Cincinnati, where their younger sisters run wild and their mother despairs that they will ever marry. Things change when ER doctor and reality television 'star' Chip Bingley arrives – but his friend, neurosurgeon Fitzwilliam Darcy, is unimpressed by the Bennets.

F 2016 528pp B2244

Emma
Jane Austen

A classic comedy about the development of a young woman, and the disconnect between an individual's inner life – her deepest fears and hopes – and the external world of customs and manners. Emma's spirit and vivacity make her one of Austen's most beloved characters. Inimitable prose.

F 1816 432pp B0001

The English Patient
Michael Ondaatje

WINNER
Man Booker Prize

In the destruction and confusion surrounding the end of the Second World War, a small group of people find themselves together in Italy. Recreating both a devastated Italy and a desert world far away, Ondaatje fuses popular novel, war story, spy story and the erotic in a complex work of wisdom and beauty.

F 1992 307pp B1370

An Equal Music
Vikram Seth

The narrator's passionate love of chamber music is infused by his passion for Julia, who disappeared from his life when he left her in Vienna. Early in the novel, he sees her through the window of a London bus. What next? A CD in each box provides sound recordings of the music referred to in the novel.

F 1999 485pp B1735

Eucalyptus
Murray Bail

A man plants out his property with an example of every known eucalypt and announces that his daughter will be a marriage prize to the first man who correctly identifies every tree. Is Ellen to have no say in her own destiny? This is a strangely exhilarating love story, blending European folktale with a piquant Australian rendering of landscape and longing.

F 1998 255pp B1594

This book elicited the full range of responses from active dislike to thorough enjoyment! However, all agreed that the language in many of the descriptive passages was beautiful and the imagery was a real feature of the novel.
Barwite Bookworms

Eyrie
Tim Winton

SHORTLISTED
Miles Franklin Literary Award

Unlikable and self-pitying drunk Tom begins to feel compassion and desire when he encounters his neighbour, Gemma. Their meeting brings back memories of the past, forcing Tom to face a physical threat in his present which is far more dangerous than the demons in his head.

F 2013 424pp B2210

Eyrie was very popular with our group and created deep discussions. His punchy prose style was enjoyed and his characterisation was done so well, not just of people but of WA, politics and social and environmental issues. Winton normally writes in a rural or beach setting, so an urban setting is different. The clipped sentences left the readers to fill in the gaps. Many wanted to read more Winton after this book.
Barwite Bookworms

F

The Feel of Steel
Helen Garner

This nonfiction collection ranges from moods of loss and desolation to hilarity and awe. A brief diary of heartbreak following a marriage break up, a journey to Antarctica, fencing lessons, reading the Bible: these short pieces add up to a book with the texture of memoir.

N 2001 223pp B1659

The Finkler Question
Howard Jacobson

WINNER
Man Booker Prize

The Finkler Question tells the story of Julian Treslove and his friends Sam Finkler and Libor Sevcik. Sam and Libor are lonely widowers, while Julian wishes one of his lovers would expire romantically in his arms, and wonders what it would be like to be Jewish. This novel touches on anti Semitism and Zionism, as well as obsession, in a complex and insightful way.

F 2010 307pp B2105

Firehead
Venero Armanno

The decades from 1975 to 1995 and Brisbane are the setting in this 'very Sicilian love story'. 'An eerie story of generations and love, of police corruption and a city's changing terrain, and of searching for that one place in the world you can finally say is home.' Armanno is an Australian writer with a unique voice: his novel is full of the urgency of desire in sensuous prose.

F 1999 401pp B1754

Flights of Love
Bernhard Schlink

In these seven sophisticated short stories Schlink takes up the theme of love, different kinds of sadness, devotion and desire, misunderstandings, betrayal, midlife crises and the search for renewal.

S 2000 309pp B1665

Five Bells
Gail Jones

SHORTLISTED
Victorian Premier's Literary Award

James and Ellie are haunted by the intimacy they shared; Catherine fled the UK, grieving her older brother; Pei Xing lost her parents during the Cultural Revolution and survived years in a re-education camp. Through their eyes we marvel at the Sydney Harbour's spectacular clash of natural beauty and iconic architecture, but as forewarned by Slessor's poem 'Five Bells', its water harbours death.

F 2011 216pp B2112

The Four Letters of Love
Niall Williams

In Dublin, the life of 12-year-old Nicholas is upended when William, his father, drops his job in the civil service because God wants him to be a painter. Over on an island in the west, 11-year-old Isabel thinks it is her fault when her beloved musical brother Sean is disabled after a fit. Can the plots of God and love override day-to-day trials?

F 1997 342pp B1711

The Full Catastrophe
Edna Mazya

Aware that his beautiful young wife is having an affair, Ilan is compelled to track down her lover. Ilan's actions become increasingly bizarre and irrational, and his state of mind, super sensitivity in reading moods and appalling mother are brilliantly depicted in a suspenseful, funny psychological thriller.

F 2005 334pp B1881

G

The Grass Harp
Truman Capote

SHORTLISTED
National Book Award

Truman Capote was from the Deep South, and this novel is steeped in its symbolism and cultural associations. Three oddly endearing characters defy small town society; its other levels of meaning will keep you talking for hours.

F 1952 192pp B0155

The Great Fire
Shirley Hazzard

WINNER
Miles Franklin Literary Award

Set largely in Japan in the aftermath of Hiroshima, the love story at its centre unfolds delicately and across continents. Peter Craven called this 'a riveting, slow intoxication of a novel which has a deliberateness and a density of verbal beauty of which most literary fiction has lost even the memory'.

F 2003 278pp B1831

The Ground Beneath Her Feet
Salman Rushdie

Rushdie's verbal pyrotechnics conjure up a musical love story between many worlds: India before and after Independence, America, the underworld, and above all the global worlds of rock'n'roll and late 20th century showbiz. A heady and heart stirring song of love, loss, pain and liberation.

F 1999 575pp B1746

H

Happenstance
Carol Shields

The parallel lives in contemporary marriages are linked in two companion novels within the one cover. Husband and wife in a 20-year marriage each tell their story of a week apart, she at a convention where she is recognised as a gifted quiltmaker, he on home duties while keeping his academic job going. Observant and compassionate.

F 1982 390pp B1446

Enjoyed *The Jane Austen Book Club?*

Try *Jane Austen: A Life* by Claire Tomalin [B1583]

Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage

Alice Munro

WINNER
Man Booker International Prize

Nine short stories from a master of the short story form. Munro writes about 'the lives of girls and women' in her own midwestern rural Canada. 'Whole lives come into focus suddenly through single events or sudden memories which bring the past bubbling to the surface ... here are people who reinvent themselves, seize life by the throat.'

S 2001 323pp B1676

Heat and Dust

Ruth Prawer Jhabvala

A young Englishwoman sets out to discover the full story of the scandal of her great aunt in the India of the last days of the Raj. In doing so, she sets that India against the 1970s republic, and evokes a country of heat, dust and passion.

F L 1975 181pp B1168

Heat Wave

Penelope Lively

In her country house in England, the love and jealousy of Pauline's early marriage resonates in her daughter's experience. While an unusually hot season takes its course, the family story moves to its startling climax in Lively's lucid, witty prose.

F 1996 215pp B1534

Honour and Other People's Children

Helen Garner

The first story, *Honour*, deals with the emotional subtleties of the interactions among a man, his wife, his prospective second wife and the astute child, whose affections and loyalties hang in uneasy balance. The second story, *Other People's Children*, explores the end of a close relationship between two women, and the break up of their collective household.

F 1980 156pp B0572

Hotel du Lac

Anita Brookner

WINNER
Man Booker Prize

Sophisticated and with a perceptive eye for the world of appearances and for human foibles and needs, this novel unveils the self containment, loneliness, encounters and longings of a writer of romantic fiction in sanctuary in Europe after an indiscretion.

F 1985 184pp B1325

How to Be Good

Nick Hornby

Tired of her irascible husband David, Katie Carr embarks on an affair. Meanwhile David falls under the spell of a faith healer and disrupts everyone's lives with his devotion to the general good. A dissection of modern morals, family life and a heartfelt diagnosis of divorce.

F 2001 244pp B1643

I

I Capture the Castle

Dodie Smith

When a new American 'squire' moves into the great house in her village, Cassandra and her wildly eccentric family become embroiled in plots and plans that test tempers and hearts. Cassandra observes the goings on in her journal – a modern Jane Austen, if not quite as sharp. Recently republished and a favourite with readers for many years.

F 1949 352pp B1802

The Idea of Perfection

Kate Grenville

WINNER
Orange Prize

Two Sydney people turn up on work projects in a struggling little town in outback New South Wales. The engineer has been sent to replace the old 'bent' timber bridge with a concrete one, but some of the locals have their own thoughts on this. A novel with Grenville's incisiveness and comic flair.

F 1999 401pp B1733

The Insatiable Desire of Injured Love

Sally Morrison

Renata steps off a mountain into thin air and somehow survives. Imprisoned in plaster on her hospital bed, she contends with the emotional fallout from a recent affair and with family members mostly intent on reforming her. This novel springs from a real event in 1973 when Sally Morrison fell from a mountain in Victoria's Cathedral Ranges.

F 2002 235pp B1786

Instances of the Number 3

Salley Vickers

'After Peter Hansome died, people were surprised that his widow seemed to be spending so much time with his mistress.' This novel explores the power of triangles: a man, his wife and his mistress, the three people he leaves behind – and more universal instances of the number three.

F 2001 307pp B1686

Iris

John Bayley

Oxford critic John Bayley first caught sight of Iris Murdoch (philosopher and writer) in 1954 and fell instantly in love. During the last four years of their long marriage, Murdoch's formidable intellect and imagination were consumed by the 'insidious fog' of Alzheimer's disease. Bayley writes in a moving, dignified way of the woman who was his wife, and their life together, in earlier days and at the time of writing.

N 1998 294pp B1736

The Ivory Swing

Janette Turner Hospital

A Canadian couple and their two children move to a region of southern India, where Indian expectations, especially about caste and women's roles, confound the visiting family. Hospital's first novel draws on her time in India, and presents a disturbing meditation on the clash of cultures and the rebellion and feminine rage in each.

F 1982 252pp B1449

J

The Jane Austen Book Club

Karen Joy Fowler

Five women and a man form a book group to discuss their favourite Jane Austen novels. Each chapter focuses on a different Austen book, interpreted through the life experience of the member hosting the month's meeting. This is an entertaining character driven comedy of manners. No prior knowledge of Austen's work is required but her fans will be especially thrilled to observe the lives of the members unfold under the guiding eye of a much adored 19th century novelist.

F 2004 279pp B1884

Journey from Venice

Ruth Cracknell

In 1998, after 41 years of marriage, the incomparable Ruth Cracknell planned a well earned holiday in Venice with her beloved husband. An unexpected stroke landed him in intensive care. This is a memoir of their love as they face the outcome, and further evidence of the indomitable spirit of this wonderful Australian woman.

N 2000 271pp B1764

L

Lady Susan, The Watsons and Sanditon

Jane Austen

Lady Susan is an epistolary novel that was completed but not published during Austen's lifetime. The Watsons is an unfinished fragment with a spirited heroine who finds her marriage prospects restricted by poverty and pride. The incomplete novel Sanditon, written in the last few months of Austen's life, is set in a seaside resort and contemplates a changing society. This volume includes an introduction by Margaret Drabble who examines these three pieces within the context of Austen's work and life.

F 2003 224pp B1046

Last Orders
Graham Swift

The novel concentrates on a group of men whose friendships and lives revolve around work, family, racetrack and pub. The narrative is initially complex, because nine different voices carry it. But this gives a wonderful mix of the lyric and the realistic as four men carry out Jack's strange last request – that his ashes be scattered into the sea.

F 1996 295pp B1538

Love, Again
Doris Lessing

What happens when someone falls in love? Is it different for the young and the old? Is it a madness, a blessing, a rationalisation of lust? Lessing's leisurely, discursive novel interweaves the 19th century with the 20th to connect us with the pains, delights and puzzles of love, particularly that of an older woman for a younger man.

F L 1995 352pp B1506

Love in the Time of Cholera
Gabriel García Márquez

The consummation of Florentino Ariza's passionate love for Fermina Daza is delayed for fifty years by her highly satisfactory marriage to Dr Juvenal Urbino. Magical yet realistic – this astonishing work is crowded with life and love stories of the Caribbean country where it is set. Smallish print.

F 1985 348pp B1247

Love like Water
Meme McDonald

After the death of her fiancé in Queensland, Cathy spends time in Alice Springs with her childhood friend, Margie, hoping to work out what to do with her life. Cathy's affair with Aboriginal Jay reveals the underside of Alice Springs and the latent racism that simmers beneath the surface of Australian society. A light and enjoyable read that boldly confronts difficult issues of place, race and identity.

F 2007 349pp B1951

M

Madame Bovary
Gustave Flaubert

One of the great classics of world literature, this novel is about a young woman stultified by marriage and motherhood in a confined society. Its portrait of Madame Bovary and the bourgeois life of country town France in the 19th century is vivid and compelling reading.

F 1856 361pp B0107

Major Pettigrew's Last Stand
Helen Simonson

Major Ernest Pettigrew, a widower, is grieving for his brother, when he answers the door to Mrs Ali, a widow. They find they share a love of literature, and their friendship soon becomes the subject of slanderous town gossip. Set in a rural English village, *Major Pettigrew's Last Stand* is told with insight, wit, and dignity and is an unconventional, romantic comedy of manners that offers much to discuss.

F 2010 388pp B2077

Mansfield Park
Jane Austen

This heroine lacks the obvious temperamental, physical and material advantages of Elizabeth Bennet or Emma Woodhouse. As Fanny Price struggles to make her way among luckier, more extroverted and less scrupulous people, Austen's writing combines metaphoric subtlety and comic delight.

F 1814 462pp B0576

Mateship with Birds
Carrie Tiffany

WINNER
Stella Prize

This is a pitch perfect depiction of the freedoms and strictures of country town life in the 1950s Australian countryside. Lonely neighbours Harry and Betty lust after each other, and complicating matters, Harry is also a father figure to Betty's son; but it all goes wrong when he tries to teach him about love and lust. Contains sexual references.

F 2012 211pp B2159

The Mint Lawn
Gillian Mears

A 25-year-old woman's struggles with an unsatisfying marriage, childhood and her mother's death are conveyed in sensual, obsessively physical prose. A strong sense of a small New South Wales river town. Unpleasant material that may offend.

F 1991 298pp B1332

The Mistake
Wendy James

A decision to adopt out a baby illegally comes back to haunt Jodie Garrow twenty five years later. The ensuing investigation puts pressure on the life and family she has since built as Jodie becomes entangled in a media witch hunt. Wendy James explores family dynamics, motherhood, and the powerful role of the media today.

F 2012 278pp B2148

Moral Hazard
Kate Jennings

SHORTLISTED
Miles Franklin Literary Award

Cath's much loved, older husband begins to succumb to Alzheimer's. To earn the money needed for his care, Cath finds work on Wall Street as an executive speechwriter and commutes between two dementias – one of men, power and greed, the other of the crumbling away of the love of her life. A mordant, harrowing, unsentimental novel.

F 2002 175pp B1672

The Mothers' Group
Fiona Higgins

Following six very different women in a mothers' group through the first years of their babies' lives, this novel explores motherhood and themes such as marriage, new parenting, and dealing with loss. One day, a shocking event changes everything, testing the women's bonds and revealing secrets that threaten to shatter their lives.

F 2012 312pp B2149

N

Northanger Abbey
Jane Austen

A high spirited, enjoyable satire on romance mysteries and gothic tales of horror; one of Austen's earliest and most literary works that includes a spirited defence of novels.

F 1818 252pp B1199

O

Of Love and Shadows
Isabel Allende

Journalist Irene has enjoyed a privileged upbringing and is engaged to an army captain when she is partnered with photographer Francisco. They soon become an inseparable investigative team, and when they discover an unspeakable crime perpetrated under the chilling political regime of their country, they must risk everything to reveal the truth – and to admit the truth about their passion for each other. A magical, captivating read.

F 1987 298pp B1349

Olive Kitteridge
Elizabeth Strout

WINNER
Pulitzer Prize

This series of stories is connected by the character of teacher Olive Kitteridge in a small coastal town in Maine, and combines "the sustained, messy investigation of the novel with the flashing insight of the short story... It illuminates both what people understand about others and what they understand about themselves"– *The New York Times*. Small print.

F S 2008 270pp B2060

We all really enjoyed this group of related short stories. The author's ability to convey a wealth of meaning in a short sentence was very impressive. The way each story connected and gradually evolved into further insights of the characters and their relationships impressed us all. The complex relationships made for a lot of discussions.

Idindiji

On Chesil Beach
Ian McEwan

It's 1962. Newlyweds Edward and Florence arrive at a hotel on the Dorset coast. They believe their marriage will bring them happiness but each faces their wedding night with unspoken fears. A brilliant portrait of how a word not spoken can shape an entire life. Contains sexual content.

F 2007 166pp B1954

P

Paula
Isabel Allende

'In ... 1991 my daughter, Paula, fell gravely ill. These pages were written during the interminable hours spent ... beside her bed.' The novelist mother embarks on the most magical, real and passionate of all her stories, containing the family legends, Chile's dramatic history, and the poignant progress of Paula's illness. Perhaps more Isabel's than Paula's saga.

N 1994 330pp B1493

Perfect Skin
Nick Earls

A single father juggles his day job as a consulting dermatologist with the needs of his 6-month-old daughter Lily. Brisbane writer Nick Earls brings us a very now novel with a lot about bad 80's fashion and music, email etiquette, and dating thirty somethings. Full of insight, perceptive social comment and Earls' comedic instinct.

F 2000 354pp B1688

Persuasion
Jane Austen

How far should one yield to persuasion from older, wiser, loving people? When is advice an interference? In Jane Austen's last completed work her characteristic incisiveness gains an autumnal tone.

F 1818 264pp B0596

The Philosopher's Doll
Amanda Lohrey

What happens when one partner wants a child and the other doesn't? In a culture of affluence, what do we need to be happy, and how much control do we have over our lives? This is an accomplished novel exploring contemporary life and how to 'have it all'.

F 2004 306pp B1822

Plain Jane
Joan Barfoot

A plain 28-year-old woman, living alone, working in a library, impulsively answers an advertisement to become the penpal of a prisoner - and changes her life. Easy to read, wry and surprisingly tense.

F 1992 243pp B1421

The Poet's Wife
Mandy Sayer

Sayer chronicles her turbulent marriage to poet Yusef Komunyakaa in this unflinching and intelligent memoir. She was 22 and he nearly 40 when they met; she a busker, and he an out of work professor – yet each found a kindred spirit in the other. *The Poet's Wife* examines their troubled relationship, and follows Sayer's development as a writer.

F 2014 417pp B2207

Portrait of a Marriage
Nigel Nicolson

Harold Nicolson and Vita Sackville West were married for 49 years. During this time each had affairs with others of the same sex, notably Vita and Virgina Woolf, yet they remained inseparably united. Written by their son, much of the book is based on work obviously intended to be his mother's autobiography.

N 1973 237pp B1073

Enjoyed *The Rosie Project?*

Try *Addition* by Toni Jordan [B2036]

NEW

Poum and Alexandre: A Paris Memoir
Catherine de Saint Phalle

SHORTLISTED
Stella Prize

Set in post-war Paris during the decline of the bourgeois class, this beautifully written memoir follows Catherine as she recounts her unconventional childhood through the life of her mother, Poum, and her father, Alexandre, two flawed eccentrics with a love of mythology and the old ways. A tender memoir about acceptance, loneliness and freedom through the observant eyes of a child.

N 2016 256pp B2254

Pride and Prejudice
Jane Austen

Amusing and astringent. This brilliant novel has become Austen's best loved work. The delightfully spirited Elizabeth Bennet must contend with the antics of her inappropriate younger sisters, her hapless parents, and the suitors that begin approaching herself and her older sister, Jane. She must also learn to overcome her own faults as she deals with those of her romantic interests.

F 1813 327pp B0210

Private Life
Jane Smiley

Margaret Mayfield is twenty seven when she marries Captain Andrew Jackson Jefferson Early. Despite her lonely marriage she stands by him through grief and tragedy, but is forced to examine their lives together as things take a darker turn when WWII approaches.

F 2010 318pp B2099

Prodigal Summer
Barbara Kingsolver

Over one humid summer in southern Appalchia, as the urge to procreate overtakes the countryside, three characters discover their connections to one another and to the flora and fauna with which they share a place. A lavish and sexually exuberant read.

F 2000 447pp B1690

R

The Reader
Bernhard Schlink

A 15-year-old German student becomes involved with a 36-year-old-woman. Long after she has disappeared from his life, Michael has cause to reassess the Hanna he knew. This haunting tale raises profound questions about action, choice, judgement and Germany's recent past. Good clear print.

F 1995 216pp B1562

The Rosie Effect
Graeme Simsion

Don is 'not fond of surprises, especially if they disrupt plans already in place', so he is dazed by Rosie's revelation of his impending fatherhood. Simsion's humour shines throughout this sequel to *The Rosie Project* as Don's fears see him return to old ways, risking his newfound happiness as he comes to terms with the unpredictability of life.

F 2014 368pp B2217

The Rosie Project
Graeme Simsion

Don Tillman, professor of genetics, leads a very ordered life. He has launched 'The Wife Project' in a bid to find a suitable mate, but things go awry when impulsive barmaid Rosie Jarman enters his life and he finds himself agreeing to help find her father. This feel good comic novel celebrates difference, tolerance and the transformative power of the unexpected.

F 2013 324pp B2182

S

Sense and Sensibility
Jane Austen

Austen portrays sisters Elinor and Marianne, each with contrasting temperaments and inclinations. In their story, she explores distinctions between wisdom and feeling, reserve and secrecy, spontaneity and steadiness.

F 1811 368pp B1085

The Sense of an Ending

Julian Barnes

WINNER
Man Booker Prize

Tony Webster has lived an ordinary, relatively unexamined life. Then, in retirement, an unexpected bequest forces him to revisit memories of his school friends and university days that he had thought immutable. This is a small novel that skilfully tackles big themes such as memory, ageing, love, truth, and regret.

F 2011 150pp B2138

Shadow Lines

Stephen Kinnane

Englishman Edward Smith emigrated to Australia and met Jessie Argyle, who was born in the remote East Kimberley and taken from her Aboriginal family at the age of five. In a deeply racially divided society, Jessie and Edward fell in love and married. Despite official surveillance and harassment, their Perth home became a centre for Aboriginal cultural and social life.

N 2003 414pp B1842

Shallows

Tim Winton

A small coastal town in Western Australia clings to one of its few surviving industries, whaling. The township witnesses struggle between whalers and conservationists; the community divides; a marriage founders.

F 1984 235pp B1213

A Stranger Here

Gillian Bouras

Bouras uses three different voices, each commenting on a recent crisis which concerns them all: Irene, Australian mother of three sons and wife of a Greek husband, has suddenly departed from her marriage and the village in Greece. As in her non fiction, here Bouras confronts the painful realities of marriage, motherhood, being drawn to two cultures and belonging fully to neither. Print well spaced.

F 1996 247pp B1507

The Submerged Cathedral

Charlotte Wood

SHORTLISTED
Miles Franklin Literary Award

Taking her title from composer Claude Debussy's *La Cathédrale Engloutie*, Wood has created a haunting but beautiful story about the consuming love between Jocelyn, an editor and Martin, a doctor. When their relationship is disrupted by a family tragedy, grief forces them to separate and embark on personal journeys of discovery. Wood's prose is rich in imagery and metaphor.

F 2004 302pp B1846

The Sugar Mother

Elizabeth Jolley

Edwin Page, gentle, prim, is on his own while his wife is overseas for a year. But Leila and her mother, the new tenants next door, somehow move in on him, and Edwin becomes aware of how he longs for the child he never had. Leila, it seems, is quite happy to become a sugar – no, surrogate – mother.

F 1988 210pp B1339

Sweet Old World

Deborah Robertson

David has always dreamed of becoming a father. When troubled teen Esther tumbles into his life, David's initial reluctance to become involved changes as he finds himself close to the happiness for which he longs. This moving novel examines the oft ignored male side of yearning for parenthood, and the importance of hope.

F 2012 224pp B2150

T

Theft: A Love Story

Peter Carey

SHORTLISTED
Miles Franklin Literary Award

Artist Michael "Butcher Bones" Boone, divorced and bankrupt, acts as caretaker for his patron's remote estate and for his 'damaged 220lb brother'. When he meets American beauty Marlene, a chain of unpredictable events unfolds. From rural Australia to New York via Sydney and Tokyo, Theft is a darkly funny, thought provoking story of love, responsibility and redemption.

F 2006 269pp B1981

Thinks . . .

David Lodge

Another delightful comedy of manners about academia, adultery and human consciousness. Ralph is an international academic star in the highly trendy field of language and thought research. Novelist Helen arrives at the university to teach, and to recover from the unexpected death of her husband. Despite their differences they begin a secret affair – with complicated consequences.

F 2001 342pp B1678

Three Dog Night

Peter Goldsworthy

Goldsworthy's intriguing novel explores human extremes in a disturbing narrative of obsessive love, mortality and self deception. His deft and evocative prose carries the intensity of the book's dark journey, a desert trip where the Australian landscape and Aboriginal rituals amplify the ambiguities and complexities of his characters and preoccupations. Challenging and compelling reading.

F 2003 342pp B1850

The Time Traveler's Wife

Audrey Niffenegger

Clare and Henry, met when Clare was 6 and Henry was 36 and were married when Clare was 22 and Henry 30. Henry suffers from a rare condition where his genetic clock periodically resets and he finds himself pulled into his past or future. A moving love story.

F 2004 518pp B2002

Although not everyone liked the style of writing, our group really enjoyed the story. It was unique, original and generated a lot of discussion around relationships, commitment and genetics.
CAE Staff Book Group

Too Much Happiness
Alice Munro

WINNER
Man Booker International Prize

Extraordinary events touch everyday lives within this brilliant collection of short fiction from celebrated Canadian writer and Nobel Prize winner Alice Munro. "Written with veteran assurance, brimming with intensely believable characters and rich social detail, these dispatches from the most unsparing reaches of Munro's imagination confirm her acclaimed place on the highest ground of contemporary fiction" – *Sunday Times*.

F S 2009 303pp B2108

To the Wedding
John Berger

In an extraordinary series of telling vignettes a blind man tells the story of the wedding between young Gino and his bride. A mother and father, estranged for years, travel across Europe for the celebrations. As the book moves from one character's perspective to another, events and characters move towards the convergence of the wedding – a haunting dance of love and death.

F 1995 202pp B1546

The Toucher
Dorothy Hewett

Controversial in its graphic depiction of the sexuality of a woman in her sixties in a relationship with a much younger man. A powerful and plangent delineation of human neediness and creativity, set in a haunting West Australian seascape.

F 1993 300pp B1430

The Transit of Venus
Shirley Hazzard

SHORTLISTED
National Book Award

Explores the power of love, and its passing, through the lives of two young Australian sisters who go to London in the care of a difficult relative. An incisive study of relationships. Demanding, but rewarding.

F 1980 337pp B0162

V

A Visit from the Goon Squad
Jennifer Egan

WINNER
Pulitzer Prize

A Visit from the Goon Squad delves into the pasts of former punk rocker and ageing record producer Bennie and his assistant Sasha – who has troubles of her own. It is witty, insightful, funny, and touching. "Features characters about whom you come to care deeply as you watch them doing things they shouldn't, acting gloriously, infuriatingly human." – *Chicago Tribune* (US).

F 2010 340pp B2129

The Volcano Lover
Susan Sontag

Subtitled 'A Romance', the novel focuses on the famous triangle of Sir William Hamilton, his wife Emma, and her lover Nelson. Their personalities and destinies are lived out near the actual volcano of Vesuvius, and metaphorical volcanoes including the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars. Sensual, intelligent, demanding.

F 1993 419pp B1431

W

Waiting
Ha Jin

Lin Kong is an army doctor during the China's Cultural Revolution. He falls in love with a modern, educated woman, however Lin Kong is trapped in an arranged marriage to a work worn loyal wife in his village, and until she agrees to divorce him, nothing will be possible. Ha Jin's novel of love and enforced obedience provides fascinating insights into the chasm between the new industrial China and the ways of its ancient agricultural settlements.

F 1999 308pp B1897

Water Under the Bridge
Sumner Locke Elliott

A novel of life in Sydney during and after the Depression. Murder, comedy and spoiled dreams are the stuff of this exceptional novel.

F 1977 367pp B1132

We Are All Made of Glue
Marina Lewycka

After a rocky start, Georgie befriends her eccentric old neighbour Mrs Shapiro. When Mrs Shapiro is admitted to hospital, Georgie is named next of kin. Sorting out Mrs Shapiro's semi derelict mansion isn't easy. It is home to seven cats, the handyman is not what he seems, two estate agents are trying to trick Mrs Shapiro into selling her house and the social worker is determined to commit her to a nursing home. Georgie also finds herself unravelling a mystery that takes her to wartime Europe and the Middle East.

F 2009 432pp B2048

What I Loved
Siri Hustvedt

The New York art scene is the context for this powerful novel about two families, two sons and two marriages, brought together by the friendship between the two men, an art critic and an experimental artist. With a change of gear, the story shifts from family and art into an urban thriller, complete with violence, duplicity, murder and erotica. Hustvedt's novel brims with ideas and emotion.

F 2003 370pp B1851

The Winter Vault
Anne Michaels

From the award winning author of Fugitive Pieces comes a poetic love story that juxtaposes historical events with moments in individual lives. In 1964, newly married couple Avery and Jean settle into a houseboat on the Nile, but a tragic event occurs which will influence their lives and relationship.

F 2009 341pp B2053

The Women in Black
Madeleine St John

In 1950s Sydney, several women are working at the famous F. G. Goode's Department Store. Their hopes, fears, dreams and romances unfold against the backdrop of a confined and changing society and as the New Year begins, the characters find themselves at the beginning of a new chapter in their lives.

F 1993 228pp B2041

This book was a hit with our group and members related to the characters. The 50's in Australia was cleverly portrayed, with the apparent lack of sophistication in some instances, and the lack of awareness of Europeans and how they lived. The group enjoyed the writing style, descriptions and the cleverly interwoven family stories throughout the book .
Red Hill Probus

Wrack
James Bradley

SHORTLISTED
Miles Franklin Literary Award

This intelligent and provocative first novel sets up a compelling web of historical detection, academic and amorous rivalry, and passions of love and war. Its focus is the wrecked Portuguese Mahogany Ship whose discovery would rewrite Australia's European history. Print well spaced.

F 1997 341pp B1548

Wuthering Heights
Emily Brontë

The poetic fierceness of Brontë's vision gives this book a rare elemental power. Adopted by Catherine Linton's father, wildling Heathcliff is bullied by Catherine's brother - and when he returns to the grand house of Wuthering Heights as a grown and powerful man, the consequences of his vengeance will be far-reaching. At the heart of the complex drama of three generations of the Earnshaws and the Lintons is the passionate love of Catherine and Heathcliff.

F 1847 376pp B0002

Step Back in Time

Take a journey back to days gone by. Covering thousands of years of human activity, this chapter contains historical fiction, nonfiction and biography.

A

According to Queeney
Beryl Bainbridge

Savour this complex and fascinating fictionalisation of the 20-year relationship between the acclaimed Samuel Johnson and his benefactor, Mrs Thrale, according to her daughter Queeney. A wonderful observer of human folly, Bainbridge tells a candid story of unrequited love, passion, rejection and possession, skilfully exposing the sexual tensions that lie beneath the surface of Georgian London. Loosely plotted through a series of letters, her concise style brings a cast of remarkable characters vividly to life.

F 2001 244pp B1947

All the Light We Cannot See
Anthony Doerr

WINNER
Pulitzer Prize

Werner attends a Nazi boarding school, gratefully escaping the mines of his hometown; Marie Laure, blind from a young age, adores her father who brings the world alive for her. Their eventful childhoods unfold until their paths cross in Nazi occupied France in the walled port city of Saint Malo, where Marie Laure hides from heavy shelling – and from a stranger who has hunted her from afar.

F 2014 544pp B2228

As I Walked Out One Midsummer Morning
Laurie Lee

Another re-creation of times gone by from the author of *Cider with Rosie*, this book deals with Spain before the Civil War, seen through the eyes of a young man destined to become a well known British writer.

F 1969 186pp B0524

At Home
Bill Bryson

An entertaining, witty and illuminative look at how history shapes our everyday lives. From the history of hygiene that is brought to bear in the bathroom, to nutrition and the spice trade that are brought home to the kitchen. His great skill is making daily life simultaneously strange and familiar, helping us to recognise ourselves.

N 2010 544pp B2096

B

Bearbrass
Robyn Annear

The authorial self description sets the delightful and bracing tone: 'Robyn Annear is a typist and lives in country Victoria with somebody else's husband'. History has never been such fun, and Melbourne – 'Bearbrass' – won't be the same after this anecdotal, irreverent, informative book about its past and present.

N 1995 290pp B1471

Bereft
Chris Womersley

SHORTLISTED
Miles Franklin Literary Award

In 1919, Quinn Walker returns home from war, having fled his hometown as a teenager falsely accused of killing his younger sister. On his return, he remains both an outsider and a wanted man. He meets a young orphan girl, Sadie, who seems to know more about the crime and about Quinn than she should, and she encourages him to take justice into his own hands.

F 2010 264pp B2106

Enjoyed *Cider with Rosie?*

Try *As I Walked Out One Midsummer Morning* by Laurie Lee [B0524]

The Birth House
Ami McKay

During WWI, young Dora befriends the elderly Miss Babineau, midwife in their small fishing village in Nova Scotia, Canada. Together, they help the women of Scots Bay through difficult labour, infertility, and even marital troubles. But when Dr Gilbert Thomas moves to town with his promise of modern medicine, everything changes. "An impressive novel, laced with quirky research and rippling with muscular poetry" – *Observer* (UK).

F 2006 385pp B2023

Bomb, Book and Compass: Joseph Needham & the Great Secrets of China
Simon Winchester

From the author of *The Surgeon of Crowthorne* and *The Map That Changed the World*. A distinguished biochemist working at Cambridge University and married to a fellow scientist, in 1937 Needham was asked to supervise a young Chinese student named Lu Gwei Djen. He fell in love with both Lu and China and established himself as the pre-eminent China scholar, documenting everything from Chinese medicine to philosophy and nautical history.

N 2008 336pp B2021

Extremely positive reaction. Most completed the book and thorougly enjoyed the read. A lively and detailed discussion. A success with all. One member felt the need to have her own copy. Simon Winchester draws one into the story and holds one's attention throughout the book. One of the best books that we have read and discussed lately.

Canberra 3

The Book Thief
Markus Zusak

Liesel is sent to live with a foster family near Munich in World War II, and with the help of her accordion playing foster father, learns to read. She is soon stealing books, which she shares with her neighbours and the Jewish refugee hiding in the basement. 'Death' is the unconventional narrator of this international bestseller by an Australian author.

F 2005 550pp B1995

Bring Larks and Heroes
Thomas Keneally

WINNER
Miles Franklin Literary Award

This imaginative reconstruction of a convict settlement in Australia in the 1790s tells of the physical and mental demands made on soldier poet Corporal Halloran: demands by his secret bride, his superiors, his Irish comrades and most of all by his conscience.

F 1967 248pp B0166

Bring Up the Bodies
Hilary Mantel

WINNER
Man Booker Prize

The sequel to Man Booker Prize winner *Wolf Hall*, this novel concentrates on the short, brutal period of Anne Boleyn's downfall. Thomas Cromwell is at the height of his powers, masterfully negotiating court politics to secure Henry VIII a way out of his failed marriage. This is a 'must read' for those who enjoy Mantel's stylish prose and sly wit.

F 2012 410pp B2155

Burial Rites

Hannah Kent

SHORTLISTED
Stella Prize

In Iceland, 1829, Agnes Magnúsdóttir awaits execution. *Burial Rites* chronicles the life that brought Agnes to this point, and explores the effect the doomed woman has on those who spend time with her in her last months. Kent evokes a harsh world within which humans battle for survival, a sense of identity, and for freedom. Based on a true story.

F 2013 335pp B2193

Our highest scoring book! We thought it was extraordinary for a first novel, with excellent research effortlessly incorporated into a compelling story. We were chilled by the vivid descriptions of the climate and the harsh conditions under which people lived in Iceland in those days. We thought both the style and writing do justice to the subject as the full story is gradually revealed, with convincing characters and lyrical descriptions of landscape. We look forward to reading the author's new book!

Hawthorn Cato Bluffers

Bush Studies

Barbara Baynton

These sharply effective stories share time and setting with Lawson's. But Baynton's treatment strips away the romance and the heroics from the bush and its characters. Contains 'Squeaker's Mate', the basis of a controversial film.

S 1902 140pp B1055

C

Caleb's Crossing

Geraldine Brooks

NOMINATED
Queensland Premier's Literary Awards

Another compelling historical novel from the author of *People of the Book*, *Year of Wonders*, and *March*. This is inspired by the life of Caleb Cheeshahteaumuck who was born in 1646 and was the first Native American to graduate from Harvard. He befriends Bethia, who lives within a Puritan settlement.

F 2011 369pp B2109

Célestine

Gillian Tindall

In a French peasant village, Tindall (an English historian) came across a bundle of letters from the 1860s, addressed to a young woman, Célestine Chaumette, and used them to carefully reconstruct the lives of the village and its people. Subtitled '*Voices from a French Village*', this thoughtful social history is detailed and complex as it creates the vivid sense of ordinary daily lives and struggles.

N 1995 292pp B1486

Charles Hotham

Shirley Roberts

As the first governor of the colony of Victoria, Hotham was soon faced with troubles in the goldfields and with the Eureka crisis. Before this, his naval career was distinguished and varied: of particular note was his posting in West Africa where his squadron was engaged in suppressing the trans Atlantic slave trade. A lucid and positive assessment of Hotham's contribution to public life. Pleasant hardcover volume: clarity of the print is excellent.

N 1985 201pp B1241

Choose Your Dilemma

William Nicolle Oats

As a young man, this Australian Quaker, in Europe for the first time from 1938 to 1940, was stuck by its bellicosity during one of the most dramatic moments in modern history. His vivid, regular correspondence with his mother is 'a gripping collection of thinking out loud letters written by a moral man in an unmoral world' (Terry Lane). In them he explores his pacificism in the face of the evil of Nazism. Can the political and spiritual paths be reconciled?

N 1999 150pp B1708

Enjoyed *The Floating Brothel*?

Try *The Many-Coloured Land* by Christopher Koch [B1790]

Come in Spinner

Dymphna Cusack & Florence James

Wartime Sydney, and the influx of American servicemen, described through the eyes of six women working in the beauty parlour of a large hotel: interesting portrayal of urban working class Australian society.

F 1951 445pp B0568

Most of us loved this book! It provided wonderful material for both discussing and reminiscing. The setting is a beauty parlour in an up-market Sydney Hotel towards the end of World War 2. This provides a wonderful way for the reader to be exposed to the social and political mores of the time. For most in the group, it was a great read, but for the others a novel of social interest!

Wood Glen: 2nd Tuesday

Cranford

Elizabeth Gaskell

First published in instalments in a magazine edited by Dickens, this is an affectionate portrait of people and small- town customs and values in mid-Victorian England. In a series of satirical sketches, Gaskell describes with humour and tenderness the lives of good natured spinster Miss Matty, her maid Martha, and narrator Mary Smith.

F 1853 312pp B0010

D

Dancing with Strangers

Inga Clendinnen

'These people mixed with ours,' wrote James Bradley, 'and all hands danced together.' What went wrong between the British settlers of New South Wales and the Australian inhabitants they encountered? Arthur Phillip and the local leader Bennelong pursued a difficult path to conciliation; we follow the painful end of that relationship as cultural differences asserted themselves.

N 2003 324pp B1826

E

Electricity

Victoria Glendinning

This high voltage, informative novel set in Victorian England is a portrayal of Charlotte Mortimer and her surprising life, illuminating the family, sexual and social mores of a culture undergoing great changes.

F 1995 250pp B1527

Empire Falls

Richard Russo

WINNER
Pulitzer Prize

A dying mill town in central Maine is the setting for Russo's portrait of ordinary people swept up in economic and political forces as seen through Mlles, a cook at the Empire Grill. The characters' behaviour and preoccupations are utterly compelling without high drama or exaggeration. It gently reminds us that life itself, though often painful, must be cherished.

F 2001 483pp B1684

F

Fire Under the Snow

Palden Gyatso

Tibet, the last spiritual society, met an avowedly materialist China, and lost. Gyatso, then 17, and a monk, tells the strangest story, and the history of contemporary Tibet. Is reality only materiality? Striving here, innocence, naïveté, brutality, brainwashing, imprisonment, hope, David and Goliath. Goliath wins, but the Wheel turns. A rarity.

N 1997 232pp B1570

The Floating Brothel

Siân Rees

The *Lady Julian* sailed in 1789 for Botany Bay with a cargo of female convicts. Rees writes vividly of the social pressures which led to female crime, of squalid prison conditions, the routines on an 18th century sailing ship and a pragmatic approach whereby both men at sea and in the young colony might be provided with women. Both aboard and in Australia, many women convicts found a life preferable to the one they had left behind.

N 2001 248pp B1641

The Forgotten Garden
Kate Morton

This is an international bestseller of family secrets, gothic mysteries and fairy tales. When Cassandra travels from Brisbane to the windswept Cornwall coast and a cottage she inherited from her grandmother, she discovers a garden which holds the secret to her grandmother's birth and journey to Australia as a 4-year-old stowaway.

F 2008 549pp B2116

G

Galileo's Daughter
Dava Sobel

Galileo was the foremost scientist of his day, fighting Church opposition for acceptance of his heresy that the sun, not the earth, was the centre of the Solar System. His much loved daughter Maria Celeste, consigned to a convent at an early age, wrote to her father throughout her life, and Sobel has woven a clever narrative around these. A fascinating account of everyday life in 17th century Italy.

N 1999 429pp B1758

Generations
Hugh Mackay

One of Australia's best known social researchers analyses Australian society by generation. He looks at baby boomers, their parents and their children. Comparing their various attitudes helps us understand the diverse and changing circumstances facing all Australians as a new millennium dawns. Will you agree with his findings?

N 1997 194pp B1572

The Glass Room
Simon Mawer

Viktor and Liesel Landauer build their modern home in the countryside of the Czech Republic in 1928. But when the Nazis rise to power, the Landauers have to flee. The house witnesses the Nazis and the Soviet invasion, but when Communism falls and the Czech Republic becomes an independent country again, the Landauers can return home.

F 2009 404pp B2125

NEW

The Good People
Hannah Kent

SHORTLISTED
ABIA Literary Fiction Book of the Year

SHORTLISTED
Walter Scott Prize for Historical Fiction

When Nora Leahy loses her husband and her daughter, she is left as the sole carer for Michael, her 4-year-old grandson who cannot walk or speak and demands her attention at all times. Desperate to end the superstitious gossip of the townsfolk surrounding Michael's deformities, Nora seeks out Nance Roche, a recluse who claims to have the otherworldly knowledge to banish the evil from her grandson. Set in 1900s poverty-stricken Ireland, *The Good People* is a chilling story about the extremes of superstition and faith.

F 2016 380pp B2258

Go Set a Watchman
Harper Lee

This newly rediscovered manuscript was intended as Lee's first novel before her editor suggested focusing on young Scout's perspective in what became the Pulitzer winning *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Lee's original text is being published with no revisions, and sees an adult Scout returning to Maycomb twenty years after the events of Mockingbird. Whatever you think of the controversy surrounding the book's release, it will certainly stimulate discussion.

F 2015 320pp B2218

Enjoyed *Book, Bomb and Compass?*

Try *Guns, Germs and Steel* by Jared Diamond [B1713]

Gould's Book of Fish
Richard Flanagan

SHORTLISTED
Miles Franklin Literary Award

This novel plucks a real life thief and prisoner, English forger William Gould, from the pages of history to act as protagonist narrator. Sentenced to a prison colony off the Tasmanian coast, Gould recounts his life story as he paints the island's native fish, recalling his grim childhood and ill fated life of crime. Flanagan's darkly humorous tale of the 19th century world of convicts and colonists slips between the real and the fantastic.

F 2001 404pp B1675

The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society
Mary Ann Shaffer

In January 1946, Juliet receives a letter which leads to an ongoing correspondence with the members of a Guernsey group formed during the German occupation of the Channel Islands. When Juliet goes to meet her new friends, her life changes in unexpected ways. This warm and witty epistolary novel is a celebration of books and an exploration of friendship, love, and sacrifice.

F 2008 273pp B2032

Guns, Germs and Steel
Jared Diamond

WINNER
Pulitzer Prize for Nonfiction

Ambitiously subtitled '*A short history of everybody for the last 13,000 years*', this is a thought provoking book on human history, tackling the difficult question of why human beings developed so differently on different continents. The writer of this Pulitzer Prize winning work on the origins of human inequality is an American scientist and explorer, whose writings aim to make science accessible. Small print.

N 1997 480pp B1713

H

The Help
Kathryn Stockett

In the American South in the early 1960s, aspiring writer Skeeter has graduated from university and returns home to pressure from her mother to get married. Aibileen is a black maid raising her seventeenth white child, with the knowledge that this child, too, will come to a certain age, and start to see her differently. Minny, Aibileen's best friend, keeps getting fired because she won't mind her tongue. The three women band together on a project that puts all of them at risk.

F 2009 451pp B2074

A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters
Julian Barnes

Jokey, sorrowful, resilient, this unusual book is not so much a bird's as a worm's eye view of history – seeing it from the bottom up, hollowing out certainties, tackling the big human questions by story telling and commentary.

F 1989 309pp B1324

Human Croquet
Kate Atkinson

Isobel Fairfax, the appealing young narrator of this story, is both character in her own right and representative of all storytellers. She has the ability to move in and out of 'normal' time, so that the novel consists of varied story strands with different and equally plausible endings. Part ghost story, part murder mystery, this novel is also a stimulating presentation of English history and the people who walked through it.

F 1998 383pp B1925

I

The Invention of Wings
Sue Monk Kidd

The new novel by the author of *The Secret Life of Bees* is inspired by the lives of abolitionist sisters Sarah and Angelina Grimké, born into a wealthy Charleston plantation in the mid 19th century. This is the story of their slave, 'Handful', and the complex relationships with those around them, marked by guilt, defiance, and the uneasy ways of love.

F 2014 373pp B2205

The Invisible History of the Human Race
Christine Kenneally

SHORTLISTED
Stella Prize

What is the complex notion of 'identity'? How can DNA shape cultures and whole nations? Award winning journalist Christine Kenneally asks these questions and more, encompassing genealogy, science, cultural inheritance and the concept of race. This engrossing book asks what we inherit from the past, and guarantees hours of discussion with its answer.

N 2014 368pp B2219

J

Jack Maggs
Peter Carey

WINNER
Miles Franklin Literary Award

Set in a vivid 19th century London, Carey's acclaimed novel in some ways reworks both *Great Expectations*, with Magwitch as Maggs, and the facts of Dickens' own life in the figure of Tobias Oates. Other characters, like Mercy and Percy, are pure Carey. Strongly and pacily plot driven, it puts a more Antipodean slant on the society from which Australia sprang.

F 1997 392pp B1575

L

The Lamp Still Burns
Isabel 'Spark' Gill

Brought up in the Victorian town of Clunes, Isabel Gill longed to be a nurse, and her autobiography records her training and experience in hospitals from 1936 to 1981. With many photographs, it provides a social history of changes in nursing, public health and medical practice.

N 1989 187pp B1551

The Law of Dreams
Peter Behrens

Behrens brings alive the catastrophe of the Irish potato famine with Fergus O'Brien, who is left alone at the age of fifteen. Sensing that he must keep moving if he is to live, he survives privation, danger and betrayals on his route to Canada.

F 2006 394pp B1968

The Lieutenant
Kate Grenville

Lieutenant Daniel Rooke arrives in New South Wales on the First Fleet in 1788 and sets up an observatory to study astronomy and navigation. Aboriginal people soon start to visit his isolated outpost and a child begins to teach him her language. As he meticulously records their conversations, an extraordinary friendship develops and Rooke soon faces a decision that will define not only who he is but the course of his entire life.

F 2008 320pp B2031

The Light Between Oceans
M.L. Stedman

SHORTLISTED
Miles Franklin Literary Award

Returned from WWI Europe, Tom is now the lighthouse keeper on a remote island off Western Australia, his young wife Isabel his only companion. When tragedy touches their lives, they make a decision with far-reaching consequences. This moving story of love and loyalty probes the blurry line separating right and wrong, and the bond between mother and child.

F 2012 362pp B2166

The Long Song
Andrea Levy

In this novel, Levy responds to the question: 'How can you be proud of your Jamaican roots, when your ancestors were slaves?' Its narrator is house slave July, born on a sugar plantation in the early 19th century. July speaks for those who are silent in the historical record of this repressive social system, but her emotional story is also highly personal and entertaining.

F 2010 308pp B2078

The Luminaries
Eleanor Catton

WINNER
Man Booker Prize

On the New Zealand goldfields in 1866, Walter Moody encounters twelve men gathered to solve a series of local crimes. In this vivid and intricate world, fortunes are made and lost and fate is governed by the stars. Ingeniously structured, *The Luminaries* reads like a 19th century murder mystery, but with gripping hidden complexities. Two month book.

F 2013 834pp B2200

M

The Madonnas of Leningrad
Debra Dean

As the German army blockades the beautiful city of Leningrad in World War II, all food stocks are destroyed, leaving the people to struggle for survival in the bombed out buildings. Recently employed as a custodian in the great art museum the Hermitage and now sheltering with others in its ruins, young Marina will always remember its great paintings of Madonna and Child. A moving exploration of the power of art and memory.

F 2006 231pp B1971

The Man Who Lost Himself
Robyn Annear

The author of *Bearbrass* brings us a true story about a 19th century adventurer with a difference. Annear's account of the contested Tichborne Inheritance sets out the evidence for readers to judge, yet retains the essential question: who was the Claimant?

N 2002 430pp B1687

March
Geraldine Brooks

WINNER
Pulitzer Prize

Set during the first year of the American Civil War, Brooks evokes the life of John March, the absent father from Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*. An anti slavery idealist, March enlists with the Union troops - but his beliefs are challenged by the horrors of war. Familiarity with *Little Women* is not essential.

F 2005 338pp B1888

Mary Barton
Elizabeth Gaskell

Gaskell's first novel is set in her native Manchester and follows two working-class families in the 1840s. John Barton begins questioning the unequal distribution of wealth, and becomes involved in the trade-union movement; his daughter, Mary, sees marriage as her only way out of poverty. Gaskell's wit shines through this clever, emotional tale of romance and murder.

F 1848 466pp B0252

Memoirs of a Geisha
Arthur Golden

Sold into a geisha house in 1929 at the age of 9, Sayuri describes the elaborate ritual of making the creature whose delicacy, artistry, conversation and seductiveness is captive to the entertainment of rich and powerful men. Artifice, eroticism, exploitation and survival are part of a world evoked in fascinating detail, and Sayuri's voice is perfectly captured by Golden.

F 1998 428pp B1597

Midnight's Children
Salman Rushdie

This vital, wide-ranging novel inventively relates stories and characters of India and Pakistan since Independence, and shows how politics can penetrate the lives of ordinary and not so ordinary people. It is charged with Rushdie's intense creativity.

F 1981 463pp B1145

We found this book hard to pin down. We did agree that it was a 'interesting' book, but it is more of a intellectual book, rather than an emotional one. It raised interesting discussions around the culture of India and its history of British colonisation, as well as the unreliable narrator and his digressions.

CAE Staff Book Group

Mr Darwin's Shooter
Roger McDonald

SHORTLISTED
Miles Franklin Literary Award

What part did Syms Covington, Darwin's manservant, play in *On the Origin of Species*? Drawing on the sparse historical details of Covington's life, McDonald imagines his boyhood, his seafaring years, and his work collecting specimens with Darwin. Small print.

F 1999 369pp B1598

Mr Rosenblum's List
Natasha Solomons

Jakob is a Jewish refugee from Nazi Germany who arrives in London in 1937, where he is handed a list of rules on how to assimilate. Jakob takes this seriously – he wants to fit in – and begins to update the list with observations of his own. His actions bewilder his wife Sadie, who clings to where they came from and who they left behind.

F 2010 311pp B2081

N

The Narrow Road to the Deep North
Richard Flanagan

WINNER
Man Booker Prize

WINNER
Prime Minister's Literary Award

In 1943, surgeon Dorrigo Evans is a prisoner of war on the Thai Burma railway. Haunted by his affair with the enigmatic Amy, his life intersects the lives of guards and fellow prisoners as they experience the daily brutalities – and their consequences. Juxtaposing beauty with terror, Flanagan explores the capabilities of the human spirit, and what makes up 'humanity' in a time of war.

F 2013 467pp B2214

The Night Watch
Sarah Waters

The Night Watch follows the intertwined lives and relationships of four characters, Kay, Helen, Viv and Duncan, revealing how the war has changed each of them. Through air raids, blacked out streets, illicit partying and sexual adventure, the novel begins in 1947 during peacetime and moves backwards to 1941, allowing Waters to connect her cast in sometimes startling ways.

F 2006 480pp B1931

A beautiful look at women during the height of World War 2. The novel goes backward in time, instead of focusing on what they become, she explores how they got to where they are.

Jess Z, Book Groups Staff

Nothing But Gold
Robyn Annear

The discovery of gold in Australia in 1851 tempted thousands to rush to try their luck. This spirited account of the first year or so of the Victorian goldfields conveys the day to day realities of getting there and making a go of it: winter's mud, summer's dust, the hard labour of digging, the unimaginable water and food, the violence and camaraderie, the exhilaration of being your own boss. A feisty recreation.

N 1999 329pp B1716

O

One for the Master
Dorothy Johnston

Helen Plathe, a young girl, wife, mother, employee and citizen, tells her story in this powerful, modest and very readable novel set in Geelong, a Victorian country centre, in the decades after World War II. Johnston brings to life not only the characters in Helen's personal story but also the woollen mill with new technologies.

F 1997 270pp B1544

Orphans of History
Robert Holden

A look at the lives of the 34 First Fleet children. Starting in the London of John Hudson, a 9-year-old chimney sweep sentenced to transportation, it follows the children to prison, the hulks, the voyage to Botany Bay and to Norfolk Island. Holden's tender, clear sighted focus on children allows us access to new facts and insights about our nation's colonial origins.

N 1999 219pp B1766

P

Parrot and Olivier in America
Peter Carey

Aristocrat Olivier, inspired by the French nobleman Alexis de Tocqueville, who wrote *Democracy in America* travels to the new world to study the prison system, and to avoid another revolution; Parrot is a frustrated British artist who is sent with him as spy, protector and servant. On their journey, they develop an unlikely and enriching friendship.

F 2009 452pp B2069

A Passage to India
E.M. Forster

This novel tells more about India than a history text. Set in the last decades of the Empire, it depicts a world of English, Hindu and Muslim difference and misunderstanding, and the land seems to have a mind of its own, opposed to friendship between races.

F L 1924 280pp B0012

The Passion
Jeanette Winterson

Henri, a young French peasant, becomes Napoleon's chicken chef, and Villanelle is a Venetian fishergirl born with webbed feet. The public and private passions of hero worship, war, gambling and love are explored with deft realism and magical inventiveness. A surprising and readable glimpse of early 19th century Europe.

F 1987 160pp B1226

People of the Book
Geraldine Brooks

SHORTLISTED
Prime Minister's Literary Award

Pulitzer Prize winning author of *March* and bestselling novel *Year of Wonders* brings us the story of Hanna Heath, a renowned book conservator. She receives a call in the middle of the night about a medieval manuscript recovered from war torn Sarajevo, and makes her way to Bosnia to restore the Sarajevo Haggadah, a Jewish prayer book, and to piece together the remarkable story, throughout the centuries, of this manuscript.

F 2008 390pp B1990

Pure
Andrew Miller

Paris, 1785. Les Innocents cemetery is full to bursting and young provincial engineer Jean Baptiste Baratte is chosen to clear up the mess. The year he spends doing so, and the people he meets, are bound to change him forever. Pure is elegantly written, with fascinating characters and discussable subject matter such as themes of corruption, personal integrity and social unrest.

F 2011 352pp B2146

R

Ransom
David Malouf

SHORTLISTED
Miles Franklin Literary Award

A lyrical retelling of Homer's *Iliad*, set against the background of the Trojan War, Ransom is a meditation on grief and war. Described by the *Australian* as a "masterpiece, exquisitely written, pithy and wise and overwhelmingly moving".

F 2009 240pp B2058

The Red Tent
Anita Diamant

Narrated by Dinah, Jacob's only daughter in the Book of Genesis. From her upbringing by the four wives of Jacob, to becoming one of the most influential women of the time, Dinah's story brings to life women's lives during biblical times, from Mesopotamia to Canaan to Egypt.

F 1998 395pp B1997

Our diverse group had a great range of opinions - many thoroughly enjoyed it, others did not like it. This then made for a spirited discussion. Overall we learnt from the book.
Sunraysia U.3.A

The Remains of the Day
Kazuo Ishiguro

For decades, Stevens has served as butler to Lord Darlington of Darlington Hall. Now he recalls a lifetime of service. Ishiguro perfectly captures the tone and outlook of one to whom dignity and correctness are all important. There is wonderful comedy here and a sense of the losses that may lie behind such a life.

F 1989 245pp B1267

Remembering Babylon
David Malouf

Gemmy Fairley stumbles into a white settlement perched on the Queensland coast in the middle of the 19th century. Is he white or black? In his new surroundings and with his affinity with the feared blacks, his presence is most unsettling. Another subtle reflection from Malouf on the sense of the self and the other.

F L 1993 202pp B1424

S

NEW

The Safest Place in London
Maggie Joel

Two women, Nancy and Diana, flee with their 3-year-old daughters to take refuge in an underground bomb shelter in London's East End, while their husbands are away at the frontlines of World War Two. Set in 1944, the novel explores the struggles of those left behind and the hard choices that are made to remain safe.

F 2016 352pp B2261

Salt Creek
Lucy Treloar

SHORTLISTED
Miles Franklin Literary Award

15-year-old Hester is troubled by her father's decision to move their family of nine from the comfort of 1850s Adelaide to a remote outpost on the Coorong River. When a native boy begins working and then living with their family, Hester watches powerlessly as colonialist prejudice comes to play out against the backdrop of a family – and a country – in flux.

F 2015 416pp B2234

Salt Creek produced a great discussion - our group loved the description of the landscape, the well-drawn characters, the ability of the author to convey the life and attitudes of the times and the depth of the research. Hypocrisy was a major theme in the book - within the family and also with the treatment of the indigenous people by the settlers. There was some wonderful evocative writing and many interesting discussion points were raised.
Jervis Bay Sea Changers

Samuel Pepys
Claire Tomalin

Pepys lived through and recorded the Great Plague of 1665 and the Great Fire of London in the following year, as well as the intimacies of daily life – theatre going, philanderings, business affairs, tiffs with his wife, recorder lessons, hangovers, home improvements, clothes. Biographer Claire Tomalin revels in her subject's appetite for experience.

N 2002 499pp B1797

Sarah Thornhill
Kate Grenville

SHORTLISTED
Prime Minister's Literary Award

Sarah is the daughter of William Thornhill of *The Secret River*. Nicknamed 'Dolly', she grows up in the relative privilege of her father's hard-won estate in early settlement Australia, and must come to terms with the tangled secrets and silent spaces wrought by violent colonisation. Kate Grenville's masterful story and colourful characters will stay with you.

F 2011 304pp B2115

We had already read The Secret River and so to have the sequel was greatly appreciated. As a story this novel has everything! There is a family secret, a long lost brother, a lost love, a drowning and the tragic dispossession of a part Maori girl. There are also great descriptive passages of The Hawkesbury and more than a glimpse of early Australia's unhappy history. A really enjoyable read!
Wood Glen: 2nd Tuesday

Sea of Poppies
Amitav Ghosh

SHORTLISTED
Man Booker Prize

India is on the eve of the first Opium War. Fleeing the violence of her village customs and caste laws, Deeti and 'untouchable' Kalua become servants on an old slave ship. The ship becomes a shelter to them and the people they meet on their eventful journey across the Indian Ocean. This is an immersive, rewarding read. Unmissable.

F 2008 480pp B2017

The Secret River
Kate Grenville

SHORTLISTED
Miles Franklin Literary Award

WINNER
Commonwealth Writers' Prize

Grenville depicts the appalling poverty of William Thornhill, who is transported to New South Wales for theft, and his later wonderment at becoming a free man, able to claim land along the Hawkesbury and support his family. She brings alive the settler situation as well as the response of the Aboriginal people who already live on that land.

F 2005 334pp B1934

The Short Reign of Pippin IV
John Steinbeck

This light hearted satire on French monarchy and politics is a long way from Steinbeck's usual subject – the landless farm labourers of America. As enjoyable as it is unexpected.

F 1957 168pp B0212

Sweet Caress
William Boyd

Amory Clay is a woman who knows her own mind. Born into a wealthy English family in 1908, her search for an interesting life will take her from scandal in 1920s Berlin to an affair in New York in the 1930s; from a stint as a war photojournalist in WW2 France to the Vietnam War. Her life's turns and the lovers she picks up along the twists of this story are engrossing, and Amory's spirit and humour will stay with you long after you finish this fascinating novel.

F 2015 464pp B2243

Sweet Tooth
Ian McEwan

In Britain in 1972, Serena is recruited by MI5 for Operation Sweet Tooth, a secret mission that brings Serena together with writer Tom Haley. Soon she falls in love and the rules of espionage fall away, but the truth is hard to discover. Set during the Cold War and a time of domestic terrorism, *Sweet Tooth* is complex, layered and beautifully written.

F 2012 370pp B2178

T

Tartar City Woman
Trevor Hay

Subtitled Scenes from the *Life of Wang Hsin ping, Former Citizen of China*. What understanding do you have of China's history between 1937 and 1990? This remarkable biography will make it live in your nerves and senses, through Hay's account of the life of an outspoken, irrepressible Chinese woman, now living in Australia.

N 1990 181pp B1291

Tess of the D'Urbervilles
Thomas Hardy

Moral outrage greeted this story of a classic situation – a wronged woman, a child conceived outside marriage, and two men. Tess is bound up by the social forces of her time in this great 19th century novel which remains relevant to the lives of women today.

F L 1891 512pp B0084

That Deadman Dance
Kim Scott

WINNER
Miles Franklin Literary Award

Award winning author Kim Scott's novel is set in Western Australia in the 1800s. It tells the complex story of contact between Aborigines and early settlers in a harsh landscape. 'There are many strands to *That Deadman Dance*: epic coastal journeys, whaling sequences that will make you gasp in wonder, injustice, understanding and loss. But it is the characters – flawed, credible human beings, embodying their history but never mere ciphers – who stay with you'. *The Age*

F 2010 400pp B2118

A lively discussion ensued on the treatment of Aboriginal people by White settlers in the fledgling colony in WA. It certainly raised our awareness of their treatment and the manner in which their country was plundered without offering anything in return. It was a poignant conclusion to an evocative presentation of early settlement of Aboriginal Australia.
Tathra

The Thousand Autumns of Jacob De Zoet
David Mitchell

WINNER
Commonwealth Writers' Prize

The novel begins in 1799 Japan. Jacob de Zoet is a Dutch bookkeeper, working for the Dutch East India Company, when he falls in forbidden love with a Japanese midwife. The Empire of Japan has shut out the outside world for a century and a half, but a European trading post keeps open a narrow corridor to the outside world. The midwife uncovers a dark and heartbreaking secret.

F 2010 480pp B2093

True History of the Kelly Gang
Peter Carey

WINNER
The Age Book of the Year

The enthralling voice of Carey's Ned draws the reader into understanding how a brave, loyal and gifted boy becomes the doomed, deluded yet compelling writer of Kelly's Jerilderie Letter. A wonderful exploration of family loves and tensions, rural poverty and hope, the novel gives a voice to Australia's oppressed, then as now longing to be heard.

F 2000 401pp B1625

U

Under the Same Sun
Andy Kissane

Two young Italian men migrate to Australia in 1951. One is a metalworker from northern Italy, the other an apprentice chef from the south. Part one immerses us in the different experiences and pressures leading to their journeys. Part two brings alive the opportunities, pains and prejudices they face, in their loves and their work, first in Sydney and then in the perilous Snowy Mountains Scheme.

F 2000 368pp B1651

W

Water for Elephants
Sara Gruen

Jacob Jankowski jumps onto a passing train and enters a world of swindlers and misfits. The second rate circus Benzini Brothers Most Spectacular Show on Earth is touring the backblocks of Depression era America. A former veterinary student, Jacob becomes caretaker of the circus menagerie. He meets Marlena, the star of the equestrian act, her husband who is a violently unpredictable animal trainer, and Rosie, a seemingly unmanageable elephant.

F 2006 335pp B1984

Wolf Hall
Hilary Mantel

WINNER
Man Booker Prize

In England in the 1520s, Henry VIII finds himself without an heir by Catherine of Aragon, and charges Cardinal Wolsey with securing him a divorce already refused by the Pope. In comes Thomas Cromwell, whose rapid rise to power and ruthless agenda lead to reformation, uncertainty, and bloodshed. Two-month book.

F 2009 672pp B2054

Working for Rupert
Hugh Lunn

Hugh Lunn now gives us his seventeen years before the masthead on the *Australian* as Rupert Murdoch's 'foreign correspondent' in Queensland. Through most of the 1970s and '80s he parades us past a blur of editors, entertaining us in Lunn style, and talking about the newspaper world and how to write a story that people will read.

N 2001 244pp B1655

Y

The Year 1000
Robert Lacey & Danny Danziger

Here is the world of the English at the turn of the first millennium. This stylish social history charts a typical year of the period, demonstrating the differences between a very old world and our own.

N 1999 230pp B1656

Year of Wonders
Geraldine Brooks

In 1665, the English village of Eyam became infected with the plague. Rather than risk spreading it, the villagers decided to quarantine themselves, and fear and superstition began to break down courage and faith. In Brooks' novel, housemaid Anna becomes an unlikely hero - but what is it like to survive while so many die? This is a poignant, unforgettable read told in Brooks' inimitable style.

F 2001 308pp B1662

What If

For those readers who like a twist, this chapter offers speculative fiction set against very real backgrounds, as well as more straightforward fantasy and science fiction.

1984

George Orwell

Presents the classic dystopia, and a state in which the government has almost complete thought control. Orwell's ideas about totalitarian methods and speech are now part of the common language, and his depiction of suffering under totalitarian regimes is insightful.

F L 1949 312pp B0029

I re-read this book recently and Orwell's ability to create a chilling world has not lost its effect on me. Highly recommended!

Larriana M, Book Groups Staff

A

The Accidental

Ali Smith

WINNER
Whitbread Novel Award

Amber, a seemingly harmless stranger, turns up at the Smarts' holiday home, and as she ingratiates herself with the family, the question of who she is fades away. Is her presence an innocent accident, or something more sinister? Smith presents a modern reworking of Passolini's 1968 film *Theorem*. Original, challenging and experimental writing, this skilfully crafted book will raise as many questions as it answers.

F 2005 306pp B1915

Animal Farm

George Orwell

Orwell's famous satire on mid 20th century political reality, telling how the animals revolt against the farmer and try to run their own affairs. Orwell raises issues about freedom and tyranny, and indicts Soviet leadership and totalitarianism.

F 1945 120pp B0071

The Annotated Alice

Lewis Carroll

This volume contains both *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking Glass* and *What Alice Found There* (1872) by Lewis Carroll, with drawings by Tenniel. As editor, Martin Gardner has included annotations to help explain some of Carroll's mysteries.

F 1960 350pp B0430

Ape House

Sara Gruen

From the bestselling author of *Water for Elephants* comes this gentle, funny novel. Isabel is a scientist working with bonobos, who are capable of reason, love and developing relationships. When the bonobos are stolen and turn up on a reality TV series, Isabel teams up with journalist John in the fight to save them amidst a media circus.

F 2010 303pp B2126

B

The Bees

Laline Paull

SHORTLISTED
Baileys Women's Prize for Fiction

Flora 717 is born a lowly worker bee, but unlike the others of her mute caste, she can speak. As Flora navigates the totalitarian regime of the beehive in this fascinating miniature world, she comes to a startling realisation – and then begins a double-life as a traitor to the hive. Illuminating in its exploration of difference, of feminism, and of institutionalised intolerance.

F 2015 352pp B2235

Beyond Black

Hilary Mantel

SHORTLISTED
Orange Prize

Mantel's imaginative thriller offers a darkly comic and unsettling universe: polluted 1990s Britain, where psychic medium Alison tours London with her sidekick, Colette. Intricately structured, elegant prose gives a biting portrait of dreads and desires which will evoke animated discussion, not least about the implications of facing one's past and demons. Contains themes that may disturb.

F 2005 451pp B1948

Brave New World

Aldous Huxley

A dystopian classic, this is a humorous and poignant novel with much to discuss. In a future world dominated by mass production thanks to Henry Ford's innovations, genetic modification and brain washing keep the population docile. But Bernard Marx is distressed and wants to break free from this society. A readable, witty novel, and this edition includes introductions by Margaret Atwood and David Bradshaw.

F 1932 229pp B2131

C

Charades

Janette Turner Hospital

SHORTLISTED
Miles Franklin Literary Award

This novel interweaves an Australian girl's search for her father and her origins with her physicist lover's mind play about the origin of the universe, time and uncertainty. It ranges from Queensland's rainforests to Boston, to MIT and Toronto; from apparently sheltered Australian and Canadian lives to the aftermath of the Holocaust.

F 1988 345pp B1243

Cloud Atlas

David Mitchell

Six stories explore the intersection of history and humanity: an American notary's South Sea journals, an Englishman transcribing for a blind composer, a reporter investigates a nuclear cover up, a futuristic fast food robot, and a Hawaiian contemplating post apocalyptic life. This thrillingly original ride spans genres and themes of colonialism, corporate culture and the collapse of civilisation. Challenging and imaginative, this will reward persistence.

F 2003 529pp B1875

D

Dissection

Jacinta Halloran

Dedicated GP and mother of two boys, Anna's life begins to unravel when she is sued for medical negligence. Deeply ashamed of her mistake, she retreats into family life, only to become aware of her husband's growing interest in a younger woman. A confronting portrayal of a woman facing personal and professional crises.

F 2008 240pp B2033

Enjoyed *Animal Farm*?

Try *The Bees* by Laline Paull. [B2235]

E

NEW

The Explosion Chronicles
Yan Lianke

LONGLISTED
Man Booker International Prize

Translated from Chinese, the story follows two feuding families and the second-born son's quest to transform his small village, called Explosion, into an urban metropolis. Poetic and imbued with elements of magical realism, the satirical novel critiques the rampant growth of capitalism in post-Mao China, and the consequences of corruption and greed.

F 2016 480pp B2262

The Eyre Affair
Jasper Fforde

In an alternate version of London in 1985, literary detective Thursday is on the trail of criminal mastermind Hades, who has been kidnapping characters from works of fiction. When Jane Eyre is snatched from between her pages, Thursday steps in as defender of literature in this exuberant, entertaining read. Fans of *Jane Eyre* will be rewarded, and those unfamiliar with the classic will want to read it.

F 2001 373pp B1878

H

Handle with Care
Jodi Picoult

Willow is born with brittle bone disease, suffering hundreds of broken bones as she grows. As her family struggles with medical expenses, Willow's mother decides to file a wrongful birth lawsuit against her obstetrician - but the obstetrician she is suing is also her best friend.

F 2009 477pp B2047

The Handmaid's Tale
Margaret Atwood

A woman designated 'child-bearer' In a rigid society lives in a backlash against feminist aspirations and sexual liberation. A compelling depiction of society's flaws which raises questions about the present.

F 1986 324pp B1189

How to Be Both
Ali Smith

WINNER
Baileys Women's Prize for Fiction

SHORTLISTED
Stella Prize

The life of a 15th century Renaissance artist entwines with that of teenage girl George in this inventive novel. Smith challenges the convention that a story should run a reliably smooth course, asking whether history can exist simultaneously in the past and present. An element of chance determines which of the characters you meet first in your copy of the book – guaranteeing good discussion!

F 2014 284pp B2229

I

The Inn at the Edge of the World
Alice Thomas Ellis

Ellis' sympathetic yet astringent portrayal touches on the selkies as she nicely blends the down to earth with something of the ghost story and the supernatural in an easily read novel.

F L 1990 184pp B1412

L

The Left Hand of Darkness
Ursula LeGuin

The planet Winter is much like Earth except for two things: its climate is always subarctic, and its inhabitants are all of one sex. LeGuin is a distinguished writer of speculative fiction and this book makes for compelling discussion on our attitudes here on Earth.

F 1969 205pp B1064

Life After Life
Kate Atkinson

SHORTLISTED
Baileys Women's Prize for Fiction

Ursula is born on a wintery night in 1910, and when she dies, is reborn on the same day and into the same family over and over. Each of her lives is fascinatingly different, woven throughout a backdrop of historical events including both World Wars. Beautifully written, original and moving.

F 2013 480pp B2185

Life of Pi
Yann Martel

WINNER
Man Booker Prize

A cargo ship carrying zoo animals flounders at sea, and Pi, a 16-year-old Indian boy, is stranded on a life raft with a hyena, an orangutan, a zebra and a Bengal tiger. He must use all his daring and wit to survive. An engaging, dazzling novel.

F 2001 319pp B1788

M

The Man from Primrose Lane
James Renner

As David struggles to overcome his wife's unexplained suicide, he finds himself entangled in a complex maze involving child abduction and the murder of a mysterious man. Through the unpredictable twists of this absorbing, genre hopping thriller, David battles with fatherhood, trauma and questions about the future.

F 2012 363pp B2153

Mara and Dann
Doris Lessing

An orphaned brother and sister journey together through excitement and danger in a future where an Ice Age covers all of the northern hemisphere, and much of Africa is dry and famine stricken. Lessing opens up questions of how environments can change civilisations, testing human decency, endurance, imagination and love.

F 1999 407pp B1765

My Sister's Keeper
Jodi Picoult

Is it morally correct to do whatever it takes to save a child's life? Anna was conceived as a bone marrow match for her older sister Kate, who has leukaemia. Picoult's portrait of a family on the brink will polarise readers and create robust discussion on parenting, ethics and the implications of bioengineering.

F 2004 423pp B1909

N

Never Let Me Go
Kazuo Ishiguro

SHORTLISTED
Man Booker Prize

Kathy, Ruth and Tommy attended an elite school in the English countryside that sheltered its students from the outside. Why were they there? Kathy narrates a retrospective journey through memory and fact, slowly unfolding details to a startling resolution. An unsettling tale that probes moral responsibility and the scientific ethics.

F 2005 263pp B1864

Beautiful and heart-breaking, Ishiguro writes the complexities of adolescence with stunning sensitivity. This book will generate great discussion on morality and ethics.

Jess Z, Book Groups Staff

Not the End of the World
Kate Atkinson

'And now for something completely different.' Imaginative and distinctive, these twelve linked stories create an unexpected sense of what it is to be alive. They portray ordinary people in confining, dangerous, or lonely circumstances that unexpectedly, even bizarrely, break into the mythic experience of Greek gods and magical transformations.

S 2002 278pp B1774

O

The Ocean at the End of the Lane
Neil Gaiman

Neil Gaiman explores memory, childhood vulnerability, and hidden trauma in this shadowy, atmospheric fairytale woven with his trademark touch of fantasy. As the unnamed narrator revisits his childhood home, memories long obscured lead him to the neighbouring farm where he spent time as a 7 year old. He remembers Lettie, the girl who lived there, and what really happened during the summer they spent together.

F 2013 248pp B2206

Only the Animals
Ceridwen Dovey

WINNER
Readings Prize for New Australian Fiction

The souls of ten animals tell captivating stories of their lives in times of human conflict, drawing on often surprising literary connections. Henry Lawson's camel witnesses the colonisation of Australia, Himmler's dog ponders the meaning of Buddhism, and a dolphin in the US Navy composes a letter to Sylvia Plath. Amusing and touching, their tales explore the consequences of warfare from a unique and original perspective.

S 2014 248pp B2212

This is an amazing book and most members enjoyed it once they were 'into it'. A few found it hard to suspend disbelief although they found it beautifully written. Everyone was in awe of the research the author had done and most delighted in the prose, the wit and the commentary it provided. One of the best books I've read this year.

Kangaroo Ground: Witty Winers

P

The Patron Saint of Eels
Gregory Day

Noel and Nannette are long time locals of a small coastal town in the grip of gentrification. When a freak flood leaves hundreds of eels trapped in the ditches around Noel's home, Fra Ionio, a 300-year-old Italian monk, comes to the rescue. Quirky and likeable characters together with lyrical evocations of bush and sea shine through in this delightful contemporary fable.

F 2005 181pp B1865

Picnic at Hanging Rock
Joan Lindsay

On a Valentine's Day picnic in 1900, a group of schoolgirls vanishes with their teacher. Witnesses are disoriented and confused, and the group are never recovered. The consequences of the day are far-reaching for the community, the remaining characters, and the once-prestigious school. The interaction of civilisation with nature is also explored in this enduring Australian classic.

F 1967 213pp B0402

R

Republic of Women
Merrill Findlay

Real people from history walk through the pages of this book, and anyone who knows Melbourne's St Kilda will recognise its threatened inner city environment. 'In this novel of striking intellectual subtlety and authority, Merrill Findlay probes questions of sexual identity in a voice that is radical, humane and tender'(Raimond Gaita).

F 1999 280pp B1752

The Road
Cormac McCarthy

WINNER
Pulitzer Prize

A man and his young son walk through a post apocalyptic American wasteland. Danger and starvation lurk at every turn in this deeply disturbing yet ultimately redemptive story. A novel that asks what we might be capable of when pushed to the brink - and whether we could make it back in one piece. Harrowing scenes may disturb; this book will give your group a lengthy and vivid discussion.

F 2006 256pp B1977

S

Saturday
Ian McEwan

McEwan creates for us one day in the life of a London neurosurgeon, a man fully engaged in his work and blessed with a domestic life of contentment, until one Saturday he must deal with the fall out from a minor traffic accident that morning. Accomplished writing, 'beautifully alive to the fragility of happiness' – *The Times*.

F 2005 279pp B1911

The Scapegoat
Daphne du Maurier

After a chance meeting at a French railway station, John, a lonely professor, assumes another man's identity, and becomes involved in the complex family relationships, love affairs and business life of the selfish and arrogant man he is impersonating. An intriguing and suspenseful story.

F L 1957 320pp B1126

Enjoyed *Jane Eyre*?

Try *Wide Sargasso Sea* by Jean Rhys [B0809]

State of Wonder
Ann Patchett

SHORTLISTED
Orange Prize

From the bestselling author of *Bel Canto* comes this compelling, thrilling novel. Scientists for a pharmaceutical company are researching an Amazonian tribe where women remain fertile until old age, in hope of selling their secret. When the head researcher disappears and the man sent to discover the findings dies, pharmacologist Marina leaves Minnesota to track down her former mentor in the depths of the Amazon.

F 2011 353pp B2120

NEW

The Summer That Melted Everything
Tiffany McDaniel

When traumatised 13-year-old Sal arrives in the summer of 1984 to Breathed, Ohio, claiming to be the devil, he is adopted into the Bliss family as one of their own. Strange accidents begin to occur and the town suffers through a scorching heat-wave, causing people to question whether the boy is who he claims to be. As the Bliss family struggle with their own personal demons, the heat brings out a fanatical hysteria of the town's people that questions the nature of evil.

F 2016 320pp B2256

T

Tehanu
Ursula LeGuin

Beautiful, challenging, deceptively simple writing explores the stories of a woman who adopts a girl crippled and scarred by abuse, and a once great wizard who has exhausted his magic. Can they survive among brutal enemies in a land rotten with evil? LeGuin reflects on power and powerlessness; the differing wisdom of women and men; and the possibility of healing.

F 1990 204pp B1461

The Telling
Ursula LeGuin

On an alien planet, Sutty now lives under the Corporation, a capitalist dictatorship which burns books and suppresses evidence of the past. From the mountain people, she learns of the extraordinarily diverse, vital, integrated culture that once existed here. This meditation on cultural decimation and colonialism is part of the cycle which includes *The Dispossessed* and *The Left Hand of Darkness*.

F 2000 264pp B1806

Things We Didn't See Coming
Steven Amsterdam

WINNER
The Age Book of the Year

This collection of nine linked narratives is set in a near future dystopia, recognisable and unsettling. A young boy is caught up in worldwide Y2K style panic, and becomes the book's nameless narrator, travelling from story to story and negotiating the lawlessness, epidemics, extreme weather, relationships and politics of a post millennium world. Often dark, sometimes funny, this intriguing book should spark discussion about issues potentially facing us all.

F 2009 174pp B2070

The Tin Drum
Günter Grass

This is the autobiography of Oskar Matzerath, a 30-year-old detained in a mental hospital, and convicted of murder. It is taken down with the aid of his tiny drum, the chosen symbol of his way of life. A brilliant and challenging work which has been seminal in German writing. Two month book.

F 1961 590pp B0070

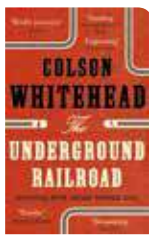
The Tyrant's Novel
Thomas Keneally

In an oil rich country, writer Alan is asked to produce a novel explaining the great deeds of its tyrannical ruler and blaming the country's difficulties on outside forces. Facing a moral dilemma and a tight deadline, Alan must resolve both at the risk of his own life and those around him. Keneally's portrayal of the experiences of asylum seekers is both terrifying and utterly compelling.

F 2003 292pp B1867

U

NEW



The Underground Railroad
Colson Whitehead

WINNER
Pulitzer Prize

WINNER
National Book Award

Cora, a young slave on a cotton plantation in Georgia is approached by Caesar, a fellow slave who tells her about the Underground Railroad, a network of tracks and tunnels that runs beneath their feet. When tragic events in her life gives her the courage she needs, Cora embarks on a harrowing journey to escape the horrors of slavery and a life lived in servitude. A brutal book with confronting scenes, it's not an easy read but a powerful novel on the dark history of slavery.

F 2017 400pp B2270

The Unknown Terrorist
Richard Flanagan

Set in post 9/11 Sydney, a Kings Cross pole dancer finds she has become the most wanted terrorist in the country, and is caught up in a vortex of murder, media hype and politically manipulated fear mongering. A fast moving thriller, this is also an angry portrayal of contemporary Australia.

F 2006 320pp B1983

The Unusual Life of Tristan Smith
Peter Carey

WINNER
The Age Book of the Year

The eponymous hero and narrator is born dwarfed and badly deformed, the vital and clever son of a beautiful, activist actress in one of the richly imagined countries in this unusual, mind stretching novel. We follow Tristan's struggles and adventures through worlds which are new, yet disturbingly familiar. Not for the squeamish, but full of wonders and marvels.

F 1994 422pp B1462

W

Wide Sargasso Sea
Jean Rhys

In Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, Mr Rochester is not free to marry because of Bertha, his mad and bad wife secreted in the attic. Dominican born Jean Rhys sympathetically re imagines the Jamaican life of a young Creole heiress, Rochester's courtship and the early years of their marriage, turning many of Brontë's values and assumptions inside out.

F L 1966 156pp B0809

A Wild Sheep Chase
Haruki Murakami

A girl with ears so exquisite that they improve sex a thousand fold, a runaway friend, a right wing politico, an ovine obsessed professor, and a manic depressive in a sheep outfit are all implicated in a hunt for a sheep that may or may not be running the world in this singular masterpiece from Japan's finest novelist. Equal parts screwball comedy, detective story and heroic quest.

F 1982 299pp B1654

Y

The Year of the Flood
Margaret Atwood

At a time when the human population has been decimated by a plage, the Corporations have taken over the world, including all scientific and technological developments. In this bleak dystopia, eco-religious sect the God's Gardeners try to work with nature as civilisation crumbles. The humanity and friendships of the female characters offer hope despite the grim atmosphere. This novel contains some of the characters from *Oryx and Crake* but is not a sequel.

F 2009 528pp B2079

Obsessions, Dreams

Grand visions, driving quests, and obsessive love; this chapter concentrates on the intense, the odd and the exhilarating. Mainly fiction, with a few nonfiction titles.

A

Angry White Pyjamas
Robert Twigger

A 30-year-old Oxford poet in Japan feels his life is slipping away. Deciding to prove himself a man, he trains with the Tokyo Riot Police. Which is more bizarre: the world of aikido in the dojo, or the foreigner obsessed by training that he cannot bear either to give up or to take seriously?

F 1997 316pp B1748

Asleep
Banana Yoshimoto

This collection of novellas links three women sunk in a spiritual sleep. One sleepwalks as she mourns a lost lover; the second is having an affair with a man whose wife lies in a coma; the third is haunted in her sleep by a woman with whom she once competed in a love triangle. Yoshimoto blends the mystical and the surreal with startling tenderness in this beautiful book.

F 1992 177pp B1631

The Autograph Man
Zadie Smith

Alex Li Tandem, Chinese Jewish north Londoner, sells autographs for a living. But what does he want? 'Only the return of his father, the reinstatement of some kind of all powerful benevolent God type figure, the end of religion, something for his headache, three different girls, infinite grace and the rare autograph of '40s movie actress Kitty Alexander with fries.'

F 2002 419pp B1777

B

NEW

The Blind Astronomer's Daughter
John Pipkin

Set in the 18th century quest for scientific discovery, the story portrays a fictionalised account of astronomer, William Hershel, and his unknown rival Arthur Ainsworth and their obsession with decoding the night sky. When Arthur goes blind from staring at the sun, he chooses death, leaving behind his grief-stricken daughter to continue his work while confronting her own desires. Based on actual historical events, the novel explores the race to discover the planets, and the role women played in aiding these discoveries.

F 2016 480pp B2269

C

Cabin Fever
Elizabeth Jolley

This second novel in the partly autobiographical trilogy concerns young Vera Wright and her efforts in post war England to survive as an unmarried mother in a world of scarcity and privation. A memorable, quirky study of loneliness and longing and the persistence of memory.

F 1990 238pp B1404

Cape Grimm
Carmel Bird

Bird explores innocence and evil in a religious community on the coast of Tasmania. When cult leader Caleb sets fire to the group meeting house, all but three of the community perish. Blending traditional folk tale elements with contemporary events, this explores our darker aspects and the reverberations of history.

F 2004 302pp B1825

Capital
John Lanchester

Encompassing a cast of characters all connected to one suburban London street, *Capital* reveals the state of British society at the beginning of the Global Financial Crisis. Sprawling but highly readable, this is a novel that addresses some big questions whilst remaining intimate and compassionate.

F 2012 592pp B2170

A Child's Book of True Crime
Chloe Hooper

SHORTLISTED
Orange Prize

A young teacher has begun her first job at a Tasmanian primary school. Through her adulterous affair with the father of a pupil, she begins to confront issues surrounding childhood and adulthood. Distinctions between fantasy and reality blur. What is the true crime here?

F 2002 238pp B1670

Closed for Winter
Georgia Blain

What happened to 12-year-old Frances on that hot summer day at the beach? The question still haunts her younger sister, Elise, now in her twenties. Blain's evocative, well wrought first novel uncovers past and present to arrive at an unexpected truth.

F 1998 249pp B1709

The Conjuror's Bird
Martin Davies

During Captain Cook's second expedition to the South Pacific, a rare and unique species of bird was captured. Cook later presented the bird to naturalist Joseph Banks who displayed it until 1778 when it inexplicably disappeared from his collection. Two centuries later, the race is on to find the Mysterious Bird of Ulieta. Dual narratives shift between past and present to create an 18th century romance inside a modern day thriller. Fast paced and enjoyable.

F 2005 309pp B1921

D

Death in Venice
Thomas Mann

A lovely and disturbing evocation of life in the pre war period. An austere, mature German writer, Aschenbach, is forced by failing health to go to Venice. In a very different culture, he becomes obsessed by the beauty of a young boy and changes profoundly.

F 1912 79pp B1157

Death of a River Guide
Richard Flanagan

SHORTLISTED
Miles Franklin Literary Award

A drowning river guide is caught up in visions of the demanding story of his family, state and people. This strikingly imaginative Tasmanian novel conveys the feeling of the great Franklin River, and the uncensored experience and idiom of those who live in the physical, social and metaphorical wilderness.

F 1994 324pp B1473

The Devil's Larder
Jim Crace

Food is central to each of the sixty-four brief tales in this literary feast from English novelist Jim Crace, where meals are served with lashings of passion, recipes are spiced with unexpected challenges and hopes and the ingredients are hilarious, delightful and subversive. Full of exuberant invention.

S 2001 193pp B1683

Enjoyed *The Picture of Dorian Gray?*

Try *The Line of Beauty* by Alan Hollinghurst [B1886]

E

Everyman's Rules for Scientific Living
Carrie Tiffany

SHORTLISTED Miles Franklin Literary Award

SHORTLISTED Orange Prize

In 1934, Jean meets and marries soil scientist Robert. They settle in the impoverished Mallee, determined to realise Robert's ambition to live and farm by scientific principles. The ensuing struggle slowly chips away at their idealism and relationship. Set against the backdrop of an impending threat of world war, Tiffany captures in a refreshing, quirky manner the hopes and disappointments of the era.

F 2005 256pp B1906

F

Foxybaby
Elizabeth Jolley

Miss Alma Porch journeys to a remote Summer School to present a version of her novel in progress to the Creative Drama students. Jolley's quirky subtlety combines with her sense of human hurtfulness, robustness and fragility.

F 1985 261pp B1310

The French Tutor
Judith Armstrong

Postgraduate student Emily begins an affair with a charismatic older academic who insists on keeping his options open. The Albertine rose and the work of Proust are woven into the fabric of a psychological novel involving obsessive love, deception and betrayal.

F 2003 301pp B1781

Enjoyed *The Strays*?

Try *Nine Days* [B2172]

G

The Great Gatsby
F. Scott Fitzgerald

This is a richly textured, nuanced exploration of the darker side of the glamour of the Jazz Age. Seen through the eyes of outsider Nick, Jay Gatsby's dream of the beautiful Daisy comes to symbolise the classic American dream.

F 1925 160pp B0308

The embodied sense of decadence, the 1920s opulence drew me in. The novel started out slow, but the point of view of the narrator as he delved into the relationship between Gatsby and Daisy unfolded was really rewarding in the end. I really enjoyed it, and it stayed with me.

Chris B, CAE Staff

H

The Hunter
Julia Leigh

A man takes to Tasmania to track down the last surviving marsupial tiger – and soon disappears into a world of silence and stillness. With a small cast of bruised and bruising individuals, the pace of this impressive first novel is sustained through to its unforgettable conclusion.

F 1999 170pp B1628

K

Kurikka's Dreaming
Craig Cormick

In Russian controlled Finland at the end of the 19th century, Matti Kurikka persuades his followers to search for a utopia where they can achieve independence and prosperity. In 1899, they arrive near Cairns in Queensland, their land of 'eternal summer'; but they find themselves in a strange and hostile country, where dream becomes nightmare.

N 2000 218pp B1644

L

Larry's Party
Carol Shields

WINNER Orange Prize

Larry Weller was once a floral designer, but becomes a garden maze and landscape gardener. The book progresses episodically from 1977 across the next twenty years, through two failed marriages and into a third. Shields writes with her characteristic perceptiveness, irony and tenderness of this 'ordinary' man, as she reflects on what it is to be male.

F 1997 339pp B1725

Last of the Sane Days
Fiona Capp

Rafael achieves his ambition to become a pilot, only to be stricken by a painful illness. He finds inspiration in the 19th century philosopher, Nietzsche, and retraces Nietzsche's last journeyings in Europe. This novel of pain, philosophy and love weaves the last of Nietzsche's sane days into the fates of these modern Australians.

F 1999 260pp B1714

The Line of Beauty
Alan Hollinghurst

This beautifully nuanced comedy of manners portrays England's rich and powerful in the 1980s at the peak of the Thatcher years. The narrator is a young man, newly arrived in London and mesmerised by the opulent world of his Tory hosts as he independently discovers the pleasures of metropolitan gay life.

F 2004 501pp B1886

Lovesong
Elizabeth Jolley

SHORTLISTED Miles Franklin Literary Award

After many years in an institution, Dalton Foster is released into a world he barely recognises. What has he done? There are disturbing indications that a child was involved. Jolley's account of his loneliness and longings is lyrical and at times disturbingly comic.

F 1997 241pp B1576

M

The Map That Changed the World
Simon Winchester

William Smith, orphan of a village blacksmith, was one of the first to link the rock strata beneath the earth's surface with the characteristic fossils found in each layer. He worked 20 years on an enormous geological map, only to find his ideas pirated by gentlemen of science.

N 2001 338pp B1666

N

Nocturnes
Kazuo Ishiguro

Ishiguro explores love, music and the passing of time in this collection of short stories. Characters range from young dreamers, to café musicians and faded stars. Throughout the five stories, characters struggle to keep alive a sense of life's romance as they grow older, their relationships flounder, and youthful hopes fade.

F S 2009 221pp B2043

Nocturnes is a stunning collection of five short stories and one theme that binds them, Music. The book reads like an orchestra, filled with ups and downs and different notes.

Jess Z, Book Groups Staff

Notes on a Scandal
Zoë Heller

From the first day that beautiful, bohemian art teacher Sheba joins the staff of St George's, history teacher Barbara realises she is different from her colleagues. When Sheba is caught having an affair with a pupil, Barbara appoints herself her chief defender and closest ally. But all is not as it seems in this compelling read of obsession and loneliness.

F 2003 244pp B1974

O

Of a Boy
Sonya Hartnett

WINNER
The Age Book of the Year

In an Australian suburb, three children set off for the milkbar – never to be seen again. 9-year-old Adrian watches the goings on of his suburban world and tries to keep his loneliness and fears of rejection at bay. Throughout the text weaves the aching true story of the missing Metford children.

F 2002 188pp B1804

The Orchid Thief
Susan Orlean

A nonfiction book which reads more like a novel, with a wonderful oddball cast of fanatics whose lives and crimes revolve around their mania for orchids. The pacy narrative follows John Laroche, self confessed orchid thief, into the sucking mud of Florida's swampy Fakahatchee Strand.

N 1998 350pp B1622

P

The Picture of Dorian Gray
Oscar Wilde

Scandal erupted over Wilde's novel when it was first published as it 'violated the laws of public morality'; though perhaps less shocking now, this psychological thriller remains just as enticing over a hundred years later. It examines the cost of self indulgence, and the havoc we wreak on our souls in the quest for satisfaction.

F 1891 247pp B0112

This book stayed with our group. We loved the supernatural element that raised discussions around appearance versus inner truth. Emotionally poignant, the slow corruption of the characters was portrayed in such a gripping way. This book resulted in one of the best discussions we had in a long time!

Murray Riverside Readers

The Precipice
Virginia Duigan

A mix of literary thriller and psychological drama, with a welcome smattering of tongue in cheek wit. Thea is a retired school principal living in the Blue Mountains. When a young couple and their niece move in next door, old fears and paranoia begin to take over her life. Thea is an engrossing, funny and unusual protagonist, and there are a number of provocative issues to discuss.

F 2011 284pp B2134

S

The Secret Cure
Sue Woolfe

Determined to find a cure for her autistic child and motivated by her own passion for science, Eva takes on work as a cleaner in a medical research laboratory. Owen is the strange reclusive man who has loved her for a lifetime. This moving novel explores what it means to be human, to be honourable, and, above all, what it means to love.

F 2003 429pp B1823

The Service of Clouds
Delia Falconer

SHORTLISTED
Miles Franklin Literary Award

Set in the Blue Mountains, this novel is almost hallucinatory in its evocation of cloud landscapes, and of the heroine Eureka's yearning for photographer Henry Kitchens. Katoomba's life, personalities and institutions in the early 20th century are deftly, even comically presented.

F 1997 322pp B1580

Solar
Ian McEwan

A Nobel Prize winning physicist and middle-aged philanderer, Michael is arrogant and selfish His career has stalled – until he decides to claim for his own another man's work on alternative energy resources that just might save the planet. *Solar* spans several continents as it explores the frailties of humankind and the threat of climate change.

F 2010 432pp B2066

The Strays
Emily Bitto

WINNER
Stella Prize

When lonely only child Lily befriends Eva Trentham, she is entranced by the glamour of the Trentham family and their circle of avant garde artists – but their seemingly idyllic, bohemian way of life is not without its costs. A study of isolation mingles with the consequences of radicalism in this haunting and beautifully observed debut novel which draws on the legacy of Melbourne's Heide group of artists.

F 2014 350pp B2226

It created a great discussion about families, their identities and differences in lifestyle and how their decisions affected their life.

Leongatha 1

T

There'll Be New Dreams
Philip McLaren

McLaren weaves together strands of Aboriginal experience across the ages. Lottie, the city raised Aborigine, loses her children to the welfare system in the 1950s and her husband to a suspicious death; Matlong saw Cook sail by in 1770; and Dundiwuy goes to New York as a didgeridoo player in the 1970s. Sophisticated and profound, human and funny.

F 2001 309pp B1667

Three Cups of Tea
Greg Mortenson

In 1993, Mortenson drifted into a village in Pakistan's Karakoram Mountains. Touched by the kindness of the villagers, he went on to build fifty five schools in remote villages across Pakistan and Afghanistan while the Taliban was rising to power. Since publication, the book's accuracy has been questioned, both in a controversial 2011 documentary and by author Jon Krakauer.

N 2007 368pp B2057

V

Veronika Decides to Die
Paulo Coelho

Why would a young, attractive, steadily employed woman from a good family take an overdose? How will she feel when she survives only to be told that the damage will quickly prove fatal? This accessible novel by popular and uplifting Brazilian writer Coelho is likely to provoke strong discussion about sanity, madness, the meaning contemporary urban lives, and about medical and literary ethics.

F 1998 185pp B1770

The Vintner's Luck
Elizabeth Knox

Among the vines of Burgundy in 1808, Sobran Jodeau, a young winemaker, has the first of his annual meetings with an angel. But this angel is not all he seems, and complicates life even further. A daring, sensuous, unconventional, addictive novel.

F 1998 241pp B1751

W

NEW

The Wonder
Emma Donoghue

When Nightingale trained nurse Lib is sent to a village in 1850s Ireland to investigate Anna, an 11-year-old girl who stops eating and claims to be nourished by the Manna of Heaven for months, she has two weeks to determine if this girl is a fraud. Inspired by the historical cases of fasting girls, this historical thriller pits motherly love against blind faith, questioning what it means to be nourished.

F 2016 256pp B2250

The World Without Us
Mireille Juchau

WINNER
Victorian Premier's Literary Award

SHORTLISTED
Stella Prize

Following their sister's death, Tess and Meg watch their devastated family come undone. Their mother Evangeline roams the forests of their farmland; their father, Stefan, retracts into himself. When an old car wreck is discovered with human remains inside, Evangeline is forced to confront her present along with secrets from her past life in a local commune. Atmospheric and gripping.

F 2015 320pp B2236

Families

These titles tackle the dynamics of families in all kinds of situations and configurations. Some are dysfunctional, some are happy, and many lie somewhere in between.

44 Scotland Street
Alexander McCall Smith

McCall Smith's Scotland Street occupies a busy, bohemian corner of Edinburgh's New Town, where the old haute bourgeoisie rub shoulders with students, poets and portraitists. And Number 44 has more than its fair share of eccentrics and failures. Dry, funny and entertaining, *44 Scotland Street* was originally written as a serialised novel.

F 2005 326pp B2052

84 Charing Cross Road
Helene Hanff

Helene Hanff wrote from New York to Marks and Co., second hand booksellers in London: 'I enclose a list of my most pressing problems'. The reply and the books that were sent across the Atlantic began a joyous correspondence that lasted 20 years. This book celebrates friendship, the art of letter writing and a love of books and the English language.

N 1971 220pp B1200

A

All That Happened at Number 26
Denise Scott

The much loved comedian tells the stories that attach themselves to a family home, exploring married life and the trials and triumphs of raising children, and memories of her outer suburban childhood. Life outside Number 26 includes her career and friendships forged with other strong, funny women. Like the house itself, this book is a bit ramshackle but warm and fun.

N 2008 261pp B2101

Enjoyed *Ghost River*?

Try *Angela's Ashes* by Frank McCourt [B1508]

And the Mountains Echoed
Khaled Hosseini

From the bestselling author of *A Thousand Splendid Suns* comes a multi-generational story that explores sibling bonds. Beginning in Afghanistan in the early 1950s, the story shifts to France and America, and back again, in a series of tales.

F 2013 416pp B2197

Angela's Ashes
Frank McCourt

A funny, gritty, confronting memoir of an impoverished childhood in the slums of Limerick. The father rarely works; when he does he drinks the proceeds, so hunger is a continuing theme. McCourt tells his story of 'that most miserable of childhoods, the miserable Irish Catholic childhood' with eloquence, exuberance and a notable absence of rancour or misery.

N L 1996 364pp B1508

Aphrodite and the Others
Gillian Bouras

With candour and compassion, Bouras examines the outlook and life experience of her mother in law, Aphrodite – priest's wife, illiterate, and unbending matriarch. The book counterpoints the oral tradition and the literate one, the personal and the political.

N 1994 174pp B1402

The Art of the Engine Driver
Steven Carroll

SHORTLISTED
Miles Franklin Literary Award

In late 1950s Melbourne, Vic longs to perfect his engine driving technique and achieve the perfect smooth ride; his son Michael dreams of fast bowling perfection; Rita, mother and wife, longs for a life with something more. A distinctively Australian novel with a luminous evocation of ordinary lives.

F 2001 278pp B1674

B

Basil Street Blues
Michael Holroyd

The acclaimed biographer of George Bernard Shaw, Holroyd never explored his own family's history until his parents' death, which left a vacuum he felt the need to fill. The result? A continuation of his never ending love affair with human nature – part-detective story, part-family saga and part-oblique voyage of self-discovery.

N 1999 309pp B1632

Behind the Scenes at the Museum
Kate Atkinson

This four generation English family saga is captivating. Atkinson's imagination and remarkable way with words lay open family life – the mismatches of personalities and expectations, the strains and trivialities, the ridiculous and the tragic.

F 1995 382pp B1520

Births Deaths Marriages
Georgia Blain

In this beautiful collection of stories, daughter of Anne Deveson revisits her bohemian childhood during the social change movement, the collapse of her parents' marriage, her brother's illness and her path to becoming a writer. Deftly examining her life's triumphs and disappointments, she teases out the universal qualities that make us both fallible and loveable.

N 2008 224pp B1998

The Blind Assassin
Margaret Atwood

This sad, sharp, humorous reflection on family life spans most of the 20th century. With characters attracting sympathy and rancour, mysteries unravelling, and themes of sacrifice and betrayal, inspiring pathos and bathos, Atwood continues to surprise and intrigue.

F 2000 641pp B1619

The Book of Emmett
Deborah Forster

SHORTLISTED
Victorian Premier's Literary Award

SHORTLISTED
Miles Franklin Literary Award

A heartbreaking exploration of domestic abuse. Emmett is an unpredictable alcoholic and violent father. His children, Louisa, Rob, Peter, Daniel and Jessie, are shaped by his destructive presence, but as he lies dying they must all come to terms with their past.

F 2009 296pp B2100

Breathing Lessons
Anne Tyler

WINNER
Pulitzer Prize

Married for 28 years, Maggie and Ira Moran are an unlikely couple: Ira is reticent and detached; Maggie optimistic, confiding, impulsive, and an intervener in other people's lives. Marriage and family provide the focus for a wry, tolerant look at life's absurdity and underlying comedy.

F 1988 327pp B1265

Brideshead Revisited
Evelyn Waugh

This is Waugh's best known novel, thanks largely to the sumptuous 1981 television series. When Charles meets glamorous Sebastian at Oxford, he is seduced by the exotic allure of Sebastian's aristocratic family and their grand country house, Brideshead. As his friend succumbs to alcoholism Charles develops a complex relationship with Sebastian's sister, Julia. This haunting novel is a portrait of love and faith, and a eulogy for a lost world.

F 1945 336pp B2130

The Burgess Boys
Elizabeth Strout

Haunted by the accidental death of their father, lawyers Bob and Jim Burgess leave behind their sister, Susan, and town in Maine for new lives in New York. But when Susan calls them back home to help her lonely son, who has thoughtlessly landed himself in deep trouble, old tensions surface. A beautifully written and complex story of sibling relationships.

F 2013 336pp B2192

C

Careless
Deborah Robertson

SHORTLISTED
Miles Franklin Literary Award

Tragedy enters the lives of two strangers: widowed Sonia, and Adam, a young sculptor experiencing his first taste of artistic success. This superbly written, convincingly plotted debut Australian novel skilfully explores responsibility, for both the living and the dead.

F 2006 293pp B1960

The Casual Vacancy
J.K. Rowling

Through the microcosm of parish council politics in the rural town of Pagford, she brings together a multigenerational cast of characters reflecting many aspects of modern Britain. A compelling exploration of community and family dynamics.

F 2012 576pp B2174

This novel stimulated wide ranging and dynamic discussion particularly on social issues ranging from Brexit to the disadvantaged in our society. A number of members found this a very disconnecting novel, because the characters were tragically convicted by circumstances. However, all agreed that J.K. Rowling is a very effective writer, able to write with a confronting, deft realism.
Willie Worms

The Children
Charlotte Wood

When Mandy and her siblings return home to watch over their critically ill father, they struggle to reconcile their past. Wardsman Tony has been waiting for Mandy's return, and as he insinuates himself into the family, pressure builds with devastating force. Wood's acutely observed third novel explores the tenacious grip of childhood and the price paid for bearing witness to the suffering of others.

F 2007 269pp B2025

The Children Act
Ian McEwan

Family Court judge Fiona daily takes momentous decisions concerning children, and must now rule on an unusual and intelligent 17-year-old whose faith has him unable to accept a life saving treatment. The consequences of Fiona's choices echo through her personal life, and will make you reconsider medical, religious and legal ethics. This is McEwan's succinct, gripping prose at its best.

F 2015 224pp B2220

The Children's Bach
Helen Garner

A compact but densely styled novel which teases apart the threads of a number of complex inter relationships. An imaginative and compelling treatment of inner suburban angst from the inimitable Garner.

F 1984 96pp B0569

City of the Mind
Penelope Lively

His marriage now evaporated, Matthew Halland shares in the bringing up of his 8-year-old daughter. An architect, his work takes him all over the ever changing cityscape of London. Lively's characteristic fusing of feeling and intellect in this most satisfying novel.

F 1991 220pp B1367

Cloudstreet
Tim Winton

WINNER
Miles Franklin Literary Award

Two families of ordinary people – battlers and losers – share a ramshackle old Perth house called Cloudstreet. Over 20 years, the ups and downs of their lives bring them and the house closer together in this sprawling, moving novel.

F 1991 426pp B1269

The Color of Water
James McBride

McBride's unforgettable memoir tells his mother's brave, eccentric story in her own words. Daughter of a failed orthodox Jewish rabbi in the American South, she ran away to Harlem, became a Bap tist, married a black man, raised 12 children and put them all through college. Around her story is McBride's story of his own struggles for identity, and towards faith in a God neither black nor white, but 'the color of water'.

N 1997 291pp B1593

The Corrections
Jonathan Franzen

FINALIST
Pulitzer Prize for Fiction

Alfred is elderly and increasingly ill, and his wife Enid wants only to have her three adult children home for a family Christmas together. These three moved to other cities, where they contend with their own messy adult lives. The black comedy and pathos in family living are counterpointed against biting portraits of America in the late 1990s. An engrossing, ambitious, powerful, funny, exceptional novel.

F 2001 568pp B1677

Enjoyed *Instructions for a Heatwave*?

Try *The Hand That First Held Mine* by Maggie O'Farrell [B2094]

Craft for a Dry Lake
Kim Mahood

WINNER
The Age Nonfiction Book of the Year

Artist Kim Mahood drives and paints her way across the Tanami Desert and the cattle station where she grew up. Fiona Capp comments: 'This subtle, sharp eyed, resolutely unsentimental memoir could well mark a new phase in our literature about Australian outback life and the complexities of a white woman's relationship with the land and with the Aboriginal people who inhabit it.'

N 2000 266pp B1636

D

Dark Places
Kate Grenville

SHORTLISTED
Miles Franklin Literary Award

Albion Gidley Singer is the cruel, domineering patriarch from *Lilian's Story*. Grenville assumes his voice to give his carelessly misogynistic perspective on his life and values as a son, husband, and father in this disturbing and impressive novel that stands alone well, but perfectly complements *Lilian's Story*.

F L 1994 375pp B1439

Digging to America
Anne Tyler

Two families living in Baltimore each adopt a baby girl from Korea and meet up at intervals over the years: the all American Donaldsons and the Yazdans, an Iranian American family. International adoption is only one of the concerns here, as each parent, child and grandparent in this sensitively observed novel responds differently to questions of being a foreigner, belonging, and being American.

F 2006 277pp B1962

Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant
Anne Tyler

FINALIST
Pulitzer Prize

Pearl has been left to bring up two sons and an unruly, passionate daughter. Anne Tyler skilfully uses the power of youth's perceptions, and sets them off against the reality of 'adult' life. Loving descriptions of family relationships, including youthful jealousies flavour life into middle age.

F 1982 303pp B0777

E

Every Secret Thing
Gillian Slovo

This astonishing book traces the life of the daughter of an imperilled South African family of passionate fighters against apartheid. What does it do to your personal life if your parents are white, communist and irrepressible? Nadine Gordimer calls this an 'extraordinary expression of the very nature of loving'. Compulsive reading.

N 1997 282pp B1550

F

Falling Leaves
Adeline Yen Mah

Embracing historical events of world importance, Mah's tale of her life as an unwanted daughter in thrall to the ideal of filial devotion is gripping from the beginning. A portrait of all the basic (and base) family feelings – love and tenderness, hate, pain, greed, resentment, indifference and malice.

N 1997 278pp B1558

Family Matters
Rohinton Mistry

Who in the family will care for its ageing patriarch, now helpless after a fall? His daughter's family take him into their crowded Bombay apartment. The resulting dilemmas and pressure are interwoven with the old man's remembrances of a forbidden love in his earlier life. 'A luminous compassion, an abundance of life and piercing moments'.

F 2002 500pp B1818

Fault Lines
Nancy Huston

Told from the perspective of a series of 6-year-olds, the story reveals how scars from the past can shape the present. From California to New York, from Haifa to Toronto and Munich, family secrets unwind revealing disturbing truths including the family's history during WWII. Content may offend some readers.

F 2007 308pp B1989

NEW

The Fence
Meredith Jaffe

Gardening column writer and local stickybeak Gwen and her husband Eric have lived in the same house in suburban Sydney for decades. When a new hipster family moves into the house next door with their four children and two loud dogs, it is the proposal of a fence that is the act of war for Gwen. Clashes between generations, personalities and lifestyle break out as the two headstrong women battle for more than just council approval. A relatable, witty look into the struggle between the old ways and the new.

F 2016 368pp B2267

The Fifth Child
Doris Lessing

Lessing's engrossing novel explores the 'old fashioned' idyll of a couple who meet, marry and lovingly fill their house with their families. The arrival of their fifth, and very different, child raises dark questions about their family – and about the human family in contemporary society.

F 1989 159pp B1259

The Fine Colour of Rust
P.A. O'Reilly

Single mum Loretta lives in the dusty rural town of Gunapan with her two kids. She gamely steps up when the local school is about to be closed and the council approves a dodgy development project near town. A book about love, friendship and community, covering contemporary issues with tenderness and humour.

F 2012 247pp B2151

Foal's Bread
Gillian Mears

WINNER
The Age Book of the Year

SHORTLISTED
Miles Franklin Literary Award

Mears chronicles the hopes and heartbreaks of two generations of a NSW farming family, particularly the marriage of golden boy Roley to tough nut Noah. From the pre war rural show jumping circuit to the changing world of the 50s, this is a powerful testament to the Australian landscape and the vulnerability of the humans within it.

F 2011 361pp B2139

A Fraction of the Whole
Steve Toltz

Heroes or criminals? Crackpots or visionaries? Relatives or enemies? From his prison cell, Jasper Dean tells the unlikely story of his scheming father Martin, his crazy uncle Terry and how the three of them upset an entire continent. Incorporating death, parenting and first love this is a scathingly funny, heartbreaking story of families and how to survive them.

F 2008 711pp B2042

Frangipani
Célestine Hitiura Vaite

This mother daughter novel is full of Tahitian lore about men, women, children and the realities of life. Gossip, intrigues, family crises, and the mother's flavoursome advice to her headstrong daughter are conveyed with warmth, charm and gusto from this Tahitian-born author.

F 2004 295pp B1879

Freedom
Jonathan Franzen

We follow the lives of Patty and Walter Berglund and their children, while touching on the environment, overpopulation, sustainability and life in Middle America after September 11. It also tells a personal story that explores the relationship between the Berglunds and Walter's best friend and rival Richard Katz, a rock musician.

F 2010 562pp B2104

G

The Gathering
Anne Enright

WINNER
Man Booker Prize

The nine surviving children of the Hegarty clan gather for the wake of their wayward brother Liam. It wasn't the drink that killed him; it was the events of the winter of 1968 in his grandmother's house, which his sister Veronica must now come to terms with. Enright follows a line of hurt and redemption through three generations, as memories warp and secrets fester.

F 2007 261pp B1985

Gilead
Marilynne Robinson

WINNER
Pulitzer Prize

From the author of *Housekeeping* comes a beautiful story of faith, family, and history. Towards the end of his life, Reverend John Ames begins a letter to his son about the strained relationship between his father, a pacifist, and grandfather, an abolitionist, who 'preached men into the Civil War'.

F 2004 282pp B1963

The Glass Castle
Jeannette Walls

Walls' father was a hopeless alcoholic, and her mother an artist who let her four children fend for themselves. Walls' attitude to her parents is almost always affectionate – but readers may not be so forgiving! This book will elicit passionate discussion.

N 2005 341pp B1882

The God of Small Things

Arundhati Roy

WINNER
Orange Prize

Twins Estha and Rahel live in the Indian state of Kerala, where cruel caste traditions coexist alongside a modern communist movement. This moving novel explores the joys and pains of moments of life for a family in a society where love laws 'lay down who should be loved. And how, and how much'.

F 1997 340pp B1559

The Good Parents

Joan London

SHORTLISTED
Prime Minister's Literary Award

Maya moves to Melbourne and begins an affair with her boss whose wife is dying of cancer. When her parents arrive to visit, they find out that their daughter has disappeared. The award winning author of *Gilgamesh* unravels the complex bonds between parents, siblings, friends and lovers to create a portrait of contemporary Australia.

F 2008 351pp B2014

H

Hamlet's Dresser

Bob Smith

Having spent his earlier years caring for a disabled sister, in his teens he joined the backstage staff of a theatre company. Tender, restrained, and glowing with excerpts from Shakespeare, this book will fasten itself in your memory.

N 2002 285pp B1782

The Hand That First Held Mine

Maggie O'Farrell

Separated by fifty years, two women are connected in unexpected ways. Lexie is in her early twenties when she moves to London, becoming immersed in the 1950s Soho art scene. In contemporary London, artist Elina struggles to recover from a difficult birth, while her partner Ted faces questions from his past.

F 2010 341pp B2094

The Harp in the South

Ruth Park

This beloved Australian novel introduces Hugh and Margaret Darcy, doing their best to raise a family amidst the poverty and hardship of slum life in 1940s Sydney. Ruth Park combines robust and engaging characters with acute social observation. Her humanity, humour and skilful storytelling make *The Harp in the South* as fresh and readable as ever.

F 1948 225pp B2198

NEW

The Healing Party

Micheline Lee

SHORTLISTED
Victorian Premier's Literary Award

Years after fleeing from her domineering evangelical father, Natasha returns to Melbourne's eastern suburbs to nurse her mother, Irene, who is dying from cancer. When she returns she quickly realises nothing much has changed. When her father claims to have received a message from God saying his wife is to be miraculously cured, Natasha struggles with her family's blind faith. Funny at times, this novel tackles the serious issues of faith, lies and family.

F 2016 304pp B2255

Home

Larissa Behrendt

Stretching back to the early years of the 20th century, *Home* describes three generations of an Aboriginal family. The novel begins in contemporary Australia with Candice, a young indigenous lawyer visiting her ancestral country with her father. Behrendt's characters are vividly drawn and there is a buoyancy and optimism in her vision.

F 2004 317pp B1832

The Household Guide to Dying

Debra Adelaide

Australian author and domestic advice columnist Delia Bennet is diagnosed with cancer. She knows she will leave behind her husband, two young daughters and five chickens. Trying to get her house in order, she writes lists, makes plans, and contemplates how she should spend her remaining time.

F 2008 386pp B2011

The House in the Light

Beverley Farmer

A divorced Australian woman returns to the Greek village where she was once welcomed as a bride. Against the earthiness and austerities of rural Greece, Farmer traces the affection, scratchiness and strain in the relationship between Bell and her ageing mother in law, the matriarch Kyria Sofia. Complex, with a luminous quality to the prose.

F 1995 235pp B1447

This book raised considerable discussion about traditional family life in our own and other cultures, the role of religion in societies past and present, and attitudes to ageing in different cultures and generations.
Sandringham 6

Housekeeping

Marilynne Robinson

FINALIST
National Book Award

Still at school, Lucille and Ruth have high hopes of their aunt Sylvie who comes to keep house for them after their mother's death. But the gentle Sylvie is a drifter and her behaviour too bizarre for some. One sister departs and soon Sylvie and Ruth must move on. There is bleakness here, but also oddity, beauty and a sense of stillness. A book that lingers in the mind.

F 1981 187pp B1206

I

Indelible Ink

Fiona McGregor

WINNER
The Age Book of the Year

Marie is 59, recently divorced with grown children and living in an affluent Sydney suburb. When drunk she decides to get a tattoo and develops an unlikely friendship with the tattoo artist, who shows her a different side of Sydney. An immersing family drama set in the Howard era.

F 2010 446pp B2092

Instructions for a Heatwave

Maggie O'Farrell

July, 1976. London is sweltering through a heatwave when Robert Riordan walks out on his wife and disappears. His three adult children return home, and family secrets are revealed as tensions mount on a journey to Ireland. Beautifully written with surprising twists, this is a moving portrait of a family that comes undone.

F 2013 338pp B2179

Our group loved this book. It twisted and turned and held us with its pain and emotions right to the end. There were so many social issues raised that underlined how every member of the family coped or broke apart. It evoked powerful discussion. It made us stop and think about our own lives and our reactions to the hardships of others. A great read.
Yarrawonga 3

Isa & May

Margaret Forster

Isamay is writing a master's thesis about the role of grandmothers in women's history, which leads to an examination of her own grandmothers: pugnacious May and chilly Isabel. Each harbours intriguing secrets, which come to light as Isamay examines their lives. Forster's writing is entertaining and accessible, and a great catalyst for exploring the universal themes of family and the multiple roles of women.

F 2010 316pp B2121

J

Jesus Wants Me for a Sunbeam
Peter Goldsworthy

Rick, Linda and their two children represent the perfect Australian suburban family. When their daughter is diagnosed with cancer, their world is shattered. This novella poses important questions about death, the afterlife and the place of religion. The conclusion to this moving meditation on love, faith and fate will generate fiercely divided responses.

F 1993 133pp B1863

The Joy Luck Club
Amy Tan

FINALIST
National Book Award

A vibrant evocation of four Chinese women and their first generation Chinese American daughters: this brave, heartfelt novel powerfully communicates the intricacies of a double cultural identity, illuminating traditional Chinese customs and modern mother daughter relationships. Small print.

F 1989 288pp B1283

K

The Kitchen God's Wife
Amy Tan

Winnie's story moves from Shanghai in the 1920s, through the Japanese occupation of China, World War II and the rise of the communists, to her decades in America after 1949. Her personal life contains much pain, courage and joy. Emotionally charged yet unsentimental, the novel explores relationships, uncovers secrets, and describes Chinese customs.

F 1991 415pp B1330

L

Ladder of Years
Anne Tyler

SHORTLISTED
Orange Prize

Sensing indifference in her family, Delia Grinstead vanishes from their lives. Walking along the beach, she keeps right on going to a town nearby where she takes on a new life as a single working woman with no ties. Where will things go from here? An unsettling look at marriage, family, human complexity and simple needs. Funny and plangent by turns.

N 1995 326pp B1466

The Lake House
Kate Morton

A missing child and a family secret are at the centre of this enthralling mystery from the author of *The Forgotten Garden*. The Edevane family live an idyllic life in their beautiful Cornwall home – until their toddler son disappears. When disgraced police constable Sadie stumbles across the house decades later, she begins to unravel what really happened on that midsummer evening in 1933.

F 2015 608pp B2240

Last Friends
Jane Gardam

This is the final title in the trilogy featuring *Old Filth* and *The Man in the Wooden Hat*. It charts the life of Old Filth's great rival, Terence Veneering, from his unconventional childhood to old age in the English countryside. Gardam is a superb stylist and an astute navigator of the human heart. Last Friends is a must for any group that enjoyed her previous books.

F 2013 224pp B2196

Life in Seven Mistakes
Susan Johnson

Elizabeth Barton's art career is finally taking off. She's about to fly to New York for her first show at a prestigious gallery but first she must survive family Christmas on the Gold Coast. Johnson explores relationships and ageing in a black comedy with an unexpected climax.

F 2008 352pp B2037

Love and Vertigo
Hsu Ming Teo

Pandora is drawn back to her native Singapore to die, and her Australian-born daughter Grace tries to understand her mother's early life as the 'rubbish child' – the fourth daughter of a Singaporean Chinese family in the 1940s. In turn funny, sad and insightful about the tensions and mysteries in families fragmented by the dislocations of war and emigration.

N 2000 287pp B1645

Lovers' Knots
Marion Halligan

WINNER
The Age Book of the Year

A capacious, hundred year family novel which focuses on particular lives of individuals at key points. Like a moving photographic collage, it lets the reader glimpse the time shifts which show individual and family destinies from unexpected angles.

F 1992 377pp B1380

Lovesong
Alex Miller

WINNER
The Age Book of the Year

SHORTLISTED
Miles Franklin Literary Award

In her Tunisian café on the outskirts of Paris, Sabiha falls in love with Australian John, and together they fashion a new life. When writer Ken meets them in Melbourne later in life, the sadness in Sabiha's eyes draws him to tell their story. This is a story about home, family, and human frailties, raising questions of morals and purpose.

F 2009 368pp B2090

Enjoyed *The Joy Luck Club*?

Try *Wild Swans* by Jung Chang [B1397]

M

The Man in the Wooden Hat
Jane Gardam

Child of the Empire, spirited young woman, Establishment wife of lawyer Edward Feathers; Betty is every bit as intriguing and vivid as her husband. Gardam explores the landscape of a marriage, including its secrets and compromises, with wit and understanding. This novel stands alone well, and is a remarkable companion piece to *Old Filth*.

F 2009 233pp B2073

The Memory Keeper's Daughter
Kim Edwards

One evening in 1964, a blizzard forces Dr Henry to deliver his own twins. His son is born healthy, his daughter has Down syndrome. Making a decision that will haunt their lives forever, he asks the nurse to take their daughter to an institution, and tells his wife that the baby died. This international bestseller is a deeply moving exploration of family secrets and the redemptive power of love.

F 2005 401pp B1972

The Moor's Last Sigh
Salman Rushdie

This Indian family saga has a huge, surprising cast. Its mind blowing mixture of the private and public, the historical and invented is elegiac, outrageous, astute, funny. An imaginative and human challenge – vintage Rushdie!

F 1995 434pp B1492

A Mother's Disgrace
Robert Dessaix

An unusual and compelling autobiography written in mid life to describe how Dessaix came to find and know the woman who is his birth mother. He offers a moving account of the apparently ordinary couple who adopted him and were such loving parents, and talks candidly about his move away from married life to discover himself as a homosexual.

N 1994 195pp B1415

Mother's Milk
Edward St Aubyn

Patrick's mother Eleanor, ageing and ailing, is determined to sign over his inheritance to a New Age Foundation, while his wife Mary is lost in her obsession with motherhood. A bitingly witty and sometimes heartbreaking novel about family dynamics.

F 2006 304pp B1952

My Family and Other Animals
Gerald Durrell

The Durrell family, their eccentric hangers on, and the local animals, birds and insects provide a steady stream of hilarious incidents in this light hearted book, set in Corfu where the author lived as a boy in the 1930s. Small print.

N L 1956 300pp B0575

N

Nine Days
Toni Jordan

Spend nine days immersed in the lives of members of one Melbourne family from the 1930s to the present day. Kit's family, including his sister, mother and grandchildren, are engaging and real in this evocative and compassionate novel about sacrifice and survival.

F 2012 245pp B2172

Noah's Compass
Anne Tyler

A retired teacher in his 60s, Liam lives a lonely life in a small apartment. His inertia is broken by an intruder, a knock on the head and a case of amnesia. His eccentric second ex wife, his daughters and his grandson Noah all help Liam find direction. *Noah's Compass* explores the meaning of happiness and the connections that keep us anchored in our lives.

F 2009 277pp B2084

No Great Mischief
Alistair MacLeod

Driven from the Highlands in 1779, Calum MacDonald sails for Nova Scotia, where he and his people work as loggers and miners, struggling in the new land and its endless cold. Two centuries later, these red haired black eyed MacDonalds are still linked by intense clan loyalty.

F 1999 262pp B1627

O

Old Filth
Jane Gardam

Edward Feathers is well respected and known affectionately as Old Filth. Filth was a Raj orphan, sent 'home' at a young age from what was then Malaya, to be fostered and receive a proper English education. Gardam's beautifully written, memorable novel pieces together the mosaic of experiences that make up the life of this one member of the Establishment, and by extension, a generation of children of the Raj.

F 2004 260pp B1910

Our group was positive about this novel - we were curious that it is part of a trilogy and will explore further. Jane Gardam's evocation of the sense of loss experienced by young children wrenched from their parents for the sake of educating them in England was convincing, often amusing, and told us a lot about life under the empire.

Willie Worms

On Beauty
Zadie Smith

WINNER
Commonwealth Writers' Prize

From the bestselling author of *White Teeth*. Howard is an art historian at an East Coast college in the US. His marriage to Kiki is strained to breaking point, and their three children struggle to cope. When Howard's arch rival accepts a post in Howard's faculty, a cascade of hilarious and tragic events ensues.

F 2005 446pp B1953

Once in a House on Fire
Andrea Ashworth

This is an account of the writer's early years following the accidental death of her father. The men her mother accepts become violent, and the family spirals downward into poverty and uncertainty. Ashworth's lucid prose and lack of self pity and the child's protectiveness towards her beautiful, neglectful mother raise fascinating questions about human vulnerability and resilience.

N 1998 330pp B1740

The Orchard Thieves
Elizabeth Jolley

In this beautiful, autumnal work Jolley creates an insightful and artful work about families. The figures of the grandmother, the three sisters, and the young grandsons who give the book its title, open our imaginations to the poignant question of what one generation can pass on to following ones. More a fable than a novel. Clear print.

F 1995 134pp B1477

Other People's Children
Joanna Trollope

What does it feel like, for adults and children, when, after losing a partner by divorce or death, a man or a woman with children of various ages enters a new relationship? This absorbing, shrewd and sympathetic novel probing the complexities of modern family life will surely sound echoes for every reader.

F 1998 320pp B1749

The Other Side of the Bridge
Mary Lawson

Arthur and Jake Dunn are as different as two brothers can be. Arthur, who is older, is shy, dutiful and set to inherit the family farm in northern Ontario, Canada, while Jake is young and reckless. When Laura arrives in their 1930s rural community their uneasy relationship is pushed to the edge. A beautifully told story of love and family that spans the changes of rural life from the Great Depression to WWII.

F 2006 273pp B2003

We all appreciated this beautifully written story. The author brought the characters and setting vividly to life and the universal themes of friendships, love, sibling rivalry, family relationships and guilt evoked an emotional response in us all. It was an enthralling read.

Toowoomba 1 U3A

Our Father Who Art in the Tree
Judy Pascoe

A funny, touching novel evoking a family in crisis. A man dies suddenly, leaving four bewildered children and a distraught wife. In the heat of a Queensland summer they contend with his absence, and young Simone is convinced her father is still speaking to her from where he now lives in the great tree behind the house.

F 2002 169pp B1795

Our Tiny, Useless Hearts
Toni Jordan

"Nothing much happens in the outer suburbs. It's just like a spa retreat. A nudist, adulterous spa retreat." Caroline and Henry's marriage is teetering on the brink, so it's lucky that Caroline's sister Janice is there to look after their daughters. But Janice is busy dealing with her feelings toward her ex-husband, and to top it all off, Caroline's nosy neighbours seem to be having their own marital crisis. This entertaining, moving novel explores family, childhood, and the sacrifices we make for love.

F 2016 288pp B2245

P

Passing On
Penelope Lively

An unmarried daughter and son, of 52 and 49 respectively, are left by the death of their domineering mother to develop what remains of their lives. Compassionate, poised and finely written.

F 1989 210pp B1347

The Poisonwood Bible
Barbara Kingsolver

FINALIST
Pulitzer Prize for Fiction

Missionary preacher Nathan Price moves his family to the Congo in the '60s, a time of tremendous political and social upheaval. The narrative alternates between Nathan's wife and four daughters in this powerful, poignant and sometimes funny exploration of religious zeal, conscience, imperialist arrogance, and the many paths to redemption. Small print.

F 1998 543pp B1728

This was a popular book with our group. It generated a great deal of discussion regarding conditions in the Congo, family relationships, culture and hardships. We liked the format of family members having separate chapters expressing their views.

Shoal Bay "Bridge Bookies"

Precious Bodily Fluids
Charles Waterstreet

Full of event, flavour and brio as 11-year-old Charlie threads his way cheekily through a rollicking family memoir of the owners of Waterstreet's pub in Albury in 1961. Irish Catholic family and school culture, six o'clock closing, SP bookies, police raids and sinister plots to fluoridate the town's water are all part of a delightful and dreadful time, now gone.

N 1998 262pp B1718

A Private Man
Malcolm Knox

Set in contemporary Sydney, this is a portrait of three adult brothers and their parents, over the days following the father's unexpected death in curious circumstances. In Knox's look at different models of masculinity, the worlds of medical practice, test cricket and pornography merge in a literary thriller about a family under pressure. Strong language.

F 2004 385pp B1838

The Pure Gold Baby
Margaret Drabble

Jess is an anthropologist and single mother. Anna is her pure gold baby – a smiling child with a learning disability who never 'grows up'. Narrated by their neighbour Eleanor, The Pure Gold Baby profiles a changing society from '60s London to the present day, exploring forms of human kinship, the experience of ageing, and the way we care for one another.

F 2013 291pp B2201

R

Reading in Bed
Sue Gee

Dido and Georgia have been friends since university. They live in a cultured English world of lovely gardens, good books and conversation. But for the first time, Dido has reason to question her marriage, while widowed Georgia has yet to come to terms with the loss of her husband; their children are unhappy in love and perfect health is no longer a given.

F 2007 340pp B2016

The Rector's Wife
Joanna Trollope

In her early 40's, Anna realises that her Rector husband's parish is 'the other woman in my life'. Children's needs impel her to get a paid job. Trollope's account of the web of personal, family and parish life was reprinted 13 times in its first two years as a paperback. Good black print.

F L 1991 243pp B1423

Revolutionary Road
Richard Yates

FINALIST
National Book Award

Frank and April are bored by their 1950s suburban American lives and dream of being extraordinary. But their decision to change their life leads to tragedy. Tennessee Williams said: "here is more than fine writing; here is what… makes a book come immediately, intensely and brilliantly alive."

F 1961 336pp B2039

The Riders
Tim Winton

WINNER
Commonwealth Writers' Prize

Fred Scully's desperate quest to get his Australian family together again drives him from Ireland across Europe, with his gutsy and loving daughter. In the background are the mysterious, waiting riders and the Australian experience. Gripping suspense.

F L 1994 377pp B1455

Rose Boys
Peter Rose

WINNER
Biography Prize

Robert Rose was a footballer and cricketer in a famous Melbourne sporting family. Suddenly left quadriplegic at 22 by a car accident, Robert became totally dependent on others. His brother Peter, a poet, writer and editor, has written a memoir about a family under great pressure, a tribute to his brother and parents and a book of quiet power.

N 2001 289pp B1796

Running in the Family
Michael Ondaatje

Ondaatje returned to his native Sri Lanka in the 1970s to retrace the baroque mythologies of his forebears, outrageous, eccentric, or embattled: 'Everyone was vaguely related and had Sinhalese, Tamil, Dutch, British and Burgher blood in them going back for generations. Love affairs rainbowed over marriages and lasted forever so it often seemed that marriage was the greater infidelity.' An unforgettable book.

N 1982 207pp B1650

Running with Scissors
Augusten Burroughs

Burroughs' mother gave him away to her psychiatrist when he was twelve. His bizarre childhood, spent in the doctor's dilapidated mansion where he maintained a relationship with a paedophilic inpatient, is the basis for this harrowing, entertaining, and endlessly surreal memoir. Contains explicit content.

N 2003 304pp B1892

S

The Secret Agent
Joseph Conrad

A carefully developed human story of an agent's family in the grim world of the agent provocateur. It is based on a real incident, the attempted destruction of Greenwich Observatory, treated with Conrad's irony, scepticism and social insight.

F 1907 249pp B1013

Seducing Mr Maclean
Loubna Haikal

The daughter of a Lebanese family enrols in Medicine to fulfil her family's dreams. Her Australian boyfriend, the suspect business dealings of her brothers, and parents slaving away in their restaurant, are ingredients in this fast moving comic novel.

F 2002 318pp B1679

The Shipping News

Annie Proulx

WINNER
Pulitzer Prize

WINNER
National Book Award

A hapless New York hack journalist takes off with his two small, motherless daughters and redoubtable aunt to storm battered Newfoundland, where he gradually makes a new life. The characters, wild setting and remarkable writing all come off the page with a blast of freshness. An irresistible comedy of human life and possibility.

F 1993 337pp B1458

A Short History of Tractors in Ukrainian

Marina Lewycka

SHORTLISTED
Orange Prize

Sisters Nadezhda and Vera haven't always seen eye to eye. But when their father's young, glamorous fiancée Valentina bursts into their lives 'like a fluffy pink grenade' they agree they must rescue him from her greedy clutches and his own geriatric fantasies. Enlivened with quirky characters and original dialogue, this spirited story is about love, old age, immigration, Ukrainian history and family secrets.

F 2005 324pp B1893

Sisters

Drusilla Modjeska

Australia's foremost women writers – Modjeska, Mears, Yahp, Garner, Hewett and Jolley – explore the joys and vexations of sisters, in autobiographical essays and more or less fictional stories. Wonderful glimpses of writers' lives and into all that is involved in being and remembering siblings.

N 1993 185pp B1427

The Slap

Christos Tsiolkas

WINNER
Commonwealth Writers' Prize

A man slaps a child at a suburban barbeque. The child is not his own. This event and its consequences have a rippling effect on the friends and family at the barbeque. Told from the viewpoints of eight people, *The Slap* is an unflinching look at the modern family. Strong language may offend some readers.

F 2008 400pp B2034

The Sound of One Hand Clapping

Richard Flanagan

SHORTLISTED
Miles Franklin Literary Award

Sonja Buloh has gone to Sydney to make herself a carefully ordered life. Her return to Tasmania connects her with the traumas of her migrant parents' European and Australian pasts, and the childhood she has tried to forget. An important novel about dislocation, work, family.

F 1997 425pp B1586

A Spot of Bother

Mark Haddon

From the author of *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time*. George is trying to settle quietly into retirement, but his daughter is marrying an inappropriate man, his wife is carrying on with his ex-colleague, and an unsettling rash has appeared on his hip. As the Hall family slides into chaos, George quietly and politely begins to go mad.

F 2006 390pp B1966

Summer at Mount Hope

Rosalie Ham

Ham's second novel is a 19th century romance. Feisty heroine Phoeba Crupp lives with her parents and sister on a small farm near Geelong. Her father moved his family from the city to establish a vineyard, a decision Phoeba's mother bitterly resents. With less black comedy than in *The Dressmaker*, Ham highlights the efforts of women a century ago to thwart tradition and pursue their dreams.

F 2005 296pp B1936

Swallow the Air

Tara June Winch

When May's mother dies suddenly, she and her brother Billy are taken in by Aunty. While Billy takes his own self destructive path, May sets off to find her father and her Aboriginal identity. Written in a poetic style, with an excellent ear for dialogue, these skilfully crafted interlinked stories about growing up on society's fringes herald a distinctive and exciting voice in Australian indigenous fiction.

S 2006 198pp B1937

The Sweet Shop Owner

Graham Swift

A decisive day in the life of 60-year-old Willy Chapman evokes the personal, family and social history of his life and his shop. Clear, compassionate writing reveals courage, pain, laughter, limitation and unexpected sweetness in an ordinary life.

F 1980 222pp B1203

Swimming with the Jellyfish

Vicki Hastrich

With a gift for humour and characterisation Hastrich evokes a small New South Wales coastal town through the eyes of a likable eccentric woman, still preoccupied by the disappearance of her mother twenty years back. A warm, quirky, insightful book with a cast of memorable characters.

F 2001 224pp B1692

T

A Tale of Love and Darkness

Amos Oz

The single child of a couple who migrated to Israel in the 1930s, Oz grew up in Jerusalem and is now one of Israel's foremost writers. His family chronicle is mesmerising: funny, intense, tragic. In the layers of his extended family in Israel – all transplanted from Eastern Europe and drenched in European languages and culture – we see the making of Jewish Jerusalem, and beyond that the emerging state of Israel.

N 2004 564pp B1938

That Eye, the Sky

Tim Winton

A threatened family struggles to hold together in the city outskirts. The moving story is beautifully told in the pungent slangy idiom of 12-year-old Ort Flack. We see his family (and the big human questions) through his loving, troubled, visionary eyes.

F L 1986 150pp B0875

There Should Be More Dancing

Rosalie Ham

On Margery's eightieth birthday she reflects back on her life. She has lived quietly in Brunswick (Melbourne) for the past sixty years but now she wants to jump off the balcony at her hotel. She doesn't trust anyone, least of all her family. However, she doesn't want to hurt anyone below the hotel so instead she thinks back and revisits her life. Told with Rosalie Ham's wit, humour and compassion.

F 2011 347pp B2128

Although for ladies 'of a certain age' this novel was very confronting, we found it also poignant. The characters were well drawn and the structure held the readers' interest. Very funny in parts but also very sad; we had a good discussion about ageing, families and friendship.

Seaford Shortfalls

A Thousand Acres

Jane Smiley

WINNER
Pulitzer Prize

Dominating, implacable Larry Cook owns the largest, richest farm in Zebulon County, Iowa. Without warning he opts to retire, passing the farm to his three daughters and setting off a chain of events which will divide the family and bring dark secrets to light. In her modern reworking of Shakespeare's tragedy *King Lear*, this American novelist produces a compelling tale about family, human nature, and this farming community.

F 1991 371pp B1499

Families

L Large Print F Fiction N Nonfiction S Short Stories Adapted Book Book Group Favourite

A Thousand Splendid Suns
Khaled Hosseini

Brought together by war, loss, and marriage to the same cruel man, Mariam and Laila develop a lifelong friendship. Spanning the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the Afghan civil war and the rule of the Taliban, this is a moving tale of friendship, love and family.

F 2007 370pp B1961

The Tiger in the Tiger Pit
Janette Turner Hospital

The tiger is an old man facing his 50th wedding anniversary, irritated and alienated by present incapacities and past lost opportunities. His wife strives to recompose a family harmony, recognising that 'We are all capable of brutality, aren't we?' A deftly woven plot in this thought provoking exploration of parents and children.

F 1983 256pp B1244

The Time We Have Taken
Steven Carroll

WINNER
Miles Franklin Literary Award

Summer, 1970: television and wireless shop proprietor, Peter, pronounces his Melbourne suburb one hundred years old. As his community prepares to celebrate progress, a mural is commissioned of the area's history. But what vision of the past will this painting reveal? The third in a trilogy, Carroll's novel is a meditation on the rhythms of suburban life during a time of radical change.

F 2007 327pp B2027

Enjoyed *Brick Lane?*

Try *A Thousand Splendid Suns* by Khaled Hosseini [B1961]

Tinkers
Paul Harding

WINNER
Pulitzer Prize

Clockmaker George Washington Crosby lies dying and travels back in time through memories of his impoverished childhood in rural Maine, and of his father, a peddler who suffered from epileptic seizures. Harding's language dazzles, whether he's describing the workings of clocks or sensory images of nature.

F 2009 191pp B2103

Our group did not find this easy but those who persevered found it very rewarding; particularly the descriptive passages relating to the landscape and passing seasons. We had a good discussion about memories and how one person can recall things differently to another. Even those who did not finish the book could enter into the discussion.

Traralgon: Latrobe Ladies

Trespass
Valerie Martin

Trespass is the story of two families haunted by the past. Chloe Dale is discontent with the American involvement in the Iraq war, and with her son Toby's girlfriend Salome Drago. An émigré from the former Yugoslavia, Salome has her own concerns and dangerous secrets from her past are about to catch up with her.

F 2007 288pp B2019

U

Unless
Carol Shields

Norah, beloved adult daughter of Reta Winters, opts out of normal life in order to sit on a gritty street corner mutely displaying a sign around her neck that reads 'GOODNESS'. Her mother's search for what drove her daughter to this turns into a funny meditation on where we find meaning and hope. A suspenseful fiction about supposedly ordinary lives from this exceptional Canadian novelist.

F 2002 213pp B1696

V

Various Pets Alive and Dead
Marina Lewycka

Unrepentant hippie Marxists Doro and Marcus realise the revolution is never coming. But why do their children have to embrace capitalism and consumerism so enthusiastically? A charming story about family values and the comedy of the new generation gap from the author of *A Short History of Tractors* in Ukrainian.

F 2012 366pp B2165

W

We Are All Completely Beside Ourselves
Karen Joy Fowler

WINNER
PEN/Faulkner Award for Fiction

SHORTLISTED
Man Booker Prize

Something in Rosemary's childhood turned her from a lively, chatty child into a quiet adult with a secret. Her siblings disappeared inexplicably; her father, a renowned psychologist, brought home his work in surprising ways. Rosemary attempts to reconcile her present with her jumbled memories, wondering what it is we relate to in others – is it the 'human', or the 'being'?

F 2014 336pp B2215

The White Earth
Andrew McGahan

WINNER
Miles Franklin Literary Award

WINNER
The Age Book of the Year

Do we own the land or does it own us? Who can claim to belong here? In the Darling Downs in the years when the imminent passage of Native Title is of huge concern to local landowners, a fatherless boy and his mother are taken in by the family patriarch. Part family saga, part history and part gothic thriller, this novel is set in a landscape haunted by the ghosts of black and white.

F 2004 389pp B1852

White Teeth
Zadie Smith

WINNER
Whitbread Novel Award

This sparkling, noisy, comic epic of multicultural Britain makes joyful use of vernaculars, various, as it traces the inter connections of three families, one Indian, one white and one mixed, over 25 years in North London and Oxford. A novel with a relish for ideas, for language and for the tragic comedy of human life.

F 2000 462pp B1772

The World Beneath
Cate Kennedy

As Sandy and Rich approach middle age they look back on the Franklin Blockade as the highlight of their lives. While Sandy embraced new age spirituality and the mothering of their 15-year-old daughter, Rich roamed the world with his camera, trying to recapture the promise of his youth. Rich attempts to rekindle his relationship with his daughter on a trek in the Tasmanian wilderness, but disaster looms. All three go on a journey and let go of the past, while they move towards a future together.

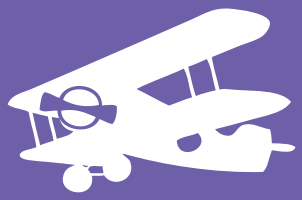
F 2009 342pp B2071

Y

You Gotta Have Balls
Lily Brett

Ruth is a 54 year old Jewish Australian running a successful business in New York. She worries about her weight, about her husband, and about her 87-year-old father, the irrepressible Edek. Enter Zofia: buxom Polish 60 something with one eye for business and another for Edek, and Ruth's worrying reaches hilarious heights. In this light hearted but satisfying novel, Brett tackles serious themes with wit and verve. Frank and with occasional strong language, this is delightful social comedy about modern family life.

F 2005 293pp B1944



Journeys

These books celebrate the ways we can step out and engage with the world, from travel writing to intensely personal and spiritual experiences.

A

The Accursed Mountains
Robert Carver

Robert Carver knows he was lucky to leave Albania alive. He foiled an attempt on his life, travelled the worst roads he has seen and fought off cholera and dysentery. He describes wonderful scenery and remote settlements where a centuries old way of life is still unchanged.

N 1998 349pp B1649

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn
Mark Twain

This great American novel is a comic and searching examination of American society in the mid 19th century. The depiction of life on the Mississippi raises larger questions of individuality, conformity and escape.

F 1884 370pp B0105

Almost French
Sarah Turnbull

A frank and engaging travel memoir from this Australian ex pat about her new life in Paris with a 'very French Frenchman'. An honest, often amusing account of the highs, lows and culture clashes associated with living in a foreign country. Read this book for an insider's account of life in Paris – food, fashion, social rituals, bloody minded bureaucrats and pampered pooches.

N 2002 309pp B1776

Almost French was enjoyed by all. We were made aware of many of the cultural differences between the two countries, particularly social ethics and of the difficulties one has adjusting to these differences when one decides to live there, very different from being a tourist.
Essendon 6

An Authentic Life
Caroline Jones

Caroline Jones sees her book as an invitation to the reader 'to reflect on your own story, on your own experience, on the way you are living your life – to discover the revelation it has to offer you'. She reveals a few central moments in her own life story as she explores the stories she elicited in her ABC Radio National program 'The Search for Meaning'.

N 1998 312pp B1707

B

Balanda
Mary Ellen Jordan

'Balanda' is the word used by Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory to describe non-Aboriginal people. Fuelled by a desire to make a meaningful contribution to the lives of indigenous Australians, Jordan spent a year working at a tiny arts centre in Arnhem Land. The transition from Melbourne to Maningrida was extreme and being a 'Balanda' proved more complex than Jordan bargained for. As her disillusionment grows, her opinions on race, culture, language, art and political correctness are constantly challenged. An honest, perceptive and engaging contribution to the relationship between black and white Australians.

N 2005 224pp B1868

Behind the Wall
Colin Thubron

A finely written look at China. The big picture is made up of many tiny portraits of people who are simultaneously common and extraordinary. Thubron parades before us the little lives of babies, people who have nothing, the greedy and the powerful, all as individuals. Informative and rewarding.

N 1987 302pp B1356

Bloodletting & Miraculous Cures
Vincent Lam

Dr Vincent Lam draws on his life experience as he follows a group of young doctors from medical school to emergency rooms. *"Each of these interconnected stories reveal nuances of different pressures – the immense sense of responsibility, sleep disturbances, psychological problems and the failures of imperfection"– Toronto Star* (Canada).

F S 2005 350pp B2024

Brick Lane
Monica Ali

WINNER
Man Booker Prize

Life for Bangladeshi village girl Nazreen is duty and obedience until her father arranges her marriage to Chanu of Tower Hamlets, London. Nazreen struggles to reconcile herself both to fate and to choice as she faces issues surrounding family, identity, Islam and community.

F 2003 492pp B1813

Brooklyn
Colm Tóibín

Eilis Lacey leaves her small town in south east Ireland in the 1950s, and sets off for a new life in Brooklyn. When tragedy strikes, she is faced with a difficult decision between love in her new land and the promises to her family back home.

F 2009 256pp B2059

C

Catfish & Mandala
Andrew X. Pham

Pham's family escaped Vietnam in 1977. Twenty years later, Pham abandons his engineering career and makes an epic year long bicycle journey on a shoestring budget through New Mexico, USA, Japan and finally Vietnam. Part travelogue, part memoir, this is a confronting book about cultural identity, framed within an exciting adventure story.

N 1999 342pp B1874

A Change of Skies
Yasmine Gooneratne

A witty, multi faceted exploration of differences and misunderstanding between cultures, and the impact of moving between cultures. Neither Australia nor Sri Lanka will look quite the same to you after this.

F 1991 329pp B1319

City of Djinns
William Dalrymple

Subtitled '*A Year in Delhi*', the book presents encounters with a range of individuals – Muslims, Sikhs, Anglo Indians, Punjabis, Sufi mystics, calligraphers, eunuchs, pigeon flyers – whose stories reflect the eventful history of this ancient city. Lively, diverting and informative: a real delight. Print smallish but clear.

N 1993 350pp B1405

Conditions of Faith
Alex Miller

A young Australian decides to marry a Scottish Frenchman and folows him to 1920s Paris, where he is working on a design tender for the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Inevitably the realities of her daily life as wife, pregnant woman and mother clash with her desire for liberty and the need to use her mind. A splendid account of the excitement and cruel sacrifices entailed in creative and intellectual commitment.

F 2000 406pp B1634

D

A Death in Brazil
Peter Robb

WINNER
The Age Nonfiction Book of the Year

Robb paints a picture of South America's largest and most mysterious country, blending personal journey with a portrait of a sensual, often violent society with extremes of poverty and wealth; a background of Portuguese and centuries of slavery, workers' strikes and organised crime – all flavoured with lime and coconut juice.

N 2003 372pp B1827

Diary of a Welsh Swagman, 1869–1894
William Evans

Joseph Jenkins worked on farms in the Ballarat and Castlemaine area and kept diaries for 25 years. These diaries lay in an attic (in Wales) for 70 years before they were found and interpreted as a valuable historical document which conveys the personality of the diarist.

N 1975 216pp B1089

Down Under
Bill Bryson

Of course, we all know that Australia is a huge, mainly empty country of aggressive climatic extremes and teeming with poisonous creatures. Even so, give yourself the pleasure of accompanying American born Anglophile Bryson as he sights a range of the country's must see destinations and draws such conclusions for himself. He can't help just liking it here, but his account of Oz is still sharp witted and aware.

N 2000 319pp B1753

E

Eat Pray Love
Elizabeth Gilbert

After a bitter divorce and a turbulent love affair, Gilbert realised it was time to pursue three things: pleasure, devotion and balance. Her spiritual quest unfolds in an engaging and highly enjoyable travel narrative that takes her to Italy, India and Indonesia.

N 2006 348pp B2000

The End of Seeing
Christy Collins

WINNER
Seizure Viva La Novella Prize

Ana is still recovering from the death of her daughter when her husband goes missing on a photojournalistic assignment overseas. Nick's last pictures were taken all across Europe, following a theme of refugees and forgotten people. Uncovering the trail left by his photographs, Ana sets out to find Nick – or, at least, the truth of what happened. Beautiful and haunting.

F 2015 240pp B2233

The English
Jeremy Paxman

The English are an ineradicable part of Australian history. This witty, penetrating book analyses English society, offering historical and sociological explanations for the way the English are. Paxman's scholarship and intellectual rigour forces a careful consideration.

N 1998 309pp B1639

F

A Fez of the Heart
Jeremy Seal

The fez has played a central role in Turkey's conflicting desires to be both Eastern and Western, both Muslim and secular. It was banned in 1925 by Kemal Atatürk, and Seal sets out to trace its history and demise. An engaging, gentle, often funny travelogue offering real insights into Turkey.

N 1995 291pp B1528

The Fig Tree
Arnold Zable

Including his Polish Jewish parents and his wife's Greek parents, Zable collects stories about belonging and dislocation. We move from late migrant era Carlton to Ithaca, hearing tales of refugees and wanderers, singers and poets. Hospitality and the welcoming of strangers are recurring motifs in a book which remains relevant today.

N 2002 222pp B1685

Flight Behaviour
Barbara Kingsolver

SHORTLISTED
Orange Prize

Farm wife Dellarobia sees her world ignited in a literal blaze of colour when rare Monarch butterflies make their home in the forests on her family's land. Class differences and societal values deepen as science clashes with religion around this small town American family, and the result is a thought provoking reflection of humanity against a backdrop of a world in flux.

F 2012 436pp B2190

Floundering
Romy Ash

SHORTLISTED
Miles Franklin Literary Award

Abandoned by their unreliable mother, Tom and Jordy live with their grandmother until their mother's sudden reappearance. During a haphazard road trip, she leaves them again, this time on Australia's west coast. Desperate, the boys turn to an old man for help – but what danger does he pose?

F 2012 202pp B2162

Footsteps
Richard Holmes

These 'footsteps of a romantic biographer' appeal to lovers of biography, travel and history, telescoping the joys of several books. Walk with R. L. Stevenson through France; join in the French Revolution with Wordsworth and Wollstonecraft; visit Shelley's complicated household in Italy. Hunting his haunting subject, Holmes struggles towards his own mature identity.

N 1985 288pp B1530

The Fountain of Age
Betty Friedan

Friedan covers many of the issues and choices facing people as they age. She attacks our society's fear and denial of age, and its belittling stereotypes of older women and men. She offers facts, anecdotes and experience in a discursive and cheerfully resilient account of the third age – not a dead end, but a fountain! Smallish print.

N L 1993 654pp B1407

French Lessons
Alice Kaplan

Brought up in a Minneapolis family, Kaplan spent her fifteenth year at a French speaking Swiss school. Exploring French became a passion, and her account of this is entrancing to language lovers. Her later research into French fascist writing linked to memories of her father, a lawyer at the Nuremberg trials. Direct, candid and mind stretching.

N 1994 221pp B1443

From Rice to Riches
Jane Hutcheon

Born in Hong Kong and part Chinese herself, ABC correspondent Jane Hutcheon takes the reader on a journey into her family's past as well as across the new China. With refreshing directness she recounts her round as a foreign journalist – meeting characters from all levels of society, outwitting the Security Police and writing self confessions when found out, and sampling the country's varied and delicious cuisine.

N 2003 371pp B1819

G

Gilgamesh
Joan London

SHORTLISTED
Miles Franklin Literary Award

WINNER
The Age Book of the Year

A small town Australian woman journeys to war torn Armenia to find the father of her child. Her retelling of the ancient Mesopotamian epic of the hero Gilgamesh, his mourning for his beloved friend Enkidu and his eventual homecoming, resonates with the journey taken.

F 2001 255pp B1695

A God in Ruins
Kate Atkinson

WINNER
Costa Book Award

Teddy is the younger brother of Ursula in *Life After Life*, and in this companion novel we follow the life he would have had, had he survived the war which killed him in Ursula's story. Atkinson writes with sensitivity and humour of life's highs, including a bucolic childhood, and lows, such as Teddy's experience of war and the small disappointments of fatherhood – and of living.

F 2015 400pp B2221

H

Heart of Darkness ✪
Joseph Conrad

In the Congo during its colonisation by Belgium, shocks and transformations resulted from the clash of cultures. The novel follows a newcomer's journey up river and inland to the heart of that experience.

F 1899 340pp B0003

A postcolonial classic, this book is a great insight into British colonial imperialism and how the Congo natives were dehumanised.
Jess Z, Book Groups Staff

Highways to a War
Christopher Koch

WINNER
Miles Franklin Literary Award

'Being in battle, like being in love, is one of the fundamental human experiences.' Set in the predominantly male world of war journalism, this novel opens in 1976 with the disappearance of a gifted war photographer in Cambodia, and follows the highways of his life into the countries and wars he covered.

F 1996 451pp B1504

Holy Cow!
Sarah Macdonald

Macdonald starts out as a 'fundamentalist atheist', but her encounters with Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Jainism, Sufis, Sikhs, Parsees, Christians and an assortment of yogis, sadhus, swamis, nuns and Bollywood stars leave her with a more complex agnosticism.

N 2002 298pp B1784

The Hungry Tide
Amitav Ghosh

Piya, an Indian born American is in search of a rare river dolphin in the wandering strands of the Ganges. When she hires an illiterate local fisherman, to guide her through the backwaters, sophisticated Delhi businessman Kanai must act as translator. Ghosh skilfully binds three people together in an exotic place to examine ideas of love, jealousy, pride and trust.

F 2004 403pp B1883

I

I Heard the Owl Call My Name
Margaret Craven

Despite encroaching social change, tribal beliefs and ways are still important to the Indian tribe living in a village of British Columbia. How can their new Anglican vicar, young Mark Brian, find acceptance, serve them and learn from them? Canada's rivers, salmon, wild geese and changing seasons are central to this simple and moving tale. Fair sized print.

F 1967 133pp B1235

In Search of the Blue Tiger
Robert Power

Aided by a vivid imagination, lonely young Oscar escapes his brutal home life through a rich fantasy world. The relationships he forms along the way with widowed librarian Mrs April and twin girls Perch and Carp will shape their destinies in profound and tragic ways.

F 2012 333pp B2160

In Siberia
Colin Thubron

Thubron journeys by train, river and truck across the vastness of Siberia among the people most damaged by the collapse of Communism. He ranges from Mongolia to the Arctic Circle, from the site of the last Czar's murder and Rasputin's village to the graves of ancient Scythians, to Baikal, deepest and oldest of the world's lakes.

N 1999 287pp B1762

Inside Outside
Andrew Riemer

The Sydney based academic, writer and critic left Budapest during 1946 at the age of 10. In 1990 he returned for a visit, hoping to get some sense of his family's past there. A witty, lucid and memorable account of two worlds, also offering Riemer's views on issues such as the importance in a new country of language acquisition.

N 1991 218pp B1328

Interpreter of Maladies
Jhumpa Lahiri

WINNER
Pulitzer Prize

Wherever each of these nine short stories is set, from Bengal to Boston, all in some way explore 'Indianness' and the complex mechanics of adjustment to new circumstances, relationships, cultures. In transparently simple writing, devoid of overt comment, Lahiri uses voice and viewpoint in such a way that the stories linger in the mind.

S 1999 198pp B1763

Iron & Silk
Mark Salzman

From the age of 13, this engaging young American was absorbed by all things Chinese. His account of two years he spent teaching English in Changsha in the early 1980s is a series of entrancing anecdotes about his students, friends and those who teach him more about the literature, calligraphy and martial arts he loves. Unforgettable vignettes of China and the Chinese way of doing things.

N 1986 211pp B1304

J

Journey to the Stone Country
Alex Miller

WINNER
Miles Franklin Literary Award

A Melbourne academic and an Aboriginal stockman meet again and travel together through the high ranges of remote North Queensland to the places they have known and come from. Miller's intimate knowledge of the outback resonates through his novel, both a cross cultural love story and an exploration of identity, of how and where one belongs, and of our painful histories.

F 2002 364pp B1803

M

Mahjar
Eva Sallis

Many books have been written about the experience of migrating to Australia from Europe and Great Britain. But these eloquent, linked stories take us into the very different lives of immigrants from the Middle East. Sallis explores exile, loss, personal displacement, growth and idiosyncrasy with empathy, comic warmth, and an undercurrent of anger in this timely book that is a joy to read.

S 2003 168pp B1834

Terrific book. We dare anyone (especially Pauline Hanson) to read this and not be moved by the plight of refugees. Beautifully and powerfully written, a real window into cultural differences and misunderstandings.
Mallacoota

Mantras & Misdemeanours
Vanessa Walker

Former journalist Vanessa Walker decided to spend a year in Macleod Ghanj (home of the Dalai Lama) researching a book on Tibetans in exile and furthering her study of Buddhism, but unexpectedly fell in love with an ex monk and became pregnant three months later. Part travelogue, part cross cultural love story, this is an enjoyable, educational and insightful read.

N 2006 293pp B1928

The Many Coloured Land
Christopher Koch

Koch's two great grandmothers settled in Tasmania in the 1840s: one a Protestant gentlewoman, the other transported as a convict. He explores Tasmanian and Irish connections in a book which combines family history, childhood memoir and his travels in two rather different Irelands, in 1956 and in 2000.

N 2002 246pp B1790

The Memory of Running
Ron McLarty

Smithy, the middle aged central figure in this American novel, is alone and in a bad way. Something prompts him to resurrect his old bicycle and head off for Los Angeles, through New York, St. Louis, and Denver, to find the sister who went missing years ago. His encounters on this cycling road trip show us an inarticulate, decent, and honest man. His story and voice carry the novel along.

F 2005 405pp B1929

Mermaid Singing; Peel Me a Lotus
Charmian Clift

In 1954, Australian writers Charmian Clift and George Johnston moved with their young family from London to the Greek Islands – long before the 'seachange' books of more affluent writers. Clift records the passage of the seasons and her family's experiences, writing with perceptiveness, warmth and vivacity.

F 1956;1959 422pp B1791

Miss Garnet's Angel
Salley Vickers

A retired teacher rents an apartment in Venice, changing her previously narrow life. Julia Garnet succumbs to the beauty of the city and its magnificent art and responds to the spirituality of the Catholic religion, becoming caught up in the lives of both locals and visitors. A gentle, kind, decorous, funny novel.

F 2000 342pp B1647

Montebello
Robert Drewe

Drewe writes about 'islomania' and the ocean, of death and renewal, his childhood and his career as a writer in this discursive sequel to *The Shark Net*. At its core is the author's journey with a group of environmentalists to the Montebello islands, site of little known British nuclear testing in the 1950s. Lots to discuss!

N 2012 286pp B2183

Mr Muo's Travelling Couch
Dai Sijie

Mr Muo, a 40-year-old student of Freud, returns from long years of study in Paris to his country of birth as its first psychoanalyst at large. China offers few patients and he is consumed by a new mission, to liberate his first love from prison where she has been consigned for political dissent. This comic novel follows its naïve hero's adventures and mishaps through the maze of present day China.

F 2005 264pp B1930

N

The Namesake
Jhumpa Lahiri

A story about an Indian boy growing up in America (and afflicted with a pet name in honour of a Russian writer), this novel depicts a recognised pattern of cultural transition: the parents cling to their Bengali past, while the next generation cannot shed the old ways fast enough. Lahiri writes with subtlety and her characters are beautifully observed.

F 2003 291pp B1835

Night Letters
Robert Dessaix

SHORTLISTED
Miles Franklin Literary Award

Diagnosed with a terminal illness, the novel's protagonist travels to Italy as his exploration of the meaning in life in the proximity of death moves him from the world of doing into a realm of being. A beautiful, civilised work of tale spinning, travel, and richly fanciful speculation.

F 1996 276pp B1542

Norwegian by Night
Derek B. Miller

82-year-old ex-marine Sheldon has reluctantly moved to Oslo, where he remains haunted by his past. When he witnesses a woman's murder by a Balkan gang, he rescues her 6-year-old son and makes a run, relying on military training now fifty years old. Both a thriller and an emotionally haunting novel about ageing and regret.

F 2012 305pp B2186

Notes from a Small Island
Bill Bryson

Bill Bryson is an unrepentant Anglophile who happened to be born in Iowa. He spent 20 years in England before deciding to return to the land of his birth. This account of his walking tour of the English countryside is full of genial fun poking at a country he adores.

N 1995 352pp B1599

O

The Odyssey
Homer

Odysseus' long voyage home from the Trojan War takes him through the terrors of the one eyed Cyclops, the seductive Sirens, and the wandering islands, before he finally reaches Ithaca and his faithful Penelope. This early Greek epic has inspired writers and artists in later ages.

F C8th BC 376pp B0335

The Old Man and the Sea
Ernest Hemingway

WINNER
Nobel Prize

In Hemingway's clear and direct prose, this story of an old man's fishing trip becomes the vehicle for the discovery of a new awareness of the dignity and beauty that can be found everywhere. A timeless tale.

F 1952 128pp B0205

The Old Man Who Read Love Stories
Luis Sepúlveda

Antonio Bolívar lives as a recluse deep in the Amazon jungle in Ecuador. When an ocelot begins attacking humans in the small settlement, he is obliged against his will to join a hunting party and confront the creature and his own past. A tale of life, death, atonement and the pleasures of reading.

F 1989 128pp B1836

One Thousand Chestnut Trees
Mira Stout

Irish American-Korean Anna visits Korea to discover her mother's family, a powerful clan stripped of their lands during the Japanese occupation. As the novel unfolds, details of Korean life are evoked with great piquancy, and we come to appreciate the country's turbulent history in this century.

F 1997 324pp B1717

Otherland
Maria Tumarkin

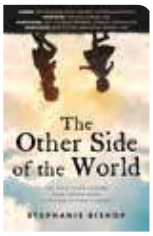
Maria Tumarkin travels home to rediscover her roots and introduce her Australian born daughter to the place where she grew up – but the Russia and Ukraine she returns to is not the same as the one she left in 1989. Maria comes to realise she cannot force her daughter to feel and think things just because she wants her to.

N 2010 313pp B2080

NEW

The Other Side of the World

Stephanie Bishop



WINNER
Readings Prize for New Australian Fiction

SHORTLISTED
Victorian Premier's Literary Award

WINNER
ABIA Literary Fiction Book of the Year

Set in post-war 1960s, Charlotte struggles with the demands of being a new mother. Her husband Henry makes a decision to move them from their cottage in Cambridge to sunny Perth, convincing himself that it's all for her sake. When their new life doesn't offer the solutions they'd hoped for, Charlotte and Henry embark on personal journeys that threaten their life together. An emotional novel that explores nostalgia, identity and the decisions we make to find ourselves.

F 2015 352pp B2268

Stephanie Bishop's second novel deals with issues of parenting, marriage, dislocation, and nostalgia in a story that is set in 1963 and spans three different locations – England, Australia and India. The book contains plenty of postcolonial themes, but also addresses motherhood and what it means to belong. A thought-provoking and well-written exploration of love and identity, highly recommended.

Jess Z, Book Groups Staff

Our Woman in Kabul

Irris Makler

Freelance journalist Makler was one of the first people into Afghanistan after the terrorist attacks of September 11. With a humorous and lively insight into the life of a journalist in the field and the contradictions of the American involvement in Afghanistan, Makler writes with a deep sympathy for the Afghan people, particularly the women and children.

N 2003 356pp B1837

P

Postcards

Annie Proulx

A Vermont farm clan declines after a son flees in terror following the violent death of his girlfriend. Barely literate, Loyal Blood makes his way across America, sending occasional postcards to his family, unaware that disaster has overtaken them. Heartbreak, hilarity and Proulx's unique style combine in this remarkable novel.

F 1992 340pp B1495

Q

Questions of Travel

Michelle de Kretser

WINNER
Miles Franklin Literary Award

Laura is an Australian traveller who becomes a travel guide editor. Growing up by the sea in Sri Lanka, Ravi dreams of other places until calamitous events lead him to the uncertain life of a refugee. This tender, witty novel tells their stories across decades and around the world. De Kretser writes masterfully about identity, authenticity and connection.

F 2012 515pp B2188

R

River Town

Peter Hessler

Peter Hessler spent two years in Fuling, a remote city in China's Sichuan province. This charming travel memoir is remarkable for Hessler's frankness, his curiosity and his unceasing desire to understand the people of China. He provides a unique glimpse into the Chinese psyche as he considers the profound cultural differences between China and the USA.

N 2001 402pp B1890

S

Salvation Creek

Susan Duncan

Susan Duncan – forty something, high profile, successful – seems to have it all. But a series of heartaches and tragedies means she must rebuild her life out of the self destruction she's been indulging in. Despite the grief underscoring this memoir, Duncan crafts her story with honesty, humour and wit, wonderful characterisation and exquisite depictions of place.

N 2006 404pp B2091

Searching for Charmian

Suzanne Chick

At 48, happily married and with three grown daughters, Suzanne discovers that her birth mother was the writer Charmian Clift. This moving book unfolds her attempts to comprehend her mother, and the turbulent changes in her sense of her own past and in her identity and direction in life.

N 1995 365pp B1457

Seize the Day

Marie de Hennezel

This moving compilation of a psychologist's diarised experiences at a palliative care unit in France explores terminally ill patients in their last stages of life. Compelling stories about love and family, giving up and taking charge, with a focus on what we can learn from the dying, make this an inspiring and emotional read.

N 2012 189pp B2143

Seven Years in Tibet

Heinrich Harrer

Tibet, though torn and vandalised, has still not played out its final act with China. Harrer's personal story is high adventure, but he also became a Tibetan official, friend and tutor to the 11-year-old Dalai Lama, and fled with him before the advancing Chinese.

N 1953 288pp B1360

Shadow of the Silk Road

Colin Thubron

Colin Thubron traces the first great trade route through China, the mountains of Central Asia, northern Afghanistan, Iran and Kurdish Turkey. Over eight months and 7000 miles he recounts his experiences along this historic route. Rich in humour, compassion and history.

N 2006 363pp B2004

That Shadow of the Silk Road was a delightful read and followed a wonderful journey along the Silk Road. One member remarked it took a lot longer to read than most books because of the wonderful descriptions. She didn't want to miss a word! The author's observations of the people and the mixtures of cultures gave us much cause for discussion.

Rylstone: The DDG's

Siddhartha

Hermann Hesse

Written in Hesse's 'Eastern' phase, this is a beautifully written novel about a young son of an Indian Brahmin. His search for truth is first through the spirit, then through the flesh, and finally through both.

F 1957 167pp B0464

Silences Long Gone

Anson Cameron

SHORTLISTED
Commonwealth Writers' Prize

Belle watches as her town in Western Australia is carted away, vowing to remain and die in the land where she long ago dug the ashes of her family. This is a curiously life-affirming expedition into the Australian heartland, which considers spiritual allegiance to the land.

F 1998 358pp B1767

Sing and Don't Cry

Cate Kennedy

Kennedy describes her years as a volunteer in Mexico with vivid accounts of food, family life, and fiestas. This is a poetic travel book with a social conscience, which is both troubling and uplifting.

N L 2005 300pp B1935

The Sisters Brothers
Patrick deWitt

SHORTLISTED
Man Booker Prize

Oregon, 1851: brothers Eli and Charlie Sisters embark upon a journey to San Francisco to fulfil a contract killing of a man who is not quite what he seems. The expedition offers dark adventures and comically bizarre encounters in a fun revival of the western genre with a 'Coen Brothers' feel.

F 2011 325pp B2142

T

That Oceanic Feeling
Fiona Capp

Capp explores surfing as an emblem of freedom, journeying from the waters of Byron Bay, Hawaii, Cornwall, and Port Phillip Bay. A unique memoir blending the power of the sea, physical elation, and personal reflection.

N 2003 288pp B1848

That Old Ace in the Hole
Annie Proulx

When naïve young Bob is sent to purchase land for a polluting hog farm, he finds a tough, wayward farming people intent on keeping their land despite all setbacks. The eccentric and tenacious locals and a brilliantly-evoked sense of place blend in this serious yet comic tale.

F 2002 361pp B1849

Things You Get for Free
Michael McGirr

Reader friendly, funny and deeply thought provoking. Maureen McGirr's long delayed trip to Europe with her priest son Michael provides a framework for exploring life and character, Michael's relationship with his father, and the world, a bus load of fellow tourists and the touristic highlights.

N 2000 296pp B1624

This Book Will Save Your Life
A. M. Homes

Richard trades stocks and shares out of his beautiful LA home, isolated - until an inexplicable and sudden burst of pain lands him in hospital. With his routine and his diet broken, Richard begins his journey to reconnect with life.This an entertaining and gently humourous novel that explores the quirkiness of LA and one man's search for meaning.

F 2006 372pp B2007

This Must Be the Place
Maggie O'Farrell

SHORTLISTED
Costa Book Award

Daniel's life has careened spectacularly off track – yet again. Banned from seeing his children, he has set up a new home in the Irish wilds with a startling woman; they are happy, until he hears news of a woman he loved (and wronged) 20-years ago. Across decades and continents and alongside a diverse cast of characters, Daniel will slowly learn about love, about forgiveness, and about living.

F 2016 496pp B2246

Throwim Way Leg
Tim Flannery

'*An Adventure*', promises the subtitle – a promise delightfully fulfilled by Flannery's account of his field work in Papua New Guinea and Irian Jaya. It's a dazzling yet unpretentious combination of his work as a research scientist with his concerns over human rights and our planetary future, lightened by the marvellous stories of an incurably curious and candid man.

N 1998 326pp B1564

Tracks
Robyn Davidson

Davidson taught herself from scratch to tame and train camels, then travelled with four of them and one dog across 1700 miles of desert from Alice Springs to the coast of Western Australia. This is her engrossingbook about the journey with plenty to discuss.

N L 1980 247pp B0599

Travels with My Aunt
Graham Greene

Staid, conservative Henry Pulling meets his Aunt Augusta for the first time in over 50 years, and soon finds himself accompanying her on journeys to exotic countries. Aunt Augusta is as fascinating as she is amoral.

F 1969 265pp B1158

Tuesdays with Morrie
Mitch Albom

A journalist renews his friendship with his old college professor who is dying. Mitch elects to help Morrie on his quest to make a study of life's last step. Written with a kind of unsensational sensationalism, this is a fearless book. Morrie and Mitch's stories are affecting and ultimately joyous.

B 1998 192pp B1769

U

Unaccustomed Earth
Jhumpa Lahiri

WINNER
Commonwealth Writers' Prize

From the Pulitzer Prize winning author comes a poignant collection of short stories that touch upon the immigrant experience. Eight stories take us from America to Europe, India and Thailand as they follow characters forging new lives.

F S 2008 333pp B2055

Under the Tuscan Sun
Frances Mayes

Mayes opens the door to a new world when she and her partner buy and restore an abandoned villa in the Tuscan countryside. In sensuous evocative language, she celebrates what she calls 'the voluptuousness of Italian life'. Armchair travel at its most inviting.

N 1996 280pp B1553

A scenic look into a rural town in Italy, Under the Tuscan Sun contains relatable themes of language, cultural barriers, heartbreak and the isolating nature of moving to a new place. The description of food was mouth-watering; it really evoked my time in Italy!

Larriana M, Book Groups Staff

The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry
Rachel Joyce

SHORTLISTED
Man Booker Prize

Harold sets out to post a letter, an ordinary task which becomes a 600-mile journey to the deathbed of an old friend. Left behind, Harold's wife Maureen finds herself on her own voyage of self-discovery in this unusual exploration of ageing, loneliness and love.

F 2012 365pp B2187

Vanishing Points
Thea Astley

SHORTLISTED
Miles Franklin Literary Award

Astley's larrikin humour and lyrically evocative writing shine through these two linked novellas, centred on life on a tiny Pacific isle for a would-be hermit and a frustrated wife. Small print, well spaced.

F 1992 234pp B1394

Voyages to the South Seas
Danielle Clode

WINNER
Nettie Palmer Nonfiction Prize

This is a swashbuckling tale of the adventures of the French explorers to Australia. Filled with colour illustrations, this lively account brings to life a classic cast of 18th century notables, exploring the French perspective of colonisation.

N 2007 261pp B2012

W

1788
Watkin Tench

First-hand accounts of the First Fleet's expedition to Botany Bay written by a captain in the marines. Robert Hughes says: 'An eye that noticed everything, a young man's verve, a sly wit ... the most readable classic of early Australian history.'

N 1793 276pp B1517

When Gods Collide

Kate James

The daughter of evangelical missionaries who spent most of her childhood in India, James became an atheist as an adult. This book recounts her journey as she returns to India to examine the nature of religious belief and cultural identity, with particular reference to the shocking murder of Australian missionary Graham Staines and his sons.

N 2012 244pp B2156

When in Rome

Penelope Green

Journalist Penelope Green abandons her comfortable existence and buys a one way ticket to Italy. Wrestling with the language and culture, Green writes about Roman life in hilarious detail. This enjoyable and readable memoir outlines the risks and rewards of chasing a dream on the other side of the world.

N 2005 308pp B2026

Z

Zarafa

Michael Allin

Sent in 1827 as a gift to the King of France, Zarafa, a young giraffe, took the French world by storm. This account of her journey from the Ethiopian highlands to Paris makes a charming, intriguing historical narrative. Attractive small book with pictures and maps.

N 1998 215pp B0172

Surviving, Prevailing

Whether it is the inhumanity of man's actions towards fellow man or the conquering of personal demons, this chapter explores the resilience of the human spirit in the face of adversity.

A

After the Fire, A Still Small Voice

Evie Wyld

WINNER
John Llewellyn Rhys Literary Prize

This debut novel set in Australia shows the impact of the violence of war. Frank moves to a seaside shack after he breaks up with his girlfriend. His father and grandfather before him each came to the shack after they served time in the Vietnam and Korean wars.

F 2009 296pp B2102

All the Birds, Singing

Evie Wyld

WINNER
Miles Franklin Literary Award

Tinged with anxiety, Jake's solitary life tending sheep on an isolated and brooding island in England is somehow preferable to whatever she left behind in Australia – until something starts killing her flock. Tensions of her past mix with her present in this clever and thoughtful mystery which reflects on belonging and identity. Contains themes that may disturb.

F 2014 240pp B2227

All Quiet on the Western Front

E.M. Remarque

This anti war polemic powerfully portrays the agony and futility of war. Remarque suffered personally through loss of his German citizenship as a result of this work. Many copies were seized and burnt by the Nazis.

F 1929 192pp B0101

Aman

Aman

The disturbing story of a Somali girl's first 17 years in the 1950s and 1960s. It shows the strong traditional culture in which 'Father is your main blood', a young female is answerable to her brothers, female circumcision is customary, and any involvement with whites can precipitate violence. Enlightening about the tribal and city peoples of contemporary Africa.

N 1994 350pp B1467

Anil's Ghost

Michael Ondaatje

A forensic anthropologist returns to Sri Lanka, a land steeped in culture and tradition, to investigate organised campaigns of murder engulfing the island. Ondaatje blends the history, art, archaeology and folklore of his extravagantly beautiful birthplace, now ravaged by civil war. Telling of a culture's attempt to submerge its history, the novel weaves an intricate chain of human connection.

F 2000 311pp B1629

An Anthropologist on Mars

Oliver Sacks

Here are seven detailed stories about patients living with neurological conditions such as autism, the violent tics of Tourette's syndrome, and a sudden and lasting inability to see colour. Sacks' infectious sense of wonder informs these gentle, exploratory, thorough accounts as he moves into wider speculations about the nature of the mind.

N 1995 319pp B1518

Enjoyed *Boomer and Me?*

Try *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time* by Mark Haddon [B1816]

The Assistant

Bernard Malamud

A Jewish storekeeper, in the poverty of New York, is badly hurt by an anonymous attacker who then becomes his assistant. A compassionate study of the human heart's growth out of violence.

F 1957 224pp B0232

It was one of the most bleak books our group had read, but most members agreed the characterisation was wonderful. In fact, some of the best the we had come across throughout the books we have read. It certainly stimulated discussion, provoking quite a strong reaction in some members, and led into a great discussion on Judaism, and various other religions.

Blackburn 10

B

NEW

The Bad-Ass Librarians of Timbuktu

Joshua Hammer

Young Abdel embarks on a journey across the deserts of Sahara to preserve and save the manuscripts of Timbuktu, first from the ravages of the desert, then from the hands of fundamentalist Islamists. The novel follows the story of Abdel setting up library archives, both public and private, in Timbuktu and then the quest to evacuate them from the clutches of extremists. The novel examines both the rise of radicalism in Northern Africa and Timbuktu's literary heritage.

N 2016 336pp B2264

The Bean Patch

Shirley Painter

Shirley Painter's indomitable memoir is sourced in her experience of the extreme child abuse she suffered, which was perpetrated within the family. This is a tribute to the teachers in government schools who opened her spirit so that she survived, even flourished, to write this confronting yet hopeful story. Likely to prompt animated discussion with very different viewpoints.

N 2002 310pp B1801

Beloved

Toni Morrison

WINNER
Pulitzer Prize

This extraordinary novel reveals the haunting legacy of slavery and racism: 'Not a house in the country ain't packed to its rafters with some dead Negro's grief'. Morrison's love song to her people and to the country which has so abused the African Americans enables us to begin to 'understand the source of the outrage as well as the source of the light'. Smallish print.

F 1987 275pp B1365

Lyrical, beautifully written with confronting themes, this book is not for the light-hearted but will move you. Highly recommended insight into the history of slavery in America.

Jess Z, Book Groups Staff

Birds Without Wings

Louis de Bernières

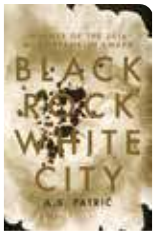
An epic novel of love and war is set in the former Ottoman Empire. De Bernières recreates a lost world in which Greeks and Turks, Christians and Muslims, lived as neighbours, sharing their lives, their cultures intermingling. Harmonious village life is destroyed by the events of World War I and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. This engrossing novel is both a celebration of humanity and a lament over the consequences of religious and racial intolerance.

F 2004 625pp B1871

NEW

Black Rock White City

A.S. Patric



WINNER
Miles Franklin Literary Award

Serbian academics Jovan and Suzana move to the Melbourne suburb of Black Rock, leaving behind two dead children when they were forced to flee war-torn Sarajevo. While at his cleaning job at Bayside Hospital, Jovan discovers bizarre graffiti that escalates into acts of violence. For Jovan, the seemingly nonsensical graffiti he cleans away evokes the trauma of his past and he begins to see the meaning behind the vandalism. This literary award-winner offers a compelling insight into displacement, language and the immigrant experience.

F 2015 248pp B2252

The Boat

Nam Le

WINNER
Prime Minister's Literary Award

These short stories travel the globe and include a grim journey of Vietnamese refugees on a small boat and a child living in Hiroshima during WWII. Le intuitively conveys the psychological conflicts people experience when they find their hopes and ambitions slamming up against familial expectations or the facts of history.

F S 2008 312pp B2022

Boomer & Me

Jo Case

Jo Case's son, 'Boomer', was diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome in primary school – something that led the writer to view herself and her family from a fresh perspective. This book (subtitled A memoir of motherhood, and Asperger's) is sure to spark discussion about what is 'normal', and whether difference necessarily means disability.

N 2013 337pp B2195

Brain on Fire

Susannah Cahalan

Cahalan was a bright young journalist when a sudden illness plunged her into terrifying psychosis, which was in fact a rare autoimmune disease affecting her brain. Part memoir, part journalism, part medical detective story, this fascinating book explores Cahalan's harrowing experience from multiple perspectives.

N 2012 264pp B2175

Burnt Shadows

Kamila Shamsie

After 9/11, an unnamed man waits to be clothed in the orange jumpsuit of Guantanamo Bay and wonders "how did it come to this?" In August 1945 in Nagasaki, Hiroko Tanaka survives the bomb blast. Her fiancé Konrad Weiss does not. The novel spans the intervening years and the interweaving lives of two families.

F 2009 363pp B2087

Bury Me Standing

Isabel Fonseca

The Gypsies are the untouchables of Europe, the lowest of the low – a scattered nation of 12 million people without a homeland. Fonseca, a journalist, describes the four years she spent with them in various countries of Eastern Europe to bring back her insightful, personal account of this mysterious people and the way they live. Many photographs.

N 1995 322pp B1521

C

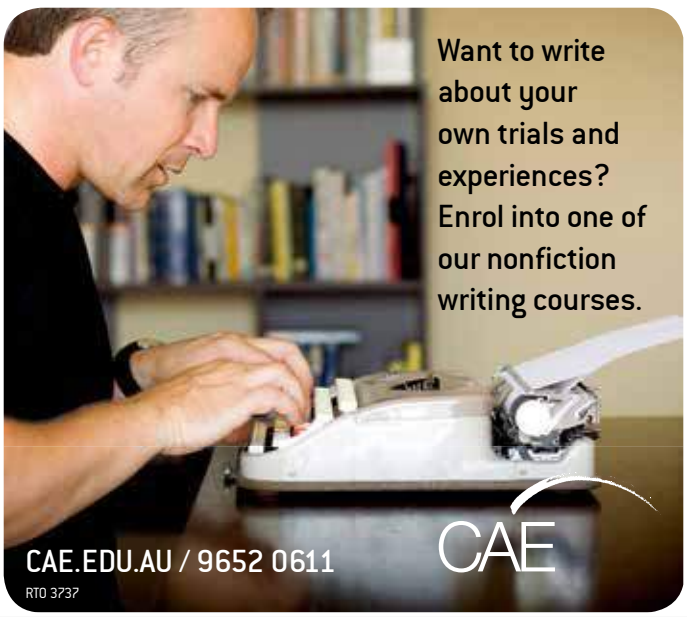
Café Scheherazade

Arnold Zable

You can go to this café in St Kilda and eat the delicious food. But to find its real life, you need to read this haunting novel. It interweaves the stories told by remarkably different Jewish émigrés from mid twentieth century Europe – Avram and Masha, the proprietors, and three of their regulars, Yossel, Laizer and Zelman. Trauma and dislocation are here transfigured by awe and lyricism.

F 2001 223pp B1620

We loved this book and it produced a wide-ranging discussion. We enjoyed the way the writing flowed and the stories of the characters. How insecure their lives were! Their experiences were very foreign to our own (thank goodness) although some of our members recalled childhood memories of rationing and wartime internment camps. We also made comparisons with other, more recent, migration waves and how those people have assimilated into society. We highly recommend this book!
Seaford Shortfalls



Close Range: Wyoming Stories

Annie Proulx

FINALIST
Pulitzer Prize for Nonfiction

Proulx is one of America's great storytellers, and here Wyoming forms the harsh territory of eleven stories peopled by rugged eccentrics – ranchers, rodeo riders, country women – all struggling to survive in a world of raw loneliness, brutality, longing, sexual urgency and sometimes bizarre events. Includes 'Brokeback Mountain', a story about two men gripped by a fierce attraction to each other when working as cow hands, which became a multi-award winning film.

N S 1999 318pp B1907

Confessions of a Clay Man

Igor Gelbach

The decay of a picturesque Black Sea resort during the decline of the Soviet empire forms the setting for this philosophical novel. The novel's main character, Bronhauser, struggles to make sense in a Kafkaesque world. Gelbach, who in 1994 was nominated for the Russian Booker Prize, now lives and writes in Melbourne. 'A wise and enchanting book,' says Robert Dessaix.

F 2001 184pp B1657

Coonardoo

Katharine Susannah Prichard

Coonardoo is an Aboriginal girl brought up by a white woman as companion to her little boy. The boy is indoctrinated against marrying black; and their love changes from an idyll to a stark tragedy. A moving account of the fate of black women in 'White' Australia.

F 1929 208pp B0201

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time

Mark Haddon

WINNER
Commonwealth Writers' Prize

15-year-old Christopher finds a neighbour's dog lying dead on the lawn and decides to write a murder mystery about it. He has Asperger's syndrome, and his flair for maths and scientific investigation is offset by unease and unusual behaviour in the presence of other people. Christopher is a brilliant creation: this depiction of the world from his viewpoint leaves a strong impression with much to discuss.

F 2003 272pp B1816

Overall most of our group really enjoyed this book and felt it gave them a good insight into how living with Autism might be. We felt the author very cleverly gave voice to the young boy and all his statements and views felt believable and true to character. The more adult issues in the book regarding his parents behaviour and coping mechanisms, added to the stories being told and initiated discussions about parenthood and relationships.

Camperdown: The Leura Literati

D

Dangerous Love

Ben Okri

A love story alive with the sounds and the smells of Nigeria in the 1970s where the ordinary and the poor live in almost impossible conditions. Struggling with post colonial realities and the aftermath of the civil war, the young artist and lover Omovo is still in touch with potent communal, cultural and spiritual traditions. A gripping novel from this Booker Prize-winning author.

F 1996 325pp B1523

Dark Victory

David Marr & Marian Wilkinson

A fascinating account of the Howard Government's unprecedented, relentless pursuit of 'border protection' on the eve of a federal election. The Tampa crisis and Howard's Pacific Solution is analysed within the context of the 2001 election, September 11 and the war on terrorism. A fly on the wall perspective on one of the most controversial episodes in Australia's political history.

N 2003 350pp B1779

The Day We Had Hitler Home

Rodney Hall

SHORTLISTED
Miles Franklin Literary Award

A blind Hitler illegally enters Australia in 1919 with our returning soldiers, and has to be smuggled out. Audrey McNeil, a young Australian cinematographer, grabs her chance to escape a difficult family, and goes to 1920s Germany. At first incredulous, we come to recognise home truths – about Australia's present and past, our insights and blind spots.

F 2000 351pp B1637

Disgrace

J.M. Coetzee

WINNER
Commonwealth Writers' Prize

An academic faces retribution when his sexual encounters with one of his students are exposed. Refusing to offer the public apology demanded from him, he resigns and retreats to his adult daughter's isolated farm. A powerful, quietly disturbing study of moral and historical accountabilities in the new South Africa.

F 1999 256pp B1745

Enjoyed *The Fault in our Stars?*

Try *My Sister's Keeper* by Jodi Picoult [B1909]

The Diving Bell and the Butterfly

Jean Dominique Bauby

At 42 and the father of two young children, Bauby found himself speechless and paralysed after a massive stroke. His mind was unimpaired. To dictate this small book, Bauby blinked for each letter of every word. More extraordinary is the writing itself – the keen gaze, lightness of touch and sensuousness with which he evokes his present circumstances and memories.

N 1997 139pp B1555

The Drowned and the Saved

Primo Levi

Levi's last book argues that as a Holocaust survivor he is a proxy witness for the true witnesses – those who were annihilated. He is lucid and with neither hatred nor forgiveness as he investigates the genocide and its relevance to the present. His insight into the issues of guilt and shame makes this an important book for any nation confronting violence and racism in its past and present.

N 1986 170pp B1440

E

Edward Koiki Mabo

Noel Loos & Koiki Mabo

The 1992 Mabo Decision overturned the concept of terra nullius. Born on one of the remotest islands in the Torres Strait, Mabo found that he had no legal title to his land on Murray Island spurred him into a ten year battle as a land rights activist on behalf of his people.

N 1996 206pp B1526

An Evil Cradling

Brian Keenan

Keenan's story of his years as hostage in Beirut is remarkable for the humour, resilience and compassion which inform his experience and suffering. It includes the record of a friendship between the writer – a working class Northern Irishman – and the upper class English public school humanist, John McCarthy.

N 1992 297pp B1371

The Eye of the Sheep

Sofie Laguna

WINNER
Miles Franklin Literary Award

SHORTLISTED
Stella Prize

This beautifully nuanced coming-of-age story follows Jimmy, a kid not quite like the others. Buffered by his mother's love, Jimmy negotiates the realities of his world as his father oscillates between alcohol and violence – and when his home life alters beyond recognition, Jimmy must learn to navigate an alien and grown-up world that the reader aches to protect him from.

F 1995 614pp B2231

F

The Fault in Our Stars

John Green

16-year-old Hazel knows she has a limited time to live, but everything she has ever thought about life, love and death is upended when she meets handsome Augustus Waters. A beautiful story about what it means to be truly alive - it will make you sob and laugh.

F 2012 313pp B2181

The Fiftieth Gate

Mark Raphael Baker

Baker grew up in Melbourne, the son of Polish Jewish parents who survived the Holocaust. In this 'journey through memory', he seeks to draw his parents back into the terror of their childhood, attempting to understand his own experience of growing up with their largely unspoken memories.

N 1997 339pp B1529

A Fine Balance

Rohinton Mistry

In India in 1975, two tailors and a college student come to the vast, teeming city and end up lodging in cramped quarters with a struggling widow. Their efforts to survive are at the heart of this unforgettable portrait of kindness, dignity, heroism, cruelty and corruption which is well worth the read. Small print.

F 1995 614pp B1516

The First Stone
Helen Garner

This is a fictionalised account of the sexual harassment case at the University of Melbourne, which led to the resignation of the master, despite being cleared of charges. The approach and the institutional issues raised make it both relevant and controversial.

N 1995 222pp B1442

Flying with Paper Wings
Sandy Jeffs

Poet Sandy Jeffs grew up in a violent family, and her world collapsed at 23 with the onset of schizophrenia. Since then, she has become a community educator and speaker about living with mental illness. An insightful look at mental illness, from the social and medical to the personal.

N 2009 268pp B2082

For Esther
Alex Sage

Born in 1924 into a devout Chassidic family, Alex Sage describes a childhood of acute poverty. A life of living off his wits ensued, until he reached Australia via a death camp and Palestine. Sage attended English classes at CAE, and conveys his story with compelling directness.

N 2000 281pp B1757

Fred Hollows: An Autobiography
Fred Hollows

Appalled by the eye diseases he found among outback Aborigines, ophthalmologist Fred Hollows gave years to a program which improved the eye health of thousands of them, and also worked in Eritrea and Nepal. This life story of a doer, a maverick and a humanitarian emphasises his public rather than private life.

N L 1991 240pp B1375

G

The Golden Age
Joan London

WINNER
Prime Minister's Literary Award

SHORTLISTED
Stella Prize

The Gold family are immigrants from war torn Hungary, and while 13-year-old Frank recovers from polio in a convalescent home in Perth, his parents can't help missing the elegance and charm of the city they left behind. This beautiful story touches on how we come to terms with the past, the many forms of recovery, and the healing power of music.

F 2014 256pp B2222

Everyone thought this the best book they had read this year. Joan London at her very best - a worthy winner of the Prime Minister's Book Award.
Mt Waverley 4

A Good Day to Die
Lisa Birnie

Is euthanasia either desirable or necessary, or could accessible palliative care supplant the need for it? In her search to understand what this question means, Lisa Birnie asked the patients, family and staff of McCulloch House (a short term palliative care centre) to tell their own stories. With her commentary, they make a wonderful book, based on the compassionate conviction that everyone should die with dignity and free of pain.

N 1998 231pp B1712

The Grass is Singing
Doris Lessing

In this powerful novel set in South Africa in the 1930s, we experience the life of Mary Turner. Lessing writes with insight and compassion of Mary's formative years, her young adulthood and her marriage to Dick. We learn of the racial attitudes of that earlier society and the way in which blacks were treated during South Africa's Apartheid.

F 1950 220pp B0427

The Great World
David Malouf

WINNER
Miles Franklin Literary Award

This ambitious novel traces the lives of two Australian men who survive the Second World War and Changi. Malouf's usual interest in relatedness and wisdom is combined with an exploration of some key national myths. Print smallish but clear.

F 1990 332pp B1275

H

Half of a Yellow Sun
Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

WINNER
Orange Prize

Set in 1960s Nigeria during the Biafran war, Adichie follows the lives of three characters caught up in the turbulent events of the time. As Nigerian troops advance and they run for their lives, their ideals, intimacies, and loyalties are severely tested. *Half of a Yellow Sun* is an emotional exploration of Africa, moral responsibility, race, class, and love.

F 2006 448pp B1964

Half the Sky
Nicholas Kristof & Sheryl WuDunn

WINNER
Pulitzer Prize

Written by the first married couple to win a Pulitzer Prize for journalism, *Half the Sky* grew from the authors' desire to tell the personal stories of women whose lives have been catastrophically impacted by factors such as poverty, sex trafficking and gender based violence. It also examines the ways many women have reclaimed their lives from oppression, and offers suggestions to readers who want to help alleviate global poverty. Readers may find some material in this book distressing.

N 2009 295pp B2111

Hand Me Down World
Lloyd Jones

This is a hauntingly beautiful tale of a mother's search for her son, taken by his father when only a few days old. Told from the point of view of the people who meet the mysterious north African woman after she is washed ashore in Sicily, different versions of the truth emerge to reveal a complex narrative of a displaced person struggling for self determination and justice.

F 2010 313pp B2122

The Happiest Refugee
Anh Do

In this popular memoir, comedian and actor Anh Do traces his family history from war torn 1970s Vietnam to the current day. He also describes his own personal and professional journey with endearing candour and humour, in this story of strength, hope and forgiveness.

N 2010 232pp B2141

Hidden Agendas
John Pilger

As reporter, polemicist and partisan, Pilger crusades against the power agendas of the media and the global markets and supports those whom they ignore – the poor who are getting poorer, the peoples of Iraq, Africa, Burma, and East Timor. His immediate, urgent and lucid style, and the gripping subject matter make for easy reading. Stacks to talk about, probably with many different opinions.

N 1998 687pp B1574

Hindustan Contessa
Jane Watson

A book where myth blends with the everyday, and where the implications of cross cultural relationships are tested. Indian born Milan and his Australian wife Tilly travel to India where they fall into the hands of kidnappers. They must accept their fate as prisoners and deal with the challenges they face within the intricacies of Indian culture.

F 2002 308pp B1783

The Horses Too are Gone
Michael Keenan

When drought took hold in New South Wales in 1994, like so many others, the Keenan property was over stocked. His efforts to keep his cattle fed and watered finally took Mike Keenan onto the stock routes of south west Queensland, where he coped with one setback after another. This true account of his experiences is a page turner and a great Aussie yarn.

N 1998 348pp B1595

House Rules
Jodi Picoult

Jacob has Asperger's syndrome. He can't read social clues, doesn't like to make eye contact, and has a singular focus. He is obsessed with forensic analysis. He keeps showing up at crime scenes and telling the police what to do – usually he is right. But then his tutor is found dead and Jacob is accused of murder.

F 2010 529pp B2076

The Human Stain
Philip Roth

WINNER
PEN/Faulkner Award for Fiction

A college professor is forced to retire when his colleagues declare him to be a racist. Not true, but the real truth about Silk would have astonished even his most self righteous accuser. Set in the late '90s against the backdrop of the Clinton/Lewinsky affair, this novel interweaves one man's story with the wider history of modern America.

F 2000 361pp B1618

I

I Confess: Revelations in Exile
Kooshyar Karimi

Growing up in the slums of Tehran, Karimi had to hide his Jewish faith. Through force of will, he became a surgeon and successful author, until he was kidnapped by the Iranian Intelligence Service, and forced to betray his own people. He and his family fled to Turkey and now live in Australia.

N 2012 365pp B2173

The Inheritance of Loss
Kiran Desai

WINNER
Man Booker Prize

In an isolated house at the foot of the Himalayas live a retired, embittered Cambridge educated judge, his granddaughter, and his cook. A Nepalese insurgency soon disrupts their lives; while in New York the cook's son tries to stay one step ahead of US immigration services. Sometimes funny, sometimes sad, the possibility for hope or betrayal hangs over every moment. Small print.

F 2006 384pp B1967

In My Skin
Kate Holden

Highly explicit and confronting memoir told in a vivid narrative voice. Holden, a quiet, sensitive university graduate from a comfortable middle class background, spiralled into heroin addiction and prostitution at the age of 21. The book is beautifully written in parts, but Holden's attitude to sex work will enrage some readers and intrigue others. Love it or hate it, this book will generate fierce discussion, not least about the relationship between female sexuality and self esteem. Contains strong language, sex and drug use.

N 2005 285pp B1926

In the Country of Men
Hisham Matar

WINNER
Commonwealth Writers' Prize

SHORTLISTED
Man Booker Prize

Set in Libya during 1979, Matar vividly evokes the brutalities of a terrifying regime from a child's perspective. Suleiman's father is away on business but Suleiman is certain he sees him standing across the street. Why doesn't he wave? Fears and whispers intensify and in an effort to save his family, Suleiman may end up betraying his friends, his parents and ultimately himself.

F 2006 360pp B1965

Into the Darkest Corner
Elizabeth Haynes

This suspenseful psychological thriller unfolds over two timelines: one follows the relationship between Cathy and the almost perfect Lee; the other, Cathy suffering from obsessive compulsive disorder. Dark themes are handled with finesse and insight, drawing you in to Cathy's world to explore the power of obsession.

F 2011 416pp B2152

J

Jackson's Track
Daryl Tonkin & Carolyn Landon

Not far from Drouin in the Gippsland district of Victoria, an almost utopian community of white and Aboriginal people lived and worked together in the timber industry from the 1930s onwards - yet Daryl Tonkin's choice of an Aboriginal wife caused a serious rift in his family. This life story of a hard working, principled man and a vanished way of life offers much to discuss.

N 1999 297pp B1596

K

A Kindness Cup
Thea Astley

A schoolteacher returns to a Queensland town's reunion, and attempts to force the citizens to recognise their cruelty to the town's Aborigines in an incident in which they took part two decades previously.

F 1974 154pp B0437

L

The Land of Green Plums
Herta Müller

This unusual autobiographical novel is a haunting account of a group of students in Ceausescu's totalitarian Romania. Weaving back and forth between the provinces and the city, the narrator traces the story of her survival and escape. A complex and poetic evocation of another country, culture and politics.

F 1998 242pp B1747

The Last Magician
Janette Turner Hospital

SHORTLISTED
Miles Franklin Literary Award

Traces the link between a gifted photographer and the female image which compels him and others, as it moves between a Queensland rainforest childhood and contemporary Sydney. Disturbingly connects the powerful establishment and the desperate underworld of the young, the homeless and the vulnerable.

F 1992 352pp B1379

Little Bee
Chris Cleave

Little Bee and her sister are from Nigeria; Sarah O'Rourke and her husband are British tourists. Their meeting on a beach in Nigeria involves a choice that impacts all of their lives. A few years later and Sarah and Little Bee (who has been in a British immigration detention centre) meet again. Some distressing material.

F 2008 378pp B2119

A Long Long Way
Sebastian Barry

In this thoughtful, moving novel, Willie Dunne joins the Royal Dublin Fusiliers in 1914 and is sent to the killing fields of Europe. When the 1916 Easter Rising in Ireland is brutally quashed, he and other Irish soldiers begin to wonder why they are fighting for the Crown. This is a fascinating insight into a rarely examined aspect of Ireland's troubled past.

F 2005 292pp B1927

Look at Me
Anita Brookner

Frances Hinton, shy and clever, works by day in a medical library and goes back every evening to the solitude of her London flat to write fiction. When she is adopted socially by Nick and his wife, her heart is full of hope. Brookner's poised, elegant prose is a superb vehicle for this novel, seen by one reviewer as being about 'monsters and their victims'.

F 1983 192pp B1715

M

The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat
Oliver Sacks

These extraordinary pieces show human beings striving to preserve their identity when things go wrong in different parts of the brain. The author is lovingly and respectfully curious about his patients and gifted in presenting their states briefly and memorably. A book to make you wonder.

N 1985 233pp B1260

Mind's Eye
Oliver Sacks

Neurologist and acclaimed author Oliver Sacks explores the relationship between the eye and the brain, and what happens to our perception of the world when this relationship is disrupted. Using his signature style, Sacks turns medical case studies into fascinating and moving human stories – particularly poignant because, this time, he includes his own experiences.

N 2010 240pp B2199

A Month in the Country
J.L. Carr

SHORTLISTED
Man Booker Prize

Returning from the Great War, the narrator goes to a small village to restore a historic wall painting. He works on it, works out its artist's story and is drawn into the local networks, making friends with another war survivor, and piecing his own life together during the English summer.

F 1980 111pp B0783

The Multiple Effects of Rainshadow
Thea Astley

WINNER
The Age Book of the Year

SHORTLISTED
Miles Franklin Literary Award

Astley is on her Queensland home ground, earlier this century. The narrative, woven from many voices and viewpoints, uncovers the extraordinary nature of everyday life for both Aborigines and settlers. Poignant and revealing.

F 1996 296pp B1541

My Dirty Shiny Life
Lily Bragge

Child of a career criminal father and a head teacher mother, Lily became a successful comedian and journalist. Uncompromisingly honest and highly entertaining in equal measure, Bragge's bumpy personal journey and the way she eventually finds salvation are bound to stimulate discussion. Contains sex, violence and drug use.

N 2010 272pp B2097

Everyone finished the book and all agreed it was intriguing and hard to put down. However it was quite harrowing and we could see the author found it cathartic to tell her story but wondered who she was really writing it for. We discussed the difficulties some people face in life and the different ways they respond. All were surprised by the way she resolved her issues.
Seaford Shortfalls

My Left Foot
Christy Brown

Christy Brown was born in 1932, one of the 23 children of a Dublin bricklayer. Born with cerebral palsy, he could not control his speech or his movement, apart from his left foot. Here he tells his own story of learning to read, write, paint and finally type with his left foot, and of his wonderfully supportive family. The film of the same name, starring Daniel Day Lewis as Christy, is based loosely on this book.

N 1954 184pp B1301

N

Nickel and Dimed
Barbara Ehrenreich

This US journalist gave up her comfortable middle class life for three months to live and work for poverty level wages. A readable book which examines the enormous disproportions in wealth that exist in America today and raises many discussable issues. Does the 'American dream' really apply to all citizens of the USA?

N 2001 221pp B1793

O

Once Were Warriors
Alan Duff

The Heke family's world of unemployment, racism, dispossession, alcohol and violence is rendered in their own brutalised idiom. From within this alienated Maori experience, Duff finds the seeds of reconnection to their own past, and shows the birth of communal and individual change, pride and hope.

F 1990 198pp B1451

An Orphan's Escape
Frank Golding

In 1940, three young brothers were admitted to the Ballarat Orphanage, but like many of the children at the orphanage they had living parents. Frank Golding recalls the 12-bleak years of their time there and pieces together the story of his parents' struggle against the state to get their children back.

N 2005 247pp B1946

P

The Plague
Albert Camus

A brilliant novel which examines the reactions of a town's people to a plague which kills much of the population. It is set in Algeria in the 1940s, and can be read also as an allegory of the spread of Fascist beliefs.

F 1947 288pp B0098

Pushing Time Away
Peter Singer

Singer's biography of his Austrian grandfather David Oppenheim before his death in the Theresienstadt ghetto traces the personal, intellectual, family and cultural richness of his grandfather's life. A portrait unfolds of a complex, admirable, surprising man. Full of important and discussable matters.

N 2003 322pp B1812

R

Reading Lolita in Tehran
Azar Nafisi

In the mid 1990s seven young Iranian women gathered in Nafisi's home to discuss the work of forbidden Western writers. Their main focus was on *Lolita*, *The Great Gatsby*, and novels of Henry James and Jane Austen. A narrative which begins with secret literature classes expands into a picture of life in a totalitarian regime.

N 2003 347pp B1839

Resilience
Anne Deveson

Drawing on her own experience and her work with media and social justice organisations, Anne Deveson asks what enables individuals and communities to cope with adversity. Her book interweaves memoir and stories, and her writing is effortlessly readable, as usual.

N 2003 296pp B1808

The Rituals of Dinner
Margaret Visser

Visser's focus is on table manners – the customs, expectations and proprieties of eating together. Subtitled *The Origins, Evils, Eccentricities* and *Meaning* of *Table Manners*, this frolic will produce animated discussion.

N 1991 432pp B1389

The Road Home
Rose Tremain

WINNER
Orange Prize

After the death of his wife, Lev moves to London from his small town in Eastern Europe to look for work so he can support his young daughter and elderly mother. Despite isolation and loneliness, he finds a job at a restaurant, discovers a passion for cooking, and slowly begins to transform from dreamer to doer.

F 2007 365pp B2013

The Rugmaker of Mazar e Sharif

Najaf Mazari & Robert Hillman

Mazari was a shepherd in Afghanistan who fled the Taliban regime to Melbourne, where he set up a successful rug shop. His memoir, captured in his own voice by writer Robert Hillman, is a fascinating insight into what compels people to leave behind their homes and histories to search for peace for themselves and their children.

N 2008 253pp B2010

The Rules of Inheritance

Claire Bidwell Smith

This is a moving memoir of a woman whose identity was formed amidst the illness and death of her parents, both diagnosed with cancer when she was a teen. Unconventionally framed around the five stages of grief – denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance – the story follows Claire's journey as she battles to overcome and resolve her unhappy inheritance of grief.

N 2012 298 B2163

S

Shadow Child

Rosalie Fraser

Born in 1958, Rosalie Fraser was removed from her parents at two and a half years old. Her story is an eye opener about the way children could be 'cared' for in foster homes and institutions, and how our governments saw to the 'welfare' of their wards during Australia's most prosperously comfortable decades. The teller's persistence, frankness and enduring spirit make the deprivation and brutalities of her life bearable in this 'memoir of the stolen generation'.

N 1998 270pp B1730

So Much for That

Lionel Shriver

FINALIST
National Book Award

Shep Knacker has just sold his company and decided to move to an island paradise, hoping his wife Glynis will move with him. But Glynis has a bombshell of her own, and reveals she has been diagnosed with a rare and aggressive form of cancer. Personal neuroses and relationships are examined as the question arises – how much is a life worth?

F 2010 436pp B2075

NEW

Songs of a War Boy

Deng Thiak Adut, Ben McKelvey

SHORTLISTED
Victorian Premier's Literary Award

Sydney-based lawyer and 2017 NSW Australian of the Year, Deng Adut overcame deadly adversity before calling Australia his home. At the age of 6, he was conscripted as a child soldier into the Sudan People's Liberation Army, armed with an AK-47. Rescued by his brother John, Deng lived in refugee camps before coming to Australia as a refugee. This inspirational biography tells his journey of overcoming the horrors of war and the challenges faced by refugees to Australia.

N 2016 320pp B2251

The Spare Room

Helen Garner

WINNER
Vance Palmer Prize for Fiction

Helen prepares her spare room for her friend Nicola, who is coming to town to receive treatment for her advanced cancer. Helen becomes Nicola's nurse, protector, guardian angel and stony judge in this story of compassion and rage as two women negotiate their way through gruelling treatments. A provocative novel that provides rich material for discussion on friendship, faith and death.

F 2008 195pp B1999

Stasiland

Anna Funder

WINNER
Samuel Johnson Prize for Nonfiction

Forty years of communism in East Germany ended when the Berlin Wall came down in 1989. This book blends travel, history and biography in the true stories of bravery and betrayal under the Stasi, the omnipresent secret police of the former East German Government. Moving, exhilarating and at times funny.

N 2002 282pp B1680

Still Alice

Lisa Genova

Alice is a 50-year-old Harvard professor when she starts experiencing symptoms of early onset Alzheimer's disease. She is forced to re-evaluate her relationship with her husband and three grown children. Genova cleverly addresses the fundamental issue of disease and mental illness: what is left of Alice?

F 2009 292pp B2098

We felt that Still Alice was an exceptional piece of writing. Using a variety of clever narrative techniques and Alice's own voice, Genova brought the twists and turns of living with Alzheimer into stark reality.
Mt Waverley Primers

The Stolen Children

Carmel Bird

Carmel Bird's short book of the stolen children's own stories sits alongside a copy of the formal Report of the National Inquiry into the separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families. Their unadorned accounts are anguishing, but it is necessary witness not only to tragedies and wrongs that were hidden and suppressed but to the importance of acknowledging the truth.

N 1998 188pp B1589

Stormy Weather

Michael Meehan

In 1955 the travelling Blind Concert' arrives with its troupe of vaudeville performers in a tiny township in Victoria's north west. Meehan's atmospheric novel explores the impact of performers and townspeople on themselves and each other through one day, as tension mounts before the night's performance.

F 2000 204pp B1768

Streets of Hope

Tim Costello

Reverend Tim Costello is a Melbourne lawyer and minister of religion for whom private faith and social issues have always inter connected. His book chronicles the time leading up to his election as Mayor of St Kilda and his battle for the democratic rights of St Kilda's street workers, drug users and homeless. It provides a rare insight into his life, his beliefs and his ongoing struggle on behalf of others.

N 1998 242pp B1703

Suite Française

Irène Némirovsky

Némirovsky depicted the experience of war and occupation as it affected the people around her, writing the two sections of *Suite Française* as events unfolded. The first part portrays a group of Parisians as they flee the Germans and make their way through the chaos of the French countryside. The second concerns the inhabitants of a small rural community under occupation.

F 2004 403pp B1913

T

The Tattooed Flower

Suzy Zail

When Holocaust survivor Emil is diagnosed with motor neurone disease, he gathers his family to share the secrets of his remarkable life. The book takes us through Emil's past and present via his daughter, author Suzy Zail. This is an inspirational story on father-daughter relationships and the extent to which we shape our own destinies.

N 2006 211pp B1939

The Tears of Strangers
Stan Grant

Grant recounts the story of the Wiradjuri people of New South Wales and the landowning Grants, descendants of an Irish rebel. White as well as black, he has ultimately to reconcile that he is descended from the oppressors as well as the oppressed and his personal success has removed him from the violence, alcoholism and despair experienced by many of his cousins. A thoughtful account of human and historical complexities.

N 2002 259pp B1681

Three Dollars
Elliot Perlman

WINNER
The Age Book of the Year

What effect has the emphasis on 'the bottom line' – downsizing, corporatising, consulting, outsourcing – had on the well educated young couples who are supposed to be among its main beneficiaries? In his compassionate first novel, Perlman gives a moving and imaginative portrait of a loving family at risk in the heartless environment of contemporary Victoria.

F 1998 381pp B1581

Tiger's Eye
Inga Clendinnen

Burning bright on every page, this is the arresting story of what happened to the distinguished Geelong born historian when serious illness in her early fifties pitched her into an Alice in Wonderland otherworld of hospitals, organ transplant and hallucination. She used writing to 'cling to the shreds of self'. The publisher's blurb is accurate: 'Lucid, fearless, passionate and wise, its true subject is being alive.'

N 2000 289pp B1742

The Tiger's Wife
Tea Obreht

WINNER
Orange Prize

Natalia is a doctor visiting orphanages in the Balkans after a devastating war when she receives news that her beloved grandfather has died. As Natalia struggles to understand his life's quest, Obreht spins around her a series of magical tales that bring home the tragedy of chronic conflict.

F 2011 336pp B2117

To Kill a Mockingbird
Harper Lee

WINNER
Pulitzer Prize

Atticus Finch is a lawyer who defends a black man who has been accused of raping a white woman. The best and worst of life in a Southern town are brought to life through the eyes of Scout, Atticus' young daughter.

F L 1960 290pp B0037

A timeless classic that explores racism and standing up for the underdog in 1920s America. I love the novel because it is still relevant today, especially in the fight against racism and false persecution.

Larriana M, Book Groups Staff

Touching the Void
Joe Simpson

In 1985 two climbing friends succeeded in scaling the spectacularly dangerous West face of the Siula Grande, a peak in the Peruvian Andes. Catastrophe struck on the descent, leaving one severely injured, the other also in extreme danger. Would both perish? Could one survive? This anguishing dilemma, Joe's almost unbelievable will to persist and the quality of his writing make this a modern classic of mountain writing – even more gripping than the recent documentary film about these same events.

N 1988 216pp B1866

Traitor
Stephen Daisley

WINNER
Prime Minister's Literary Award

Barely released before being swamped under awards and praise, Traitor asks the question: What would make a soldier betray his own country? This is an important book about love, loneliness, compassion, war and the bond between two people. Both brutal and beautiful, the writing is nuanced and personal, and gently suffused with the Sufi philosophy. The writing style is unusual but stick with it and you will be rewarded.

F 2011 293pp B2132

The Turning
Tim Winton

The run down coastal town of Angelus in Western Australia's south is the setting for seventeen overlapping stories, men and women, young and old, their hopes, longings, second thoughts, disappointments, as they scan the horizon, looking to the world beyond and caught at a point of change or altered awareness. The natural world and human destinies within it are superbly evoked: this is Winton at his best.

S 2004 317pp B1896

W

Wanamurraganya
Sally Morgan

Morgan met Jack McPhee while searching for her extended family in Western Australia's North. Here, aged 84, he tells her his life story. Of mixed Aboriginal and European ancestry, he worked from the age of seven as an itinerant station hand and mine worker in the Pilbara. Despite the harsh government policies which affected his life, his story is told without rancour. Photographs through the text.

N 1989 196pp B1254

Well Done, Those Men
Barry Heard

As a young man from a small Victorian country town, Barry Heard was conscripted into the army at age 21, fought in Vietnam and came back to cope as best he could. In his laconic, Aussie, blokey voice, Heard tells us simply what happened – during his training, in action, and after his return to civilian life. Writing this memoir marked his emergence from the massive breakdown which finally overtook him. Gripping, at times funny, affecting, alarming, this book enlarges our understanding of the damage war can do.

N 2005 290pp B1914

Our members were unanimous in thinking very highly of this book. A very emotional, insightful and relevant read. The author was very honest and true. We found his straight-forward writing style very appealing. We could feel his pain and discomforts. Very eye-opening.

Caulfield 3

The Wilderness
Samantha Harvey

SHORTLISTED
Orange Prize

Jake has Alzheimer's disease. It's his birthday, his wife has passed away, his son is in prison, and it is unclear where his daughter is. Told from Jake's point of view, *The Wilderness* sifts through his past. What really happened and what may have happened blur together until it's difficult to tell what is true and what is not. Beautifully written, this is a compelling study of human frailty.

F 2009 328pp B2086

The Woman Who Walked Into Doors
Roddy Doyle

Paula Spencer's uncensored voice convincingly takes us into her brave attempt to struggle free from a violent marriage, her drinking problem and her own denial: 'After all the years and the broken bones and teeth and torture I still keep blaming myself.' Doyle's writing pulls no punches as she is seen in the wider context of the poor in Ireland.

F 1996 226pp B1505

Dark Deeds

These titles explore the darker side of life with psychological thrillers, true crime, world politics, spy tales and more.

A

Alias Grace
Margaret Atwood

SHORTLISTED
Orange Prize

A large, complex fiction combining murder mystery with social comment on class and sexual relationships, and based on historical fact: a notorious murder case in Canada. Atwood explores the ambiguities of 16-year-old Grace Marks, and also brings her usual wit and insight to psychology, morality and the management of Victorian homes and prisons. A must for Atwood lovers. Small print.

F 1996 545pp B1556

All That I Am
Anna Funder

WINNER
Miles Franklin Literary Award

Funder's debut novel moves between contemporary Sydney, Weimar Germany, and wartime New York and London. It fictionalises the true story of German revolutionary Ernst Toller and his circle of friends and associates as they struggled to publicise the brutality of the Nazi regime. A compelling exploration of sacrifice, betrayal, and the need to bear witness.

F 2011 365pp B2137

Amsterdam
Ian McEwan

Two friends of many years are among the mourners gathered at the North London funeral of Molly Lane, one an esteemed composer, the other, editor of a quality broadsheet. Also present is the Foreign Secretary. Each, it transpires, had at one time been Molly's lover. Incriminating revelations are made, and the careers and destinies of the three men are in question. A cleverly plotted, blackly comic morality tale.

F 1998 178pp B1861

Another World
Pat Barker

Wonderful writing combines sharp observation of today's family lives with resonant evocations of murders and mysteries. The power of old wounds to hurt or heal the present is explored in another intelligent, honest, generous spirited novel by Pat Barker. It concerns two blended families, one 19th and the other late 20th century, and the centenarian Geordie, who fought in the First World War.

F 1998 278pp B1588

B

Berlin Syndrome
Melanie Joosten

A psychological thriller by a debut Australian author. Clare is a young backpacker who meets native Berliner Andi at Checkpoint Charlie. He invites her to move in with him and a tale of obsession and psychological intrigue begins. This is an intelligent novel with a masterful description of the loneliness and isolation that can be found in a foreign city - and the potential vulnerability of a woman travelling alone.

F 2011 246pp B2113

Black Tide
Peter Temple

A ne'er do well son has fleeced his ageing parents, and Jack Irish, AFL devotee and one time solicitor, promises to look into it. The action shifts from Fitzroy pub to Toorak and across to the horsetrack. Peter Temple's settings are masterly, his characters are convincing, and he writes some of the best dialogue on the current Australian scene.

F 1999 356pp B1853

Blood from a Stone
Donna Leon

In Venice, Commissario Brunetti looks into the case of an African street vendor shot dead while selling fake goods to tourists. The man's illegal status and his country of origin are linked into the investigation, and matters with disturbing international implications are interwoven with Venetian family living.

F 2005 320pp B1858

The Bone People
Keri Hulme

WINNER
Man Booker Prize

An unusual exploration of the lives of a woman, a child and a man. This novel portrays startling psychological and physical terror as the characters move towards a resolution which weaves together Maori spirituality and the traditional wisdom of East and West. Not easy to read, but a gripping novel with a considerable reputation.

F 1983 450pp B0404

Borderliners
Peter Høeg

This chilling, suspenseful novel is about what we owe to our young. Three abandoned, damaged children end up at a select school where students are rigidly controlled in an atmosphere of subtle menace. One, a boy in his teens, has to work out why, and what can be done.

F L 1993 252pp B1483

The Broken Shore
Peter Temple

Joe Cashin is sent to a quiet Victorian coastal town to do the undemanding work of a country cop. But a brutal attack on the town benefactor brings him back into the thick of things. A novel about place, family, politics and power which reads less like crime fiction and more like literary fiction. Strong language.

F 2005 345pp B1917

The Brush Off
Shane Maloney

From the opening sultry sex scene between the ministerial minder and the editor of a small circulation arty magazine, this entertaining thriller deftly mixes humour, satire and the pleasures of the whodunit, as Maloney highlights the hypocrisy in the carryings on of politicians, the acquisitive art world and the greedy corporate high fliers.

F 1996 314pp B1484

The Butcher's Wife
Li Ang

In a small traditional town in Taiwan, a wife kills her husband, and her community cannot believe that she does not have a lover. In showing what led to this violent act, Li Ang does not censor the crude language or the brutality of the husband. A haunting and horrific tale, with insight into the gentle, driven woman at its centre.

F 1983 142pp B1366

C

Captivity Captive
Rodney Hall

SHORTLISTED
Miles Franklin Literary Award

The Gatton murders on Boxing Day 1898 are the factual basis of this harrowing yet absorbing fiction, which examines the darker side of a large, ordinary, Australian pioneering family.

F 1988 214pp B1272

Enjoyed *The Bone People*?

Try *Once Were Warriors* by Alan Duff [B1451]

Carry Me Down
M.J. Hyland

SHORTLISTED
Man Booker Prize

In rural Ireland in the 1970s, painfully awkward and acutely observant 11-year-old John believes he possesses a gift for lie detection, a belief that will have devastating consequences for his family. The crisp prose in Hyland's second novel presents an enthralling portrait of a family, and a chilling study of lies interpreted through the eyes of a boy struggling on the cusp of adolescence.

F 2006 313pp B1919

Case Histories
Kate Atkinson

Private investigator Jackson Brodie finds himself immersed in three unsolved mysteries, and as he traces the threads of these interweaving tragedies we discover his own painful misfortunes. This unconventional detective novel focuses on those who are left to pick up the pieces, trapped by their need to know the truth. Each character is haunted by desperation to remember their loved ones, while seeking the relief of closure.

F 2004 304pp B1873

The Child in Time
Ian McEwan

WINNER
Whitbread Novel Award

The only child of a young couple suddenly disappears in McEwan's complex, haunting, almost magical interweaving of the themes of loss, memory and the human capacity for regeneration.

F 1987 220pp B1316

The Cove
Ron Rash

In a gloomy valley in the Appalachians there is a farm that the locals believe is cursed. The farm's owners are Laurel, an object of derision with a port wine birthmark, and her brother Hank, maimed from war in Europe. When mute stranger Walter enters her life, Laurel finds happiness she has never known. But will Walter's secret destroy them?

F 2012 255pp B2158

NEW

The Cuckoo's Calling
Robert Galbraith (J.K. Rowling)

Published under a pseudonym, J.K. Rowling's first crime novel tells the story of Private Investigator Cormoran Strike, a wounded war veteran with too many debts and not enough clients. When Strike is asked to investigate the death of a famous supermodel, he enters the privileged world of the rich and famous where things are never what they seem.

F 2014 560pp B2265

D

Dead Man Walking
Helen Prejean

This passionate case against capital punishment comes from a nun brought into contact with violent criminals on Death Row. Remarkable for exploring evil, love, and grace.

N 1993 358pp B1502

Diamond Dove
Adrian Hyland

Drifting back to the Aboriginal community she left years ago, Emily doesn't know where she belongs. Within hours of her return, an old friend is brutally murdered and an old enemy is the only suspect. This outback crime yarn tackles issues of land, lore and relations between black and white Australians. Strong language may offend some readers.

F 2006 322pp B1949

The Dinner
Herman Koch

Paul and his wife are on their way to a dinner, which he knows neither of them will enjoy, and his satiric, humorously snide observations slowly reveal the reasons for this over five courses. Expertly paced twists expose dark events, and the veneer of middle class respectability is questioned in the face of parental angst, loyalty and justice.

F 2012 309pp B2171

The Dressmaker
Rosalie Ham

Tilly returns from fashionable Europe to her mother, 'old Mad Molly', and to the small country town in the Victorian wheatbelt where she grew up. In this inventive first novel, part pastoral, part Gothic, there is much comic brio as Tilly brings *haute couture* to the backblocks.

F 2000 296pp B1638

E

Emergency Sex & Other Desperate Measures
Kenneth Cain, Heidi Postlewait & Andrew Thomson

The authors, former UN employees, met on peacekeeping assignment in Cambodia. The trio cross paths in Somalia, Haiti, and Bosnia, and their friendship strengthens. Interweaving stories reveal idealism, humour and desire, beneath accounts of war that will educate and outrage. Confronting descriptions of sex and genocide will offend some, but this is well worth the effort for its brilliant investigation into the human cost of global politics.

N 2004 352pp B1877

Enduring Love
Ian McEwan

Joe becomes the object of obsessive attentions from a young man whom he has only seen once before. Under this stress, his previously happy marriage begins to fail. A chilling study of the troubling phenomenon of the stalker, from a novelist with an uncanny ability to portray disturbing states of mind.

F 1997 247pp B1710

Enjoyed *The Dinner*?

Try *The Slap* by Christos Tsiolkas [B2034]

F

Farewell, My Lovely
Raymond Chandler

Chandler is one of the most enthralling thriller writers and this, his best known book, withstands the test of time. You may have seen the film with Robert Mitchum and Charlotte Rampling in the leading roles.

F 1940 253pp B1060

Fatal Remedies
Donna Leon

Police investigator Guido Brunetti deals with domestic tension as his articulate, strong willed wife makes a stand on an issue of great concern. As crime escalates from the local to the international scene, Leon deals with issues of corruption in the local scene of Venice, where she has lived for 25 years.

F 1999 303pp B1855

The Fig Eater
Jody Shields

Vienna in 1910. It seems at first that this will be a straightforward historical crime novel, but it mines the fertile tension between morality and passion that provided such rich material for Freud himself. Beneath the imperial city's respectable facade are layers of deception, abuse and sexual perversion. Interweaving two parallel investigations of a young girl's murder, Shields explores the nature of investigation itself. What is the role of logic, and what of intuition?

F 2000 349pp B1640

Fingersmith

Sarah Waters

SHORTLISTED
Man Booker Prize

Sue grows up in a house of fingersmiths (petty thieves) in a grimy back alley of Victorian London. Baby farming, gloomy mansions, inheritances and conspiracies, hangings, oppressive relatives and eccentrics and lunatic asylums – it's all here. Full of deceptions, twists and unfolding romance, this novel is brilliantly written. The lesbian love interest and reference to the thriving Victorian pornography industry are post Dickensian.

F 2002 548pp B1807

The things about Fingersmith that made it a page turner for some readers were the same things that really frustrated others: Intriguing twists and turns versus overworked, contrived plot. Meticulous detail versus obvious scholarly research. No matter that there was such a range of views about the story, it stimulated a great discussion about poverty, pornography, sexuality and the place of women in society.

Camperdown Leura Literati

G

The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo

Stieg Larsson

The first book in the Millennium trilogy. Set in Sweden, this unconventional and gripping mystery delves into social issues, particularly about violence against women. Disgraced journalist Mikael Blomkvist is hired by a wealthy businessman to investigate the disappearance, of his niece Harriet Vanger. Lisbeth Salander, an anti social, tattooed, computer hacker becomes his unlikely assistant. Content may offend some readers.

F 2008 533pp B2067

Gone Girl

Gillian Flynn

When a seemingly happy woman disappears without a trace, convincing evidence points to the involvement of her oddly unemotional husband. This well crafted psychological thriller surprises with each turn of the investigation, unfolding disturbing information with every twist. The unpredictable characters, absorbing storyline and creative structure are stimulating discussion points, and questions and interview with author Gillian Flynn are included.

F 2012 496pp B2177

H

The Hamilton Case

Michelle de Kretser

WINNER
Commonwealth Writers' Prize

This brilliant evocation of life in 1930s Ceylon, at the end of the British colonial period, focuses on the murder of an English tea planter and the tangled personal life of the narrator. A Ceylonese lawyer who prides himself on being more English than the English, Sam's complex character and distorted view of the world are beautifully sustained. De Kretser's historical novel is complex and satisfying.

F 2003 369pp B1862

The Harmony Silk Factory

Tash Aw

WINNER
Commonwealth Writers' Prize

A kaleidoscopic portrait of Johnny Lim, textile merchant, petty crook and inventor, who marries local beauty Snow Soong. Years later, their son Jasper seeks to unravel the truth about his parents' relationship. Dealing with loyalty, love, and betrayal in 1940s Malaysia on the brink of abandonment by the British, Aw brilliantly exposes the cultural tensions of an era.

F 2005 362pp B1923

Havana Bay

Martin Cruz Smith

Arkady Renko first appeared in 1981 as the maverick Moscow policeman in Gorky Park. Now Arkady has arrived in Cuba to investigate the death of a Russian embassy worker. A richly intricate spy thriller, made more compelling by its evocation of a threadbare, vibrant, dangerous Havana with the insinuation of music never far away.

F 1999 453pp B1761

I

The Ice Princess

Camilla Lackberg

When writer Erica Falck returns to her hometown in Sweden, she learns that her childhood friend Alex has died. Police are treating it as a suicide, but as Erica interviews people about Alex's death, it becomes clear that deeper secrets are hiding beneath the surface of the small, idyllic town of Fjallbacka.

F 2011 400pp B2145

In Cold Blood

Truman Capote

A Kansas farmer and his family were murdered early one morning in 1959, an event that captivated Capote's interest. In an effort to escape subjectivism, he spent five years on the case, made friends of the two murderers, and wrote this 'non fiction novel' about it all.

N 1966 288pp B0100

The Invisible Ones

Stef Penney

In 1980s England, private eye Ray Lovell is investigating the disappearance of a young woman who married into a travelling Gypsy family. Meanwhile, Romani teenager JJ struggles to unravel long held family secrets. Inspired by film noir, this thriller explores hidden secrets, and the lives of those on the fringes of society. From the author of *The Tenderness of Wolves*.

F 2011 438pp B2135

J

Joe Cinque's Consolation

Helen Garner

In this 'true story of death, grief and the law' Garner unravels the bizarre killing of an unsuspecting young man by his girlfriend. Why did those who knew of the murder do nothing? An onlooker during the legal proceedings, Garner comes to know the Cinque family, especially Maria, Joe's mother.

N 2004 328pp B1859

K

The Killing of Sister McCormack

Anne Henderson

Sister Irene McCormack was the first Australian Catholic missionary to be murdered abroad. What prompted her to travel to in rural Peru, where she lived simply and taught the children of the poor? Henderson skilfully teases out the many different facets of Sister McCormack's life and death: theology, politics, terrorism, relationships, mission work, and passion.

N 2002 308pp B1673

Kittyhawk Down

Garry Disher

Set on the Mornington Peninsula not far from Melbourne, this crime novel offers dead bodies, manhunts, suspense and intrigue. Disher's character development is excellent, especially in unfolding the private and professional life of his police investigator, Hal Challis.

F 2003 275pp B1787

L

The Legacy

Kirsten Tranter

Reimagines *The Portrait of a Lady* by Henry James. Ingrid inherits a fortune, moves to New York, marries, becomes stepmother to teenage Fleur, and immerses herself in the art scene. The morning of September 11, Ingrid disappears after an appointment downtown, and her cousin Ralph asks his friend Julia to find out what happened.

F 2010 438pp B2095

The Little Stranger
Sarah Waters

SHORTLISTED
Man Booker Prize

In post-war rural Warwickshire, country GP Dr Faraday becomes involved in a spiralling series of disturbing events involving the crumbling estate of grand local family, the Ayres. A ghost story, a family in decline, and a rapidly changing society make this compelling reading from this popular author.

F 2009 501pp B2038

The Lovely Bones
Alice Sebold

14-year-old Susie is brutally murdered, and tells her story looking down from heaven. Haunting, compelling, and unsettling, this is an original and challenging novel about healing, recovery, and moving on towards a newly defined future.

F 2002 328pp B1789

A haunting novel about the darkness of human nature, but also explores the bond between family and how grief can tear us apart. I loved the mystery as we worked out who killed her. Unique book!

Jess Z, Book Groups Staff

M

Midnight In Sicily
Peter Robb

A fascinating collage of Italian art, history and travel - and the story of the Mafia in Sicily. Robb claims that during the 'season of distinguished corpses', the 'men of honour' built on their conservative Sicilian power base, and with the support of the anti left Vatican and CIA, moved into the top positions in Italy. A crime story like no other.

N 1996 326pp B1549

Enjoyed *The Tainted Trial of Farah Jama?*

Try *The Tall Man* [B2062]

Midnight In the Garden of Good and Evil
John Berendt

FINALIST
Pulitzer Prize for Nonfiction

This ornate, readable book transports us to the lush setting of Savannah, Georgia, a city which is inward looking, ingrown, and caught in a time warp. It's full of eccentric people and anecdotes, with a murder and four trials for good measure.

N L 1994 388pp B1476

It was a great hit with our group! Many said it was the best read we had in ages. Clever writing gave us a great insight into the city of Savannah and its inhabitants. Some of John Berendt's descriptions of the society's matrons made us laugh. We all wanted to go to one of the parties to view the people! A great read and recommended by everyone.

Rylstone DGGs

The Midnight Watch
David Dyer

On the night the Titanic sank, her passengers and crew noticed another ship nearby. That ship was the Californian, and as the details of the tragic night emerge, reporter John Steadman is intrigued by the reactions of her crew. Based on true events, this gripping novel explores the human failings of those who could have prevented disaster – and yet, stood by.

F 2016 336pp B2239

Miss Smilla's Feeling for Snow
Peter Høeg

A small boy fell to his death from the roof of an apartment block. But was this really an accidental death? Smilla Jaspersen, descended from the Inuit people of Greenland, has a feeling for snow – and she thinks not. The action moves from Denmark to the Arctic icecap, and snow and ice, beauty and extremity are central to the world of this unusual thriller.

F 1992 410pp B1413

The Moonstone
Wilkie Collins

A superb novel which has been regarded as the first of the modern detective stories, and was originally serialised in Charles Dickens' magazine. After a theft in a grand home, Sergeant Cuff must solve a mystery with as many facets as the priceless missing diamond, including tracking down a missing nightgown as the key to a murder.

F 1868 526pp B1170

Morality Play
Barry Unsworth

In 14th century England, a troupe of travelling players is beset by winter, plague and banditry. The players decide to replace their usual miracle play with an improvisation of the events leading up to a recent murder. Historical novel and murder mystery blend as we witness the birth of modern drama.

F 1995 188pp B1511

The Mystery of a Hansom Cab
Fergus Hume

This handsome 1999 edition restores the local Melbourne detail and language of the original text of this early murder mystery, which sold 20,000 copies here when it was first printed. This readable, historically significant example of crime fiction is a period piece of late 19th century Melbourne.

F 1886 309pp B0408

N

Nice Try
Shane Maloney

Melbourne may be the Australian capital of performance comedy and Maloney lives up to this reputation with this delightful tale. Murray Whelan's involvement with Melbourne's bid to stage the Olympic Games allows hilarious insights into 1990s politics, gym culture, and Aboriginal activism.

F 1998 312pp B1577

Nineteen Minutes
Jodi Picoult

Picoult delves into small town life to explore 'difference' in our society. In Sterling, New Hampshire, 17-year-old Peter has endured years of verbal and physical abuse at the hands of classmates. One final incident sends Peter over the edge, leading him to an act which forever changes the town's residents. Rich with psychological and social insight, Picoult asks: how well can we really know someone?

F 2007 600pp B2001

O

On Beulah Height
Reginald Hill

Three children are abducted in the small Yorkshire village of Dendale. Fifteen years later, Andy Dalziel, the uncouth but astute detective who worked on the earlier case, is called in when another child goes missing. A haunting novel with sharply observed characters, humour, spirit and an aching sense of loss. Small print.

F 1998 440pp B1727

One Good Turn
Kate Atkinson

At the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, Jackson Brodie (from *Case Histories*) becomes enmeshed in a number of murders that ripple out from a road rage incident. An array of characters, from the quirky to the bizarre, feature in this fast moving, deftly plotted comic novel.

F 2006 396pp B1975

Orpheus Lost
Janette Turner Hospital

There is an explosion on the underground, terrorists are suspected, and Leela, a gifted American mathematician, is taken to an interrogation centre outside the city. Her childhood friend, Cobb, is conducting an unconventional investigation and reveals that Leela's love interest Mishka, a talented Australian musician, is not who he seems.

F 2007 358pp B2008

P

The People in the Trees

Hanya Yanagihara

Scientist Norton Perina reflects on his controversial Nobel Prize winning discovery amid a media storm of allegations of child abuse. His matter of fact viewpoint contrasts his questionable morality, lending a dark psychological element to a book which will leave you considering Western colonisation, ecological disruption, and the subjective way we view ourselves – and our heroes. Endlessly discussable. Contains themes that may disturb.

F 2013 384pp B2209

It was generally agreed that the book was bleak, but the writing was amazing, and the book raised issues that will be remembered for a long time. It is certainly different, but also unforgettable. We have never read anything like it - the ideas were original and very well developed.

Jervis Bay Sea Changers

Perfume: The Story of a Murderer

Patrick Süskind

Jean-Baptiste Grenouille is born with an astounding sense of smell, yet he himself has no scent. He learns the art of the perfumer and creates a scent for himself that can fool people's perceptions of his personality. One day, inspired to possess the scent of a young girl, he murders her, embarking on a journey to the dark side of humanity.

F 1985 263pp B1453

Highly descriptive book that captures smells on the written page. A beautifully written story about the senses from the mind of a murderer.

Larriana M, Book Groups Staff

The Poison Principle

Gail Bell

Enticingly subtitled *A Memoir of Family Secrets and Literary Poisonings*. Bell's grandfather was known inside the family to have poisoned his two young sons with strychnine in 1927. Herself a trained pharmacist, Bell spent years disentangling these events, and interweaves her discoveries with precise detail about how arsenic, strychnine, and cyanide work, and accounts of famous poisoners and their victims.

N 2001 279pp B1660

Postmortem

Patricia Cornwell

Set in Cornwell's home town of Richmond, Virginia; the investigator is Dr Kay Scarpetta, a forensic pathologist. A serial killer is on the loose; three women have been attacked and killed in their own bedrooms. When a fourth victim is discovered, the pressure is on for Scarpetta to produce results. A real spine chiller: not for the faint hearted. Small print.

F 1990 293pp B1422

The Power and the Glory

Graham Greene

Set in Mexico at the time of religious persecution in the name of revolution, and in many ways like a thriller, the story is of the last, hunted days of a whisky sodden priest determined to continue the Church's ministry.

F 1940 288pp B0139

R

The Railway Station Man

Jennifer Johnston

Helen has retreated to small town on the Irish coast as she recovers from the tragic death of her husband. She begins painting again, and slowly forms a relationship with war hero Roger who lives at the nearby railway station house – but happiness can be fleeting among the tensions of life. An explosive, well-plotted novel from this Whitbread Novel Award-winning author.

F 1984 187pp B1234

Reading in the Dark

Seamus Deane

SHORTLISTED
Man Booker Prize

In the town of Derry in Northern Ireland, a young boy from a Catholic family is gripped with secrets, fears, suspicions and betrayals, all having to do with IRA involvement and the police. The boy's gradual piecing together of events provides chilling suspense, but together with this bleakness Deane renders a magical world of a child's imaginings; of tales, songs and myths.

F 1996 233pp B1545

Rebecca

Daphne du Maurier

WINNER
National Book Award

Max de Winter's second wife lives with him in a suffocating atmosphere of mystery and rising menace, as she becomes vested in the mystery of what became of his first wife, the dazzling Rebecca. A classic thriller and still a gripping story even if you know Hitchcock's film version.

F L 1938 397pp B1137

We absolutely loved this book! Most of us were old enough to have read the novel in our youth and to have seen the movie at some point along the way. Beautifully atmospheric, a true gothic tale, which captivates with the wonderfully skilful writing of Daphne du Maurier, although on discussion, the plot was somewhat flawed in parts.

Wood Glen: 2nd Tuesday Book Group

Restless

William Boyd

In the summer of 1976, Ruth discovers the strange truth about her elderly mother, Sally. Russian by birth, she worked for the British Secret Service during World War II. A suspenseful novel of a female spy that sheds a fascinating light into wartime British American relations and explores the consequences of betrayal and duplicity.

F 2006 304pp B1976

Resurrection Bay

Emma Viskic

Deaf since childhood, Caleb has always relied on his instincts. When his best friend is murdered, Caleb begins an investigation that will force him to face the demons from his past. Laced with a dark humour, this original, fast-paced thriller questions what it means to pass for 'normal' in a world where otherness is often seen as 'disability', asking intriguing questions about identity and belonging.

F 2015 192pp B2232

The Return of the Dancing Master

Henning Mankell

In a remote location in northern Sweden, an off the job policeman decides to find out more about the violent death of a colleague. Mankell is a master of suspense and tension, able to take on big ideas such as the resurgence across Europe of neo Nazism. Intelligent, complex crime writing.

F 2000 520pp B1840

All members enjoyed this book. After two 'heavy' books this intriguing story flowed easily, keeping members keen to read on. In this book we found it interesting and enlightening to learn of the effect that Germany and Naziism had on Scandinavia, particularly Sweden. The characters, police and detectives were not what we would expect of our own, but they did lend colour and suspense to the story.

Albury Wodonga U3A

Enjoyed *Kittyhawk Down?*

Try *Postmortem* by Patricia Cornwell [B1422]

The Robber Bride

Margaret Atwood

WINNER
Commonwealth Writers' Prize

Zenia was 'pure, free wheeling malevolence', a manipulator who brilliantly exploited the generosity and weaknesses of friends. They attended her funeral with relief - but now she returns to disrupt their lives again. Atwood at her best: wittily observant, emotionally engaging, and positive about friendship.

F 1993 470pp B1456

Our members found much to discuss in the content and detail of the characters, and way the protagonist involved herself in the lives of her friends. We had a very good discussion, which helped to give a good understanding of each of the characters and their reactions to the various dilemmas in which they were involved. The general consensus was that it was worth the time taken to read the book.

Mt Waverley Tally Ho 1

Room

Emma Donoghue

SHORTLISTED
Orange Prize

5-year-old Jack lives in one room with his mother, and believes they are the only real people in a world that exists only within 'Room' – until his mother confides her terrible secret. Jack is by turns poignantly naïve and wise beyond his years, and his story will haunt you long after you finish this powerful novel. Disturbing content with plenty of material for discussion.

F 2010 400pp B2110

S

Secrets of the Jury Room

Malcolm Knox

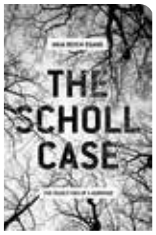
What happens if twelve randomly chosen men and women do not easily reach a unanimous decision? Prompted by his own experience of jury duty in a criminal case, Malcolm Knox (literary editor of the *Sydney Morning Herald*) has produced a readable book about jury trials, and their advantages and disadvantages.

N 2005 352pp B1956

NEW

The Scholl Case

Anja Reich-Osang



SHORTLISTED
CWA Daggers Award

When a woman's body is found in the forest near Berlin, suspicion falls on her husband, Heinrich Scholl, former mayor and well respected member of the community. They had been married almost fifty years and were considered the perfect couple, could he really be capable of her murder? But when award-winning journalist Anja Reich-Osang investigates deeper into their marriage, she discovers not everything is what it seems. This is a true crime that reads more like a fiction novel.

N 2016 213pp B2263

The Shark Net

Robert Drewe

In this memoir, subtitled *Memories and Murder*, Drewe captures key images from his youth in Perth. After his family's transfer from a more conservative Melbourne he experiences the Perth locals as strange and fascinating. There's humour, perceptiveness and also dread – as a serial murderer menaces the city, a figure who turns out to be more closely connected with their family than anyone realises.

N 2000 358pp B1843

Silvermeadow

Barry Maitland

A missing teenager and a sighting of a vicious bank robber are both linked to Silvermeadow, a glitzy new shopping centre on the outskirts of London. Maitland brings his architecture background into play, not just with the design of the mall but with the social psychology that underpins it. Well written and plotted, with convincing characters. Small print.

F 2000 346pp B1856

Snow Falling on Cedars

David Guterson

FINALIST
PEN/Faulkner Award for Fiction

In 1954 on an island off the Pacific coast of America, a fisherman is found dead, and a second generation Japanese American is accused of murdering him. This novel about a small community examines prejudice, racial injustice, war, love and conscience. A page turner offering much to discuss.

F 1994 404pp B1497

The Snowman

Jo Nesbo

The first day of snow has fallen on Oslo, and police investigator Harry Hole is involved in solving a series of brutal murders. Hole finds himself trapped in the killer's evil game, which will bring him to the verge of insanity. Content may disturb.

F 2010 576pp B2154

Something Fishy

Shane Maloney

It may be summer at the beach, but the Hon. Murray Whelan MP is onto something: criminality in one area of the fishing industry. There are sharply observed scenes of Lorne, and Maloney's usual liking for fast, funny action.

F 2002 242pp B1844

We all found this book a 'rollicking good yarn'. The author was able to carry us along with his beautifully written, incredibly descriptive story so that it was easy to overlook some major coincidences and implausible passages. We loved the accurate descriptions of local areas as well as the political satire mixed in. Overall it was a thoroughly good story that juxtaposed horror and fun into a crime-writer's tale. Rare to find a book that ALL members of our group enjoyed.

Warrandyte 5

Enjoyed *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close?*

Try *Room* by Emma Donoghue [B2110]

Started Early, Took My Dog

Kate Atkinson

The fourth Jackson Brodie book in the bestselling series that began with *Case Histories* and was followed by *One Good Turn* and *When Will There Be Good News?* This gripping mystery is as compelling as its precursors.

F 2010 400pp B2088

Stupid White Men

Mike Moore

A polemic on American society and American politics, Moore's rage converts to outrageousness: 'old white men wielding martinis and wearing dickies have occupied our nation's capital'. Not for the reader looking for subtlety, this noisy diatribe will offer much to discuss. Do we see any trace of what he portrays in Australia?

N 2001 281pp B1809

Sucked In

Shane Maloney

The discovery of a body in a recently drained lake in country Victoria sends Murray Whelan into investigation mode. Are these the remains of a union leader, drowned twenty years back? Maloney brings us a sharp witted picture of Melbourne during the late 1990s.

F 2007 276pp B1978

The Surgeon of Crowthorne

Simon Winchester

The *Oxford English Dictionary*, a massive work which took 70 years to complete, was based on the contributions of thousands of volunteers, but a mystery surrounded W.C. Minor, one of the most prolific and helpful of these. Winchester's bestselling book sets out the bizarre tale of Minor and his torments, and also offers a diverting account of dictionaries.

N 1998 207pp B1704

Surrender
Sonya Hartnett

Gabriel once did a thing unforgivable in the eyes of his community. Now 20 years old and dying, he has only his faithful dog and his childhood friend Finnigan with whom he made a chilling pact. This demanding, disturbing and exhilarating psychological thriller explores the impact of suffering on a child's mind.

F 2005 245pp B1895

The Suspicions of Mr Whicher
Kate Summerscale

WINNER
Samuel Johnson Prize for Nonfiction

The murder of a child lies at the heart of this biography of a middle class Victorian family, Summerscale's meticulous research turns a mystery into an accessible social history of Britain's 19th century love affair with detectives, and the birth of the detective novel.

N 2008 372pp B2085

T

The Tainted Trial of Farah Jama
Julie Szego

A Somali teen in Melbourne was convicted of the rape of an Australian woman – but the tireless efforts of his lawyer led to shocking revelations 18 months later. Raising questions about justice, migration, cultural taboos, prejudice and gender politics, this is a confronting story about the legal system in Australia.

N 2014 242pp B2213

This book generated the best discussion I can remember in my five years of being in the group - whether the author did the right thing by even writing the story, the shock of the obvious mistakes that occurred throughout the trial, and the failure of our legal system. Most enjoyed reading the book, a few didn't appreciate the authors style, but we all completed the book.

Blackburn 10

The Tall Man
Chloe Hooper

In 2004, Cameron Doomadgee was arrested for swearing at a white police officer. Within 45 minutes he was dead in a watch house cell, the main suspect well respected Senior Sergeant Christopher Hurley. Hooper tells the full story of the subsequent trial and its repercussions. Her reports won her a Walkley Award and were published around the world.

N 2008 288pp B2062

The Tenderness of Wolves
Stef Penney

WINNER
Costa Book Award

1867, Canada. As winter grips the isolated settlement of Dove River, a man is brutally murdered and a 17-year-old boy disappears. Tracks outside the dead man's cabin head north. One by one journalists, trappers, and traders set out across a desolate and dangerous landscape; pursuing the tracks before the snow erases the past for good. But do they want to solve the crime or exploit it?

F 2006 440pp B1980

The Thirteenth Tale
Diane Setterfield

Angelfield House was once the home of the March family – the manipulative Isabelle, her brutal brother Charlie, and wild twins Emmeline and Adeline. But now the house stands forgotten, its chilling secrets hidden from view - until a biographer begins investigating Angelfield's past.

F 2006 459pp B1994

An enjoyable read that draws on all the gothic elements. Diane Setterfield is quite clever using an array of techniques to allow readers to follow the characters across several generations... memories, diaries, research and memorbillia. Interpreting the clues given in the novel led to much discussion in our group.

Blue Mountain Bookends

This House of Grief
Helen Garner

Garner was shocked by the tragic story of a man whose three children drowned when his car plunged into a dam on Father's Day in 2005. Here, she follows the engrossing twists of the man's court case and various appeals in this true crime story, watching as the theatre of the law tries to determine: was this accidental, or deliberate?

N 2014 288pp B2223

This Is How
M.J. Hyland

This is a vividly imagined novel about a young man on the edge of sanity. Patrick is moving in to a boarding house on the English seaside, leaving behind his parents, an unfinished university degree, and a failed engagement. There is a mounting sense of unease as we follow the emotionally inarticulate Patrick in this study in claustrophobia and loneliness.

F 2009 320pp B2056

Trespass
Rose Tremain

Antiques dealer Anthony escapes his fading London life to his sister's house in France, where his presence disrupts her life and relationship. When he decides to buy the run down family home of local siblings Aramon and Audrun, he becomes entangled in a struggle between brother and sister which runs deeper than he can know. Tremain explores family history and what it means to 'trespass' in this haunting novel.

F 2010 253pp B2072

Truth
Peter Temple

WINNER
Miles Franklin Literary Award

Inspector Stephen Villani is head of the Victoria Police Homicide Squad and he faces a series of new murders to solve. A dark novel that explores corruption, deceit and truth. "*Truth* is both confronting and electrifying. It is Temple's best book" – *Age*.

F 2009 387pp B2083

Two Caravans
Marina Lewycka

From the author of the international bestseller *A Short History of Tractors in Ukrainian* comes a hilarious, yet gritty look at what lies behind the arrival of food at our tables. Lewycka's depiction of the exploitation involved in the global labour market is just one part of a picaresque tale involving itinerant migrant workers, young love and a caravan journey from the strawberry fields of Kent.

F 2007 310pp B1982

U

NEW

The Unfortunate Victim
Greg Pyers

Set in the gold-mining town of Daylesford in 1864, this historical crime fiction revolves around the brutal murder of a newlywed, and the chase to find her killer. Based on a true story, the novel offers plenty of discussion around the treatment of female victims and the state of law enforcement during Australia's gold-rush period.

F 2017 320pp B2260

The Untouchable
John Banville

Quintessential member of the English Establishment, Anthony Blunt was disgraced in 1979 when he was revealed as one of the Cambridge spies recruited in the 1930s. The central figure in Banville's exploration of the spy's mentality is loosely based on Blunt, with a supporting cast of randy, heavy drinking dissemblers. A dazzling read: cool, ironic, sad and funny.

F 1997 405pp B1566

V

The Verge Practice
Barry Maitland

The glamorous world of architect Charles Verge is disturbed when his second wife is murdered, and he disappears. Is Verge the killer, now on the run, or has someone killed both Verge and his wife? The action moves between London, Barcelona and the British countryside as police investigators Kolla and Brock follow the trail. Small print.

F 2003 313pp B1854

Vernon God Little
D.B.C. Pierre

WINNER
Man Booker Prize

WINNER
Whitbread Novel Award

The riotous adventures of 15-year-old Vernon Gregory Little in small town Texas and beach front Mexico mark one of the most spectacularly irreverent, satirically acute and critically acclaimed debuts of the 21st century. Strong language.

F 2003 279pp B1941

When Will There Be Good News?
Kate Atkinson

From the bestselling author of *Case Histories* and *One Good Turn* comes the third literary mystery with Jackson Brodie. Dr Hunter is missing and Reggie raises the alarm. In a series of deadly coincidences, Jackson joins Reggie's search and reconnects with Detective Chief Inspector Louise Monroe. With strong character development and multiple plot twists accompaning Atkinson's dark, humorous style.

F 2008 348pp B2029

White Dog
Peter Temple

Jack Irish, gambler, cook, cabinet maker and one time lawyer has a quiet, understated appeal. In a rainy autumn he moves in a world of shady property deals, the squalid exploitation of young women, and untimely death. Peter Temple is admired for his superb ear for dialogue and Australian idiom and his unillusioned portrayal of the Melbourne and Australian scene.

F 2003 337pp B1799

The White Tiger
Aravind Adiga

WINNER
Man Booker Prize

The son of a rickshaw puller, Balram leaves school to work in a teashop. When a rich village landlord hires him as a chauffeur in Delhi, Balram's re education begins, but to access the wealth and opportunity of the city he must embrace a new morality. Provincialism and the caste system clash with the economic glitter of the techno-boom, where murder is sometimes the best option.

F 2008 336pp B2030

The Woman in White
Wilkie Collins

One of the first mystery novels and still a fine example of the genre one hundred and fifty years after it was written. Walter helps a distressed young woman dressed in white, then realises that she had escaped from a nearby asylum. This sets up a surprising plot involving insanity, hidden identities and illegitimate children. It is said that politician William Gladstone cancelled an evening at the theatre to read it; novelist William Makepeace Thackery sat up all night to finish it – and it may produce a similar response in you. Small print.

F 1859 648pp B1059

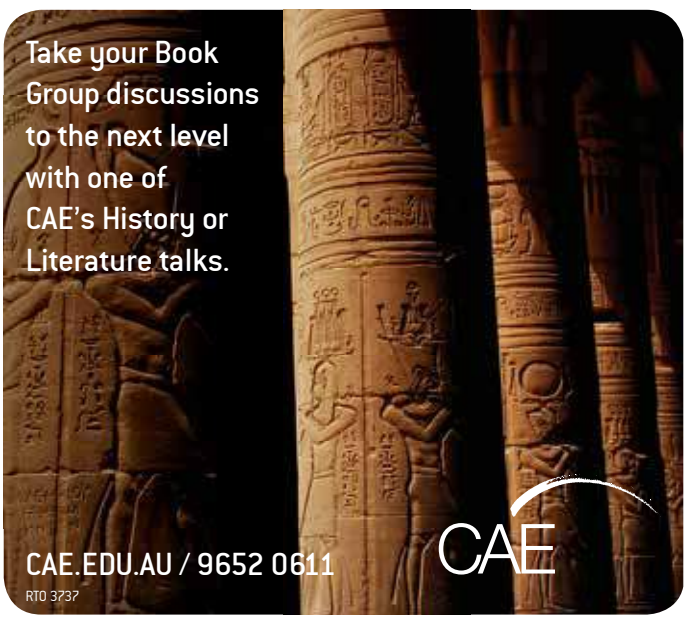
W

We Need to Talk About Kevin
Lionel Shriver

WINNER
Orange Prize

When her son commits mass murder days before his sixteenth birthday, Eva is robbed of everything important to her. In a series of letters to her estranged husband, Eva revisits the events that led to the horrific incident. This chilling, deeply psychological novel asks controversial questions about parenting and family in the modern age.

F 2005 468pp B1942



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Book Groups Enrolment Form

Centre for Adult Education Level 2, 253 Flinders Lane, Melbourne, VIC 3000 Phone: 03 9652 0611 Fax: 03 9654 7840

Group Name: _____ **Group Number: ZZ** ☐☐☐☐ **18**

Is this your first CAE course? Yes ☐ **No** ☐ **If no, please supply your CAE number:** ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

Surname: _____ **Given names:** _____

Home phone: _____ **Mobile:** _____ **Work Phone:** _____

Address: _____

State: _____ **Postcode:** _____ **Email:** _____

☐ Please tick box if you wish to sign up to our free eBook service to receive eBooks (in addition to your allocated physical books).

FEE SCHEDULE 2018: VICTORIA (GST Inclusive). Please circle appropriate fee.

No. of group meetings	Full Fee	Seniors Fee	Concession Fee	Secretary Fee	Pro-rata fee	Pro-rata fee approved
11	$149	$135	$99	$85		
9	$138	$125	$92	$79		
6	$109	$99	$73	$63		

FEE SCHEDULE 2018: INTERSTATE (GST Inclusive). Please circle appropriate fee.

No. of group meetings	Full Fee	Seniors Fee	Concession Fee	Secretary Fee	Pro-rata fee	Pro-rata fee approved
11	$172	$150	$117	$96		
9	$155	$135	$106	$87		
6	$118	$103	$81	$66		

Please note: Interstate membership fees differ due to postage/delivery charges.

Senior and Concession Fees (to claim a concession fee you must have a valid card and provide us with a photocopy).

Senior Fees – Must have a valid Seniors Card or Commonwealth Seniors Health Card.

Concession Fees – Must have a valid Pensioner Concession Card, Health Care Card or Veterans Affairs Gold Card.

☐ Senior ☐ Pensioner ☐ Health Care ☐ Veterans Affairs Gold ☐ Other

Card Number: _____

PAYMENT DETAILS:

Cash and EFTPOS payments can only be made by paying in person at CAE's reception counter on Level 2, 253 Flinders Lane, Melbourne 3000.

☐ Cheque ☐ Money Order ☐ Visa ☐ Mastercard Card No. __ __ __ __ / __ __ __ __ / __ __ __ __ / __ __ __ __ Exp. ____ /____

Total Amount $ _____ Card Holders Name: _____

Card Holder's Signature: _____

Receipt Options:

☐ I do not require a receipt ☐ Send my receipt by email ☐ Mail my receipt by post

Book Groups E-Newsletter – Please tick box if you DO NOT want to receive CAE Book Groups Newsletter by email ☐

CAE – If you do not wish to receive any marketing communication from us, please tick here: ☐

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

Refunds, less a $30 administrative fee, will only be made if requested at least 4 working days prior to the group's first discussion date. Otherwise, no refunds or credit notes will be issued.

Enrolment Checklist: ☑

- ☐ Tick the number of meetings your group is having, check your fee type and circle the correct fee payable.
- ☐ If you are a new member joining later in the year, contact our office for the applicable pro-rata fee.
- ☐ If you are claiming a Senior or Concession fee **please provide the card number and attach a photocopy of your card.**

Office Use Only

Book Groups Administration Signature:	Date:

Service Hub ONLY	Batch Number		Date Processed		Service Hub Initials	

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