

## ERL BOOKCLUB TITLES A-C

**ADAMSON, Gil**

**The outlander**

**400 pages**

On a moonlit night in 1903, a mysterious young woman flees alone across the Canadian wilderness, one quick step ahead of her pursuers. Mary Boulton is nineteen years old, half mad, and widowed - by her own hand. Tearing through the forest with dogs howling in the distance, she is desperate, her nerves burning, and she is certain of one thing only - that her every move is being traced. Two red-headed brothers, rifles across their backs, lurch close behind her: monstrous figures, identical in every way, with the predatory look of hyenas. She has murdered their brother, and their cold lust for vengeance is unswerving. As the widow scrambles to stay ahead of them, the burden of her existence disintegrates into a battle in which the dangers of her own mind become more menacing than the dangers of the night. Along the way, the steely outlaw encounters a changing cast of misfits and eccentrics. Some, like the recluse known as 'The Ridgerunner', provide a brief respite from her solitude; others, like the Reverend Bonnycastle, offer support only to reveal that they too have their own demons raging inside. As she is plunged further away from civilisation, her path from retribution to redemption slowly unfurls.

**ADELAIDE, Debra**

**The household guide to dying**

**386 pages**

When Delia Bennet author and domestic advice columnist is diagnosed with cancer, she knows it's time to get her house in order. After all, she's got to secure the future for her husband, their two daughters and their five beloved chickens. But as she writes lists and makes plans, questions both large and small creep in. Should she divulge her best culinary secrets? Read her favourite novels one last time? Plan her daughters' far-off weddings?

**ALBOM, Mitch**

**The five people you meet in heaven**

**208 pages**

Eddie is a grizzled war veteran who feels trapped in the toil of his father before him, fixing rides at a seaside amusement park. Then he dies in a tragic accident, trying to save a little girl from a falling cart. He awakens in the afterlife, where he learns that heaven is not a lush Garden of Eden, but a place where your earthly life is explained to you by five people who were in it. These people may have been loved ones or distant strangers. Yet each of them changed your path forever. As the story builds to its stunning conclusion, Eddie desperately seeks redemption in the still-unknown last act of his life. Was it a heroic success or a devastating failure? The answer is as magical and inspirational as a glimpse of heaven itself.

**ALBOM, Mitch**

**Tuesdays with Morrie**

**192 pages**

Maybe it was a grandparent, a teacher or a colleague. Someone older, patient and wise, who understood you when you were young and searching, helped you see the world as a more profound place, gave you sound advice to help you make your way through it. For Mitch Albom, that person was Morrie Schwartz, his college professor from nearly twenty years ago.

**ALEXANDER, Goldie**

**Body and soul**

**240 pages**

Set in the summer and autumn of 1938, *BODY AND SOUL* is eighteen-year-old disabled Lilbet Marks' very biased account of the love affair between Felix Goldfarb, a recent migrant from Hitler's Germany, and Lilbet's twin sister Ella. Lilbet adores Ella, but also envies her beauty and for her ability to dazzle men. Lilbet's father Simon Marks, her eldest sister Julie, and all their friends are entranced by Felix Goldfarb's winning blend of worldly sophistication and boyish charm. Only bookish Lilbet suspects Felix might not be all that he seems. As Lilbet records the day to day events at home, her newspaper cuttings and notes explore 1938 attitudes in general, the intolerance shown at the time towards the disabled, the ambivalence she feels towards her family, her insecurities, fear of loneliness and the double-edged sword of love.

**ALEXANDRA, Belinda**

**White gardenia**

**544 pages**

Opening in a small village on the Chinese-Russian border under Japanese occupation in the final days of World War II, "White Gardenia" tells the story of a White Russian mother and daughter separated by war. Based on the true life story of the author's mother, who was forced to flee to China on the outbreak of WWII, and eventually made her way to Australia. Rich in incident and historic detail, it spans decades and continents, stretching from glamorous Shanghai to a tent city on a remote Pacific island and, finally, Australia.

**ALI, Monica**

**Brick Lane**

**496 pages**

Still in her teenage years, Nazneen finds herself in an arranged marriage with a disappointed man who is twenty years older. Away from the mud and heat of her Bangladeshi village, home is now a cramped flat in a high-rise block in London's East End. Nazneen knows not a word of English, and is forced to depend on her husband. But unlike him she is practical and wise, and befriends a fellow Asian girl Razia, who helps her understand the strange ways of her adopted new British home. Strikingly imagined, gracious and funny, this novel is at once epic and intimate. Exploring the role of Fate in our lives - those who accept it; those who defy it - it traces the extraordinary transformation of an Asian girl, from cautious and shy to bold and dignified woman.

**ANDERSON, Joan**

**A year by the sea**

**192 pages**

During the years Joan Anderson was a loving wife and mother she slowly and unconsciously replaced her own dreams with the needs of her family. When her sons grew up, she realized that life no longer centred around the home, and that her relationship with her husband had become stagnant. She felt that the best part of her life was finished. So, shocking herself and her husband, she retreated alone to the family cottage on Cape Cod. Over the course of a year at the cottage she gradually discovered that life was not yet finished, but instead was full of possibilities. "A Year by the Sea" is a record of Joan's experiences and her journey of self discovery, that she hopes will inspire other women to find the courage to recreate their own live.

**ALLENDE, Isabel**

**Daughter of fortune**

**416 pages**

Set in Anglophile Chile and goldrush California during the middle years of the nineteenth century, this magnificent romance tells the story of English foundling Eliza Sommers who grows up in the bustling entrepot of Valparaiso. Eliza is a spirited, sparky and ambitious romantic who becomes embroiled in a forbidden love affair with the charismatic but capricious Joaquin Andieta. When he disappears suddenly for California, and the promise of riches that rumours of gold strikes have brought him, she can but follow after him!

**ALLENDE, Isabel**

**My invented country**

**199 pages**

A question about nostalgia propels an exploration of her past, including the complicated history and politics of Chile, where she spent the better part of her childhood. Despite her strong connection with Chile, Allende says she has been an outsider nearly all her life. Her stepfather was a diplomat, so her family moved quite frequently. However, in her travel diary Allende compares everything to Chile, her "one eternal reference" point. "From saying goodbye so often my roots have dried up," she notes. She successfully reclaims them, however, through two channels. Allende relays anecdotes about what she calls her untraditional family--whom she has based some of her novels upon, including [\*The House of the Spirits\*](#).

**ANONYMOUS**

**The bride stripped bare**

**224 pages**

An explosive novel of sex, secrecy and escape. A woman disappears. Her car lies abandoned on a remote bluff; no body is found. She was the good wife, the good mother: mannerly, quiet, self-contained. But she has left behind an incendiary diary chronicling a disturbing journey of sexual awakening. As the diary opens on her honeymoon in Morocco, she believes herself to be happy -- or happy enough, anyway. Swiftly, this security masquerading as love fractures in an act of massive betrayal, only to propel her into a world of desire and fantasy and recklessness. What begins for her in the imagination ends in a tangle of sheets, in a drowning spiral of obsession and release.

**ANSAY, Manette**

**Vinegar hill**

**352 pages**

When Ellen Grier's husband loses his job, she has little choice but to agree to his suggestion that they and their children move in with his parents on Vinegar Hill. Their new home is more stifling than she feared - a loveless place where dark secrets lurk behind a facade of false piety, and calculated cruelty is routine. Ellen's spirit is close to crushed: how is she to protect her children from their grandparents' bitterness and disapproval? Will her love for little Amy and Bert give her the strength to find a way for them to escape?

**ARMSTRONG, Lance**

**It's not about the bike**

**289 pages**

People around the world have found inspiration in the story of Lance Armstrong--a world-class athlete nearly struck down by cancer, only to recover and win the Tour de France, the multiday bicycle race famous for its gruelling intensity. Armstrong is a thoroughgoing Texan jock, and the changes brought to his life by his illness are startling and powerful, but he's just not interested in wearing a hero suit. There's serious medical detail here, which may not be for the faint of heart; from chemo to surgical procedures to his wife's in vitro fertilization, you won't be spared a single x-ray, IV drip, or unfortunate side effect. Athletes and coaches everywhere will benefit from the same extraordinary detail provided about training sessions--every aching tendon, every rainy afternoon, and every small triumph during his long recovery is here in living colour.

**ASTLEY, Thea**

**Drylands**

**300 pages**

In her flat above Drylands' newsagency, Janet Deakin is writing a book for the world's last reader. Little has changed here in 50 years, except for the coming of cable TV. Loneliness is almost a religion, and still everyone knows your business. The town is being outmanoeuvred by drought and begins to empty, pouring itself out like water into sand. Small minds shrink even smaller in the vastness of the land. One man is forced out by council rates and bigotry; another sells his property, risking the lot to build his dream. And all of them are shadowed by violence of some sort - these people whose only victory over the town is in leaving it. "*Drylands* is a wake-up call for millennial Australia... Astley's brilliance rests not only in her distinctive prose style but her willingness and courage to make social statements, to assemble portraits of pain as a bridge to compassion." *The Bulletin*

**ATKINSON, Kate**

**Case histories**

**399 pages**

Cambridge is sweltering, during an unusually hot summer. To Jackson Brodie, former police inspector turned private investigator, the world consists of one accounting sheet - lost on the left, found on the right - and the two never seem to balance. Jackson has never felt at home in Cambridge, and has a failed marriage to prove it. Surrounded by death, intrigue and misfortune, his own life haunted by a family tragedy, he attempts to unravel three disparate case histories and begins to realise that in spite of apparent diversity, everything is connected...

**ATWOOD, Margaret**

**The robber bride**

**576 pages**

Zenia is beautiful, smart and greedy, by turns manipulative and vulnerable, needy and ruthless; a man's dream and a woman's nightmare. She is also dead. Just to make sure Tony, Roz and Charis are there for the funeral. But five years on, as the three women share an indulgent, sisterly lunch, the unthinkable happens; 'with waves of ill will flowing out of her like cosmic radiation', Zenia is back.

**AUSTEN, Jane**

**Emma**

**474 pages**

'I wonder what will become of her!' So speculate the friends and neighbours of Emma Woodhouse, the lovely, lively, wilful, and fallible heroine of Jane Austen's fourth published novel. Confident that she knows best, Emma schemes to find a suitable husband for her pliant friend Harriet, only to discover that she understands the feelings of others as little as she does her own heart. As Emma puzzles and blunders her way through the mysteries of her social world, Austen evokes for her readers a cast of unforgettable characters and a detailed portrait of a small town undergoing historical transition.

**AUSTEN, Jane**

**Pride and prejudice**

**368 pages**

With the arrival of eligible young men in their neighbourhood, the lives of Mr and Mrs Bennet and their five daughters are turned inside out and upside down. Pride encounters prejudice, upward-mobility confronts social disdain, and quick-wittedness challenges sagacity, as misconceptions and hasty judgements lead to heartache and scandal, but eventually to true understanding, self-knowledge, and love. In this supremely satisfying story, Jane Austen balances comedy with seriousness, and witty observation with profound insight. If Elizabeth Bennet returns again and again to her letter from Mr Darcy, readers of the novel are drawn even more irresistibly by its captivating wisdom.

**AYANOGLU, Byron**

**The taste of honey**

**292 pages**

A sensuous, fun-filled odyssey through the verdant landscape of Crete. For years Byron Ayanoglu has been dreaming of the Mediterranean island of Crete, imagining days filled with leisurely walks around ancient ruins, sunset swims in sparkling waters, and long lunches on a terrace shaded by wisteria and honeysuckle. What he doesn't count on is being roped into an improbable restaurant venture with a rag-tag group of friends! The story of 'Byron's Curry House' is a Greek tragedy of heroic proportions. Plagued by natural disasters, bureaucratic nightmares and the sort of fiery temper tantrums that would do a two-year-old proud, Byron and his friends succeed in creating something the locals will never ever forget. And all in a little under a year. A celebration of the Greek spirit, culture, passion for the good life and capacity for chaos, Byron Ayanoglu's hilarious island adventure is a feast for all the senses.

**BAIL, Murray**

**Eucalyptus**

**272 pages**

On a property in New South Wales, a man named Holland lives with his daughter Ellen. As years pass and Ellen grows into a beautiful young woman, her father announces his decision: she will marry the first man who can name all the species of the eucalypt, down to the last tree.

**BANVILLE, John**

**The sea**

**264 pages**

When art historian Max Morden returns to the seaside village where he once spent a childhood holiday, he is both escaping from a recent loss and confronting a distant trauma. The Grace family had appeared there, in that long-ago summer, as if from another world. Mr. and Mrs. Grace, with their worldly ease and candour, were unlike any adults he had met before. But it was his contemporaries, the Grace twins, Myles and Chloe, who most fascinated Max. He grew to know them intricately, even intimately, and what ensued would haunt him for the rest of his years and shape everything that was to follow.

**BARKER, Pat**

**Regeneration**

**256 pages**

In Craiglockhart war hospital, Doctor William Rivers attempts to restore the sanity of officers from World War I. When Siegfried Sassoon publishes his declaration of protest against the war, the authorities decide to have him declared mentally defective and send him to Craiglockhart.

**BARNES, Julian**

**Arthur and George**

**505 pages**

Arthur and George grow up worlds and miles apart in late nineteenth-century Britain: Arthur in shabby-genteel Edinburgh, George in the vicarage of a small Staffordshire village. Arthur becomes a doctor, and then a writer; George a solicitor in Birmingham. Arthur is to become one of the most famous men of his age, George remains in hardworking obscurity. But as the new century begins, they are brought together by a sequence of events which made sensational headlines at the time as The Great Wyrley Outrages. George Edjali's father is Indian, his mother Scottish. When the family begins to receive vicious anonymous letters, many about their son, they put it down to racial prejudice. They appeal to the police, to no less than the Chief Constable, but to their dismay he appears to suspect George of being the letters' author. Then someone starts slashing horses and livestock. Again the police seem to suspect the shy, aloof Birmingham solicitor. He is arrested and, on the flimsiest evidence, sent to trial, found guilty and sentenced to seven years' hard labour. Arthur Conan Doyle, famous as the creator of the world's greatest detective, is mourning his first wife (having been chastely in love for ten years with the woman who was to become his second) when he hears about the Edjali case. Incensed at this obvious miscarriage of justice, he is galvanised into trying to clear George's name.

**BARTLETT, Anne**

**Knitting**

**272 pages**

It's been ten months since Jack died, and Sandra, a tightly wound academic, copes with her grief by immersing herself in the history of textiles. When she and Martha, a gifted knitter, meet over an unconscious body on the footpath, the unlikely threads of their lives tangle into each other. Sandra invites Martha to join her in a professional collaboration, but what begins as a working relationship becomes something deeply personal. Martha seems at ease with herself, in spite of her own experience of grief. But what does she carry around in those three large bags?

**BAUBY, Jean-Dominique**

**The diving bell and the butterfly**

**139 pages**

The diary of Jean-Dominique Bauby who, with his left eyelid (the only surviving muscle after a massive stroke) dictated a remarkable book about his experiences locked inside his body. On 8 December 1995, Bauby suffered a massive stroke and slipped into a coma. When he regained consciousness three weeks later, the only muscle left functioning was in his left eyelid, although his mind remained as active and alert as it had ever been. He spent most of 1996 writing this book, letter by letter, blinking as an alphabet was repeatedly read out to him. "The Diving-Bell and the Butterfly" was published in France on Thursday 6th March 1997. It achieved instant success. Then, three days later, Bauby died. "The Diving-Bell and the Butterfly", which records Bauby's lonely existence, is a book about the triumph of the human spirit and the ability to invent a life for oneself in the most appalling of circumstances.

**BEHMOIRAS, Josiane**

**My mother was a bag lady**

**264 pages**

When Dora and her eight-year-old daughter, Josiane are arrested in France, they are unable to produce on demand a one-franc coin, legal proof that they are not vagrants. To the detective holding their identity papers, the solution is simple. Penniless, unwanted, itinerant and Jewish, they must be shipped back to the Promised Land. But, this fresh start in Israel comes at a price. Dora's hostile neighbours are soon persecuting her openly for her foreignness and eccentricity. As she tries to make their tiny asbestos hut a home, their few possessions begin to disappear. Worse are the cat-calls in the street and the constant threat of physical violence. Ostracised from their community, Dora and her daughter face the world together. But soon, Josiane must come to terms with the truth about her mother.

**BENNETT, Alan**

**Uncommon reader**

**128 pages**

The Uncommon Reader is none other than HM the Queen who drifts accidentally into reading when her corgis stray into a mobile library parked at Buckingham Palace. She reads widely (JR Ackerley, Jean Genet, Ivy Compton Burnett and the classics) and intelligently. Her reading naturally changes her world view and her relationship with people like the oleaginous prime minister and his repellent advisers. She comes to question the prescribed order of the world and loses patience with much that she has to do. In short, her reading is subversive. The consequence is, of course, surprising, mildly shocking and very funny.

**BERENDT, John**

**The city of falling angels**

**373 pages**

*The City of Falling Angels* opens on the evening of January 29, 1996, when a dramatic fire destroys the historic Fenice opera house. The loss of the Fenice, where five of Verdi's operas premiered, is a catastrophe for Venetians. Arriving in Venice three days after the fire, Berendt becomes a kind of detective-inquiring into the nature of life in this remarkable museum-city-while gradually revealing the truth about the fire. In the course of his investigations, Berendt introduces us to a rich cast of characters: a prominent Venetian poet whose shocking "suicide" prompts his skeptical friends to pursue a murder suspect on their own; the first family of American expatriates that loses possession of the family palace after four generations of ownership; an organization of high-society, partygoing Americans who raise money to preserve the art and architecture of Venice, while quarreling in public among themselves, questioning one another's motives and drawing startled Venetians into the fray; a contemporary Venetian surrealist painter and outrageous provocateur; the master glassblower of Venice; and numerous others--stool pigeons, scapegoats, hustlers, sleepwalkers, believers in Martians, the Plant Man, the Rat Man, and Henry James.

**BERG, Elizabeth**

**Never change**

**240 pages**

Middle-aged Myra Lipinsky describes herself as "the one who sat on a folding chair out in the hall with a cigar box on my lap selling tickets to the prom, but never going." And despite a flourishing career as a visiting nurse, she feels as much an also-ran as ever. As the novel begins, in fact, high school seems to be rearing its ugly head again: Chip Reardon, the heartthrob of Myra's youth, has returned to town to live with his parents. Chip is dying from a brain tumor, and Myra becomes his nurse. Berg is not the kind of writer to lay bare the unsettling power dynamics of such a situation. Instead, Chip and Myra become friends and, well, learn how to love each other. It's a testament to the author's strong sense of character that we actually believe--and what's more, care about--Myra's emergence from her emotional cocoon.

**BINCHY, Maeve**

**Quentins**

**416 pages**

Every table at Quentins Restaurant has a thousand stories to tell: tales of love, betrayal and revenge. Ella Brady wants to make a documentary about the renowned Dublin restaurant that has captured the spirit of a generation and a city in the years it has been open. There is Monica, the ever-cheerful Australian waitress, and Blouse Brennan, whose simplicity disguises a sharp mind and a heart of gold. Presiding over Quentins are Patrick and Brenda Brennan, who have made Quentins such a legend. But even they have a story and a sadness which is hidden from the public gaze. As Ella uncovers more of what has gone on, she wonders about the wisdom of bringing it to the screen. Should the restaurant keep its secrets?

**BINDING, Tim**

**Island madness**

**368 pages**

In *Island madness*, Tim Binding has written a novel that is part war story, part murder mystery, and wholly compelling. Set on Guernsey during the final years of World War II, the story traces the impact of German occupation in the British Channel Islands on both conquerors and conquered alike. By 1943, when Binding's novel begins, the Germans have been on Guernsey for three years and an inevitable degree of fraternization has become the norm. This is especially apparent in the complicated relationship between Major Lentsch, his island-born lover, Isobel van Dielen, and her former flame (and Guernsey's current chief constable) Ned Luscombe. When Isobel is murdered early on in the proceedings, it is up to Ned to solve the crime--a task that throws him into a reluctant liaison with his rival.

**BIRCH, Tony**

**Shadowboxing**

**178 pages**

Shadowboxing is a collection of ten linked episodes, sharing common themes and characters; from the life of a boy growing up in the inner Melbourne suburb of Fitzroy in the 1960s. Michael's working-class Catholic family is held together by his long-suffering mother but dominated by his sullen father's drinking and rage. The family live as though under siege, surviving through thrift and guile in the midst of poverty and violence. Set against this darkness, Michael is a Huck Finn character with the Yarra River as his inner-Melbourne Mississippi which he explores with a hunger for adventure and wild, dangerous fun. This is also the story of Fitzroy and it conveys the spiritual landscape of the suburb, full of local characters and eccentrics.

**BLAIN, Georgia**

**Births, deaths, marriages**

**224 pages**

This book is about life and how we really live it. These true tales move from visits to nudist communes, to losing your virginity; to going to couples' counseling and coping with death in the family. From a bohemian childhood to adulthood as a mother and writer, the author explores true life in all its extraordinary richness.

**BLAIN, Georgia**

**Candelo**

**264 pages**

Thinking back to a family holiday at Candelo, Ursula recalls a time when the power of place mingled with the impetuosity of youth and the heat of the desolate town. Choices were made without thinking. Young lives came together and would never be the same again. Years on, as Ursula confronts decisions that are not so easy to make, an intriguing mystery unfolds. Revelations collide with memories of Candelo - and some breathtaking secrets come to light.

**BLAIN, Georgia**

**Names for nothingness**

**230 pages**

In her final year at school, Caitlin meets Fraser from the Satya Deva sect. She feels a longing for peace and nothingness and changes her life dramatically by leaving school, her family and home. The past is the past; never to be revisited. The future is all that matters. When her mother Sharn learns she has had a child, that is enough to make her take drastic action. A telling portrayal of the stresses and confusion of both family and life, told from the innocence of a teenager to the knowing adults Sharn and Liam.

**BOURAS, Gillian**

**No time for dances**

**230 pages**

At the age of fifty, Gillian Boura's sister, Jacqui, took her own life. Here Bouras explores Jacqui's life and the reason why her loved ones could not save her. This frank, heartfelt, lyrical and compelling examination of the nature of grief and mental illness is also the story of a warm, delightful and fragile woman who lived much of her life in mental pain.

**BOWEN, Stella**

**Drawn from life**

**303 pages**

Stella Bowen was one of the first Australian to make a living as a painter. Born in Adelaide, she left Australia as a young woman to live and work in England and France. This moving and honest memoir describes the joys and hardships of her bohemian lifestyle and her relationship with the writer Ford Madox Ford. Bowen became one of Australia's official War Artists during WWII.

**BRAGG, Melvyn**

**The soldier's return**

**288 pages**

By the time corporal Sam Richardson returns from Burma to his Cumbrian hometown of Wigton, the bunting's long gone, and Sam, like everybody else, wants to get back to normal. But his plans to return to family life with Ellen and six-year-old son Joe don't run smooth. The war has taken away his old job, while Ellen holds down two; Joe's been raised with other men as father-figures; and Sam struggles to repress what he's witnessed out east. In *The Soldier's Return* Bragg explores the most unsettling of experiences: returning to a normality that's no longer normal. In Sam, with his undemonstrative reserve and irrational suspicions, he creates a man who cannot heal the mental scars of active service. While Bragg affectingly evokes Cumbria in the 40s, with a sure-footed sense of that time and place's idiom, this is no exercise in nostalgia, but a book whose concerns--how to deal with the happy ending of war--are only too resonant today.

**BRISCOE, Constance**

**Ugly**

**448 pages**

Constance's mother systematically abused her daughter, both physically and emotionally, throughout her childhood. Regularly beaten and starved, the girl was so desperate she took herself off to Social Services and tried to get taken into care. When that failed, she swallowed bleach 'because it kills all known germs and my mother always told me I was a germ'. When Constance was thirteen, her mother simply moved out, leaving her daughter to fend for herself: there was no gas, no electricity and no food. But somehow Constance found the courage to survive her terrible start in life. This is her heartrending – and ultimately triumphant – story.

**BROOKS, Geraldine**

**March**

**346 pages**

Set during the American Civil War, "March" tells the story of John March, known to us as the father away from his family of girls in "Little Women", Louisa May Alcott's classic American novel. In Brooks' telling, March emerges as an abolitionist and idealistic chaplain on the front lines of a war that tests his faith in himself and in the Union cause when he learns that his side, too, is capable of barbarism and racism. As he recovers from a near-fatal illness in a Washington hospital, he must reassemble the shards of his shattered mind and body, and find a way to reconnect with a wife and daughters who have no idea of the ordeals he has been through. As Alcott drew on her real-life sisters in shaping the characters of her little women, so Brooks turned to the journals and letters of Bronson Alcott, Louisa May's father, an idealistic educator, animal rights exponent and abolitionist who was a friend and confidante of Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau. The story spans the vibrant intellectual world of Concord and the sensuous antebellum South, through to the first year of the Civil War as the North reels under a series of unexpected defeats.

**BROOKS, Geraldine**

**Nine parts of desire**

**276 pages**

This is a study of Islamic women, and of the often contradictory political, religious and cultural forces that shape their lives. The book examines Iran, the Israeli-occupied West Bank, Jordan and the Middle East. It argues that there is feminism amongst Islamic women, and reveals other startling discoveries that defy western stereotypes about the Muslim world. This study offers an acute analysis of the world's fastest growing religion, and illustrates how Islam's holy texts have been used to justify the repression of women.

**BROOKS, Geraldine**

**People of the book**

**400 pages**

In 1996, Hanna Heath, an Australian rare-book expert, is offered the job of a lifetime: analysis and conservation of the famed Sarajevo Haggadah, which has been rescued from Serb shelling during the Bosnian war. Priceless and beautiful, the book is one of the earliest Jewish volumes ever to be illuminated with images. When Hanna, a caustic loner with a passion for her work, discovers a series of tiny artefacts in its ancient binding - an insect wing fragment, wine stains, salt crystals, a white hair - she begins to unlock the book's mysteries. The reader is ushered into an exquisitely detailed and atmospheric past, tracing the book's journey from its salvation back to its creation.

**BROOKS, Geraldine**

**Year of wonders**

**336 pages**

In 1666, plague swept through London, driving the King and his court to Oxford, and Samuel Pepys to Greenwich, in an attempt to escape contagion. The north of England remained untouched until, in a small community of leadminers and hill farmers, a bolt of cloth arrived from the capital. The tailor who cut the cloth had no way of knowing that the damp fabric carried with it bubonic infection. So begins the Year of Wonders, in which a Pennine village of 350 souls confronts a scourge beyond remedy or understanding. Desperate, the villagers turn to sorcery, herb lore, and murderous witch-hunting. Then, led by a young and charismatic preacher, they elect to isolate themselves in a fatal quarantine. The story is told through the eyes of Anna Frith who, at only 18, must contend with the death of her family, the disintegration of her society, and the lure of a dangerous and illicit attraction.

**BROWN, Dan**

**The Da Vinci code**

**560 pages**

Robert Langdon, Harvard Professor of symbology, receives an urgent late-night call while in Paris: the curator of the Louvre has been murdered. Alongside the body is a series of baffling ciphers. Langdon and a gifted French cryptologist, Sophie Neveu, are stunned to find a trail that leads to the works of Da Vinci - and further. The curator, part of a secret society named the Priory of Sion, may have sacrificed his life to keep secret the location of a vastly important religious relic hidden for centuries. It appears that the clandestine Vatican-sanctioned Catholic sect Opus Dei has now made its move. Unless Landon and Neveu can decipher the labyrinthine code and quickly assemble the pieces of the puzzle, the Priory's secret - and a stunning historical truth - will be lost forever.

**BRYSON, Bill**

**The life & times of the thunderbolt kid** **403 pages**

Bill Bryson's first travel book opened with the immortal line, 'I come from Des Moines. Somebody had to.' In his deeply funny new memoir, he travels back in time to explore the ordinary kid he once was, and the curious world of 1950s America. It was a happy time, when almost everything was good for you, including DDT, cigarettes and nuclear fallout. This is a book about growing up in a specific time and

place. But in Bryson's hands, it becomes everyone's story, one that will speak volumes – especially to anyone who has ever been young.

**BURNHAM, Sophy**

**The treasure of Montsegur**

**276 pages**

A gripping historical novel set in medieval France, a time when spiritual passions were flying. From life as a noblewoman to an elderly beggar, Jeanne weaves her past and present into a tapestry, its vivid details revealing the life of a woman trapped by convention and torn by her love of things outside of this world. A story of passion, intrigue, mystery and love, set around the little-known siege of Montsegur.

**BURROUGHS, Augusten**

**Running with scissors**

**304 pages**

*Running with Scissors* is the true story of a boy whose mother (a poet with delusions of Anne Sexton) gave him away to be raised by her unorthodox psychiatrist who bore a striking resemblance to Santa Claus. So at the age of twelve, Burroughs found himself amidst Victorian squalor living with the doctor's bizarre family, and befriending a pedophile who resided in the backyard shed. The story of an outlaw childhood where rules were unheard of, and the Christmas tree stayed up all year round, where Valium was consumed like candy, and if things got dull an electroshock-therapy machine could provide entertainment. The funny, harrowing and bestselling account of an ordinary boy's survival under the most extraordinary circumstances.

**CAPOTE, Truman**

**In cold blood**

**352 pages**

Controversial and compelling, "In Cold Blood" reconstructs the murder in 1959 of a Kansas farmer, his wife and both their children. Truman Capote's comprehensive study of the killings and subsequent investigation explores the circumstances surrounding this terrible crime and the effect it had on those involved. At the centre of his study are the amoral young killers Perry Smith and Dick Hickcock, who, vividly drawn by Capote, are shown to be reprehensible yet entirely and frighteningly human. The book that made Capote's name, *In Cold Blood* is a seminal work of modern prose, a remarkable synthesis of journalistic skill and powerfully evocative narrative.

**CAREY, Peter**

**Jack Maggs**

**368 pages**

*Jack Maggs* is a variation on *Great Expectations*, in which Dickens's tale is told from the viewpoint of Australian convict Abel Magwitch. The names, it's true, have been tinkered with, but the book's literary paternity is unmistakable. So, too, is the post-colonial spin that Carey puts on Dickens's material: this time around, the prodigal Maggs is perceived less as an invading alien than a righteous (if not particularly welcome) refugee.

**CAREY, Peter**

**The true history of the Kelly gang**

**432 pages**

In a dazzling act of ventriloquism, Peter Carey gives Ned Kelly a voice so wild, passionate and original that it is impossible not to believe that the famous bushranger himself is speaking from beyond the grave. *True History of the Kelly Gang* is the song of Australia, and it sings its protest in a voice at once crude and delicate, menacing and heart-wrenching. Carey gives us Ned Kelly as orphan, as Oedipus, as horse thief, farmer, bushranger, reformer, bank-robber, police-killer and, finally, as his country's beloved Robin Hood.

**CARROLL, Joanne**

**The Italian romance**

**373 pages**

Lillian has had to make the hardest decision a woman can make. In war-torn Australia in 1947, she is forced to choose between her baby daughter and the love of her life, an Italian prisoner-of-war. She flees to Italy to make a new life in an act of love that haunts her for fifty years. Set between rural New South Wales and Italy, *The Italian Romance* examines the choices we make and their unexpected consequences.

**CASTRO, Brian**

**The garden book**

**316 pages**

Set in the Dandenongs between the Depression and World War II, the book revolves around Swan Hay, the daughter of a Chinese schoolteacher, and her relationships with brutal bushman Darcy Damon, and an American aviator and adventurer. A work of literary detection, it is tribute to the beauty and cruelty of the Australian bush, and Australia's identity crisis during the period of the White Australia Policy.

**CATHER, Willa**

**O Pioneers!**

**250 pages**

Willa Cather's second novel is abundant with interwoven themes. In one respect Cather bears witness to the early 20th-century Pioneers. The farmer taming the wild Northern States of America, battling with the elements and an unforgiving land to create a home, family and livelihood. On another level *O Pioneers!* is the story of Alexandra Bergson. Due to the death of her father she becomes the head of the household and spends her time between protecting her younger brother and out in the countryside that has become hers. *O Pioneers!* is a powerful testimony to love, the land and the pioneering spirit.

**CHALLIS, Sarah**

**Footprints in the sand**

**512 pages**

When Emily Kingsley arrives at the church, late and sad, for her Great Aunt Mary's funeral, she has no idea that her life is about to change completely. Still grieving for her broken relationship with the vain, mean and unfaithful Ted, and trying to come to terms with the cracks which seem to be appearing in her parents' marriage, she sobs her heart out in the church. At the wake afterwards, however, she and her cousin Clemmie are told that Mary has appointed them executors of part of her Will. They are to transport her ashes to Mali, in western Africa and her final resting place is to be Timadjlalen, in the Saharan desert. And so begins Emily and Clemmie's adventure -- a journey that will be the most important of their lives.

**CHEVALIER, Tracy**

**Falling angels**

**416 pages**

Set among the sweeping skirts and social upheavals of Edwardian London, Tracy Chevalier's *Falling Angels* is a meditation on change, loss, and recovery. Her central characters are two young girls of the same age, whose family plots are situated side-by-side in a cemetery modeled on Highgate. Lavinia Waterhouse is respectably middle-class, devoted, like her conventional, doting mother, to the right way to do things, although suspiciously well-schooled in subjects like funerary sculpture and the English practices of mourning. Her friend Maude Coleman comes from a slightly more privileged and free-thinking background. In contrast with Lavinia's mother, Maude's mother Kitty Coleman is well-educated by the standards of the day, and it has made her restless and irritable.

**CHEVALIER, Tracy**

**Girl with a pearl earring**

**248 pages**

A brilliant historical novel on the corruption of innocence, using the famous painting by Vermeer as an inspiration. Griet, the young daughter of a tilemaker in seventeenth century Holland, obtains her first job, as a servant in Vermeer's household. Tracy Chevalier shows us, through Griet's eyes, the complicated family, the society of the small town of Delft, and life with an obsessive genius. Griet loves being drawn into his artistic life, and leaving her former drudgery, but the cost to her own survival may be high.

**COELHO, Paulo**

**The alchemist**

**192 pages**

This is the magical story of Santiago, an Andalusian shepherd boy who dreams of travelling the world in search of a worldly treasure as fabulous as any ever found. From his home in Spain he journeys to the markets of Tangiers, and from there into the Egyptian desert, where a fateful encounter with the alchemist awaits him. With Paulo's visionary blend of spirituality, magical realism and folklore, *The Alchemist* is a story with the power to inspire nations and change people's lives.

**COELHO, Paulo**

**The zahir**

**368 pages**

The narrator of *The Zahir* is a bestselling novelist who lives in Paris and enjoys all the privileges that money and celebrity bring. His wife of ten years, Esther, is facing an existential crisis. When she disappears along with a friend, Mikhail, who may or may not be her lover, the authorities question the narrator. Was Esther kidnapped, killed, or did she simply abandon a marriage that left her unfulfilled? The narrator doesn't have any answers but he has plenty of questions of his own. Then, one day, Mikhail finds the narrator and promises to take him to his wife. In his attempt to recapture a love lost, the narrator discovers something unexpected about himself.

**COLETTE**

**Gigi & The cat**

**157 pages**

In these two superb stories of the politics of love, Colette is at her witty, instinctive best. *Gigi* is being educated in the skills of the Courtesan: to choose cigars, to eat lobster, to enter a world where a woman's chief weapon is her body. However, when it comes to the question of Gaston Lachaille, very rich and very bored, *Gigi* does not want to obey the rules. In *'The Cat'*, a wonderful story of burgeoning sexuality and blossoming love, an exquisite strong-minded Russian Blue is struggling for mastery of Alain with his seductive fiancée, Camille.

**COUPLAND, Douglas**

**Eleanor Rigby**

**336 pages**

'My name is Liz Dunn. The Liz Dunns of this world take classes in croissant baking, and would rather chew on soccer balls than deny their children muesli. They own one sex toy, plus one cowboy fantasy that accompanies its use! Look at me: I am a traitor to my name: I'm not cheerful; I'm drab. I'm crabby and friendless. And lonely.' Liz Dunn is 42 years old, and lonely. Her house is like 'a spinster's cell block', and she may or may not snore - there's never been anybody to tell her. Then one day in 1997, with the comet Hale Bopp burning bright in the blue-black sky, Liz receives an urgent phone call asking her to visit a young man in hospital. All at once, the loneliness that has come to define her is ripped away by this funny, smart, handsome young stranger, Jeremy. Her son.

**COURTENAY, Bryce**

**The power of one**

**640 pages**

No stranger to the injustice of racial hatred, five-year-old Peekay learns the hard way the first secret of survival and self-preservation - the power of one. An encounter with amateur boxer Hoppie Groenewald inspires in Peekay a fiery ambition - to be welterweight champion of the world.

**CRACKNELL, Ruth**

**A biased memoir**

**308 pages**

*Ruth Cracknell: A Biased Memoir* goes behind the scenes into the fascinating world of Australia's first lady of theatre, film and television. From performing in radio soap operas in evening wear to dancing a wild tango in the famous Phillip Street revues to subverting the 'old dear' stereotype in *Mother and Son*, Ruth Cracknell has led an acting life that embraces Australian theatre history since World War Two. Her personal account beautifully evokes the endless summers and long verandahs of childhood, the wild adventure of London in the 50s, the fun and desperation of rehearsals in many theatres - and always the richness of a life hugely enjoyed and lived to the full.

**CRACKNELL, Ruth**

**Journey from Venice**

**276 pages**

The Serene City beckons, promising Paradise regained for Ruth Cracknell and her husband, Eric, as they set forth on a carefully planned holiday. Up and over the bridges, through the maze that is the city. Spring rain, and water on all sides, soothing. What they are seeking is time. Time to think, time to gaze, time for each other. But from the moment the holiday becomes an uncharted journey, their time is measured. *Journey From Venice* is confronting yet deeply comforting - an acknowledgement of the miracle that is unconditional love. And this story, above all, is a love story.

**CRICHTON, Michael**

**Prey**

**367 pages**

High-tech whistle-blower Jack Forman used to specialise in programming computers to solve problems by mimicking the behaviour of efficient wild animals--swarming bees or hunting hyena packs, for example. Now he's unemployed and is finally starting to enjoy his new role as stay-at-home dad. All would be domestic bliss if it were not for Jack's suspicions that his wife, who's been behaving strangely and working long hours at the top-secret research labs of Xymos Technology, is having an affair. When he's called in to help with her hush-hush project, it seems like the perfect opportunity to see what she's been doing, but Jack quickly finds there's a lot more going on in the lab than an illicit affair. Within hours of his arrival at the remote testing centre, Jack discovers his wife's firm has created self-replicating nanotechnology--a literal swarm of microscopic machines. Originally meant to serve as a military eye in the sky, the swarm has now escaped into the environment and is seemingly intent on killing the scientists trapped in the facility.

**CROGGON, Alison**

**The gift**

**465 pages**

Maerad is a slave in a desperate and unforgiving settlement, taken there as a child when her family is destroyed in war. She is unaware that she possesses a powerful gift, a gift that marks her as a member of the School of Pellinor. It is only when she is discovered by Cadvan, one of the great Bards of Lirigon, that her true heritage and extraordinary destiny unfolds. Now she and her teacher, Cadvan, must survive a punishing and uncertain journey through a time and place where the dark forces they battle with stem from the deepest recesses of other-worldly terror.

*The Hours* is both a homage to Virginia Woolf and very much its own creature. Even as Michael Cunningham brings his literary idol back to life, he intertwines her story with those of two more contemporary women. One grey suburban London morning in 1923, Woolf awakens from a dream that will soon lead to [\*Mrs. Dalloway\*](#). In the present, on a beautiful June day in Greenwich Village, 52-year-old Clarissa Vaughan is planning a party for her oldest love, a poet dying of an AIDS-related illness. And in Los Angeles in 1949, Laura Brown, pregnant and unsettled, does her best to prepare for her husband's birthday, but can't seem to stop reading Woolf. These women's lives are linked both by the 1925 novel and by the few precious moments of possibility each keeps returning to.