

ERL BOOKCLUB TITLES D-H

DAVENPORT, Will

The painter

416 pages

Beautifully evocative and suspenseful double time-scheme narrative about Rembrandt, love and art. In January, 1662, the artist Rembrandt, bankrupted in the great tulip crash, accidentally stows away on a boat for Hull. To pay for his passage, he must paint the Captain's portrait. For himself, he paints a portrait of the Captain's beautiful wife. Rembrandt has seduced many a sitter before, and sets about doing so again. But he has a rival -- none other than the MP for Hull after the Civil War, the poet Andrew Marvell! And the Captain's wife is far from being a passive player in this triangular game of love, deceit and manipulation. All this is discovered in the present day by another painter, Amy, who has returned to her old family home as a restorer. As she paints a portrait of the man she is becoming involved with, so she uncovers the secrets of the past.

DAVENPORT, Will

The perfect sinner

374 pages

Sir Guy de Bryan, trusted friend of Edward III, consecrates a magnificent Chantry, his personal bulwark against the torments of purgatory. Yet he is known as an honorable man. Why should he fear for his eternal soul? Sir Guy harbours three sins, violations of the chivalric code he holds so dear. The first, he has atoned for; he was more of a witness than perpetrator of the second; the third he cannot confess. Yet when he is called upon to lead a dangerous mission across the Alps, he finds one of his companions strangely interested in his tale. The young squire has an uncanny ability to draw out the truth! and in doing so, elicits a remarkable story of rivalry, murderous deception and deep passion. Over six hundred years later, high-flying policy adviser Beth Battock is forced to return to her home village in Devon when her prized career is rocked by scandal. Prompted by a local stone carver, who is painstakingly restoring the searing inscription once displayed on the Chantry, Beth must recognise her own history and that of her family, the thread that binds them to the de Bryans, and that the consequences of her actions cannot be divorced from what went before, in love and war.

DAVIDAR, David

The house of blue mangoes

421 pages

Three generations of an ancient family come and go in Chevathar, the village by the sea. First there is Solomon, the patriarch, manoeuvring to keep the peace as caste struggles begin to encroach on the village. Then there is the story of Solomon's sons, their fortunes rising and falling as India begins its struggle for independence. Finally, there is the story of Solomon's grandson, making his own stand for independence. A host of characters enliven these pages from Father Ashcroft, the English priest washed up in a forgotten corner of the empire, to Mrs Wilkins the planter's wife who clings to the old ascendancy, and to Helen, an Anglo Indian beauty who brings about the final disintegration of the family.

DAY, Marele

Mrs Cook

368 pages

While her husband circumnavigated the globe, travelling further than any man had before, in her heart Elizabeth Cook travelled with him, imagining the exotic, the sensory, the strange. Shaped by historical fact, this novel evokes the love and interior worlds of the Cooks.

DEAN, Louise

This human season

384 pages

November 1979, the height of Northern Ireland's Troubles. Kathleen Moran's son Sean has just been transferred to the hypersecure H-block in Belfast's notorious Maze prison, where he soon emerges as a young but important force in the extreme protest, known as the Blanket, that political prisoners are staging there. John Dunn is also newly arrived at the prison, having taken on the job of guard—a brutal but effective way to support a house and a girlfriend, the domestic dream. In the weeks leading up to Christmas, no one's dreams go untroubled. As rumors of a hunger strike begin to circulate, Louise Dean's pitch-perfect novel places two parents, two sons, and two enemies on a collision course that ends in a surprising and deeply resonant climax.

DE BONT, Genna

The pepper gate

319 pages

As an artist and art teacher Mallory has had incredible success. As a husband and father his successes have been few. Now that he's been diagnosed with a debilitating disease will he find redemption? Set in present day between Mallory's home in rural New South Wales and Sydney, where he leads his other life as prominent Australian artist, *The Pepper Gate* is a finely crafted novel about an eccentric man who is not only set in his ways but unapologetic about his many flaws. Mallory has many women in his life, his wife, his two ex-wives, his disabled daughter, a young woman who might be the daughter he hasn't seen for twenty years as well as the women he's had affairs with over the years. *The Pepper Gate* explores these relationships with honesty and without judgment.

DE KRETZER, Michelle

The Hamilton case

369 pages

The place is Ceylon, the time the 1930s. Set amid tea plantations, corruption and the backwash of empire, this gripping novel has a pitch-perfect ear for the comedy and a sharp eye for the tragedy of a world at the end of its tether. Sam Obeyesekere - 'obey' by name and by nature - is a Ceylonese lawyer, a perfect product of empire. His family once had wealth and influence but starts to crack open as political change comes to the island, and Sam's glamorous father dies leaving gambling debts. And at the heart of the novel is the Hamilton case, a murder scandal that shakes the upper echelons of island society. Sam's involvement in it makes his name but sets his life on course for disappointment.

DE KRETZER, Michelle

The lost dog

345 pages

Tom Loxley is holed up in a remote cottage in the bush, trying to finish a book on Henry James and the Uncanny when his dog goes missing, trailing a length of orange twine, tied with firm knots. Tom's lonely childhood in India taught him to tie knots but not to hold on...The house belongs to Nelly Zhang, an elusive artist with whom Tom has become enthralled. The narrative spans ten days while Tom searches for his dog...and loops back in time to take the reader on a breathtaking journey into glittering worlds far beyond the present tragedy, from an Anglo-Indian childhood to the brittle contemporary Melbourne art scene, from Tom's scratchy, unbearably poignant relationship with his ailing mother to the unanswered puzzles in Nelly's past - her husband also disappeared in the bush. And the reader fears for Tom as well as for the dog. Set in present-day Australia and mid-20th century India, here is a haunting, layered work that vividly counterpoints new cityscapes and their inhabitants with the untamed, ancient continent beyond.

DE KRETSEER, Michelle

The rose grower

303 pages

14th July 1789, Montsignac, Gascony. The Saint-Pierre family is caring for American artist Stephen Fletcher after he's fallen from his balloon, and landed in a haystack. Jean-Baptiste de Saint- Pierre is a magistrate with three daughters. But the Saint-Pierres' existences--like those of everyone else in the locality--are about to fracture as the Revolution gathers momentum and the shockwaves from Paris push out into the provinces. Michelle de Kretser takes us from the co-operative and optimistic start of the Revolution as it manifests in Montsignac, through factionalisation, fanaticism and Terror, denunciations and betrayals, through love and loyalty to a quiet, damaged aftermath, with a vivid cast of surprising heroes, unexpected villains and not-quite-innocent bystanders.

DESSAIX, Robert

Night letters

276 pages

Every night for twenty nights, from his Venetian hotel room, an Australian man recently diagnosed with an incurable disease, writes a letter home to a friend. He reflects on questions of mortality, seduction and the search for paradise. Interweaving incidents from the journey he has just made from Switzerland with stories of enchantment and passion set in a variety of lands and centuries, Dessaix tells a compelling tale of a life lived with a heightened sense of mortality. Night Letters, also on the 1997 Miles Franklin shortlist, was recently awarded joint winner of the 1997 Book Data/Australian Booksellers Association Book of the Year and was recently shortlisted for the NSW Premier's Literary Award for Fiction.

DETTMAN, Joy

Jacaranda blue

326 pages

For forty-four years, Stella Templeton has been a dutiful daughter and a good citizen, living in Maidenville, population 2,800, where nothing happens - until one hot summer afternoon, when an ugly act has lifted the respectable skirts of Maidenville.

DETTMAN, Joy

One Sunday

362 pages

Early one Sunday, the town of Molliston wakes to the news that a young bride is dead. The year is 1929. The Great War with Germany has been fought and won, but at an immense cost to the small community. Death is too familiar here. So many sons were lost. So many daughters would never be wives; so many grandchildren would never be born. Racial hatred is like a bushfire in the belly of some. And the dead girl is found only yards from the property of old Joe Reichenberg, a German. Tom Thompson, the local cop, lost his two sons in Gallipoli. He believes he has come to terms with his bereavement - until that Sunday. Slowly, the true face of Molliston is exposed. By midnight, a full moon is offering its light - and a glimmer of hope.

DETTMAN, Joy

Yesterday's dust

388 pages

The sequel to the bestselling "Mallawindy". Only the strong survive Mallawindy. Some get away, but even they fight to escape the town's dark legacy. Jack Burton escaped. For six years he has been missing, presumed dead. Still, memories of him continue.

DEVESON, Anne

Resilience

296 pages

This work explores resilience, one of the most important and intriguing characteristics affecting human wellbeing. In western societies scant attention has been paid to exploring how and why some people and some communities are better able to cope with adversity and risk than others. Anne Deveson addresses the nature of resilience, whether it can be "learned", its many components, what inhibits resilience and why some people/communities are more resilient than others. The book aims to provoke ideas and debate, to stimulate and inspire individuals and groups of people to feel they can cope, to encourage a different ethos amongst the shapers of law and policy, and to encourage the establishment of programmes to develop resiliency models for young people.

DIAMANT, Anita

The red tent

336 pages

Her name is Dinah. In the Bible, her fate is merely hinted at in a brief and violent detour within the verses of the "Book of Genesis" that recount the life of Jacob and his infamous dozen sons. The "Red Tent" is an extraordinary and engrossing tale of ancient womanhood and family honour. Told in Dinah's voice, it opens with the story of her mothers - the four wives of Jacob - each of whom embodies unique feminine traits, and concludes with Dinah's own startling and unforgettable story of betrayal, grief and love.

DIDION, Joan

The year of magical thinking

227 pages

Several days before Christmas 2003, John Gregory Dunne and Joan Didion saw their only daughter, Quintana, fall ill. At first they thought it was flu, then pneumonia, then complete septic shock. She was put into an induced coma and placed on life support. Days later - the night before New Year's Eve - the Dunes were just sitting down to dinner after visiting the hospital when John suffered a massive and fatal coronary. In a second, this close, symbiotic partnership of 40 years was over. Four weeks later, their daughter pulled through. Two months after that, arriving at LA airport, she collapsed and underwent six hours of brain surgery at UCLA Medical Centre to relieve a massive hematoma. This powerful book is Didion's 'attempt to make sense of the weeks and then months that cut loose any fixed idea I ever had about death, about illness, about marriage and children and memory, about the shallowness of sanity, about life itself'. The result is an exploration of an intensely personal yet universal experience: a portrait of a marriage, and a life, in good times and bad.

DRABBLE, Margaret

The peppered moth

400 pages

It is 1905, and Bessie is a small child living in a South Yorkshire mining town. Unusually gifted, she sits quietly and studies hard, waiting for the day when she can sit the Cambridge entrance exam and escape the way of life her ancestors have never even thought to question. At the other end of the century her granddaughter, Faro, is listening to a lecture on genetic inheritance. She has returned to the town where her grandmother grew up and sees the families who have lived there for longer than anyone can remember. But for all her exotic ancestry and glamour, has she really travelled any further than them?

DREWE, Robert

Grace

432 pages

Some relevant facts about Grace Molloy. Apart from being named after a 100 000-year- old skeleton, she was twenty-nine and for much of the past three years she'd been hiding from an erotomaniac. Physically and emotionally besieged, Grace attempts to claw back her personal territory by abandoning her inner-city life as a film reviewer and fleeing to the remoteness of the Kimberley - where existence and territory have altogether wider implications. Lying low, working in a wildlife park, she reclaims her sanity amid the crocodile pens and snake cages by visualising herself as a media creation - a woman of mystery; a woman overcoming the odds. Her only links with the outside world are two men: her father, a controversial anthropologist famed for discovering the ancient remains of 'the first modern woman', and her nemesis - her stalker.

DRINKWATER, Carol

The olive farm

342 pages

THE OLIVE FARM is television actress Carol Drinkwater's lyrical account of a new life in France; about her house Appassionata and the trials and tribulations of acquiring an olive farm, restoring it, farming the olives, overcoming the heartaches of taking on a 'new' French family and understanding slowly the workings and lifestyle of a vivacious Provencal community. THE OLIVE FARM opens the door on a bustling Mediterranean world using Carol Drinkwater's old abandoned villa as the gateway to it. The book explores the local landscape, the various al fresco jazz festivals, the colourful carnival in Nice, the local cuisine, meals around an oval wooden table, the cycle of olive farming and pressing, local wines.

DUBUS, Andre

House of sand and fog

368 pages

When Kathy, a young recovering alcoholic recently separated from her husband, fails to open a series of tax letters that have been sent to her in error, the State of California seizes the house she and her brother have inherited from her father. The State sells the house at auction to Behrani, a former Iranian Air Force officer. Unable to parley his skills into a job in aerospace in the US, the house represents an entry into real estate and a passport to the future of his family and his own version of the American Dream. For Kathy, its loss is the last of a series of insults life has dealt her. When she becomes involved with a married policeman who takes up her cause, the stage is set for a gut-wrenching tragedy.

DUIGAN, Virginia

The biographer

336 pages

Greer Gordon lives in Italy with Mischa Svoboda, a driven Czech-born painter with a booming international reputation. She and Mischa met in the 1970s, when his debut show at the small Melbourne art gallery where Greer then worked created a sensation. He was unknown at the time, a recently arrived refugee from Prague. Their explosive love affair caused Greer to abandon her husband, job and autocratic boss Verity, sever all contact with home and embark on a nomadic life with Mischa. Twenty-five years later, Tony, a young American art critic, has been researching a biography of Mischa and arrives in the small Italian hilltop community where they now live. Greer is consumed by anxiety, fearing 'the biographer' may have unearthed something that happened as a consequence of her meeting Mischa, a buried secret she had intended to write out of her life story.

DU MAURIER, Daphne

Rebecca

448 pages

Last night I dreamt I went to Manderley again ... Working as a lady's companion, the heroine of Rebecca learns her place. Life begins to look very bleak until, on a trip to the South of France, she meets Maxim de Winter, a handsome widower whose sudden proposal of marriage takes her by surprise. She accepts, but whisked from glamorous Monte Carlo to the ominous and brooding Manderley, the new Mrs de Winter finds Max a changed man. And the memory of his dead wife Rebecca is forever kept alive by the forbidding Mrs Danvers ... Rebecca is the haunting story of a young girl consumed by love and the struggle to find her identity.

DUNANT, Sarah

The birth of Venus

412 pages

Alessandra is not quite fifteen when her prosperous merchant father brings a young painter back with him from Holland to adorn the walls of the new family chapel. She is fascinated by his talents and envious of his abilities and opportunities to paint to the glory of God. Soon her love of art and her lively independence are luring her into closer involvement with all sorts of taboo areas of life. On excursions into the streets of night-time Florence she observes a terrible evil stalking the city and witnesses the rise of the fiery young priest, Savonarola, who has set out to rid the city of vice, richness, even art itself. Alessandra must make crucial decisions about the shape of her adult life, as Florence itself must choose between the old ways of the luxury-loving Medicis and the asceticism of Savonarola. And through it all, there is the painter, whose love will change everything.

DUNCAN,, Susan

Salvation Creek

402 pages

At 44 Susan Duncan appeared to have it all. Editor of two of Australia's top selling women's magazines, a happy marriage, a jetsetting lifestyle covering stories from New York to Greenland, rubbing shoulders with Hollywood royalty, the world was her oyster. But when her beloved husband and brother die within three days of each other, her glittering life shatters. In shock, she zips on her work face and soldiers on - until one morning eighteen months later when she simply can't get out of bed. Heartbreaking, funny and searingly honest, SALVATION CREEK is the story of a woman who found the courage not only to walk away from a successful career and begin again, but to beat the odds in her own battle for survival and find a new life - and love - in a tiny waterside idyll cut off from the outside world. From the terrifying first step of quitting the job that had always anchored her to abandoning herself to a passionate affair and she knows will break her heart, Duncan never flinches from the truth or loses her wicked sense of humour. Even when she finds a paradise on earth only to discover that it may be too late. It's been said that the greatest risk in life is not to take a risk. Sometimes you have to risk everything to find the only thing you need.

DUNMORE, Helen

The siege

304 pages

Leningrad, September 1941. German tanks surround the city, imprisoning those who live there. The besieged people of Leningrad face shells, starvation, and the Russian winter. Interweaving two love affairs in two generations, THE SIEGE draws us deep into the Levin's family struggle to stay alive during this terrible winter. It is a story about war and the wounds it inflicts on people's lives. It is also a lyrical and deeply moving celebration of love, life and survival.

DURRELL, Gerald

My family & other animals

301 pages

As a self-described "champion of small uglies," Gerald Durrell (1925-1995) devoted his life to writing and the preservation of wildlife, from the Mauritius pink pigeon to the Rodrigues fruit bat. *My Family and Other Animals* was intended to embrace the natural history of the Greek island of Corfu, but ended up as a delightful account of his family's experiences that were, according to him, "rather like living in one of the more flamboyant and slapstick comic operas".

DYLAN, Bob

Chronicles

293 pages

How could the fiercely anti-establishment composer of *With God on Our Side* embrace (in turn) orthodox Judaism, then fundamentalist Christianity – two religions absolutely antithetical to his celebration of the unfettered human spirit? How could the demigod of folk (and disciple of Woody Guthrie) make his controversial move into electric rock? How could this man of the streets become the arch capitalist? If no answers to these questions are to be found within the pages of *Chronicles*, there is nevertheless a whole host of pleasures to be encountered: literary felicities, brilliantly etched pen portraits of musical personalities he has encountered, the biting wit one might expect – not to mention a thousand surprises.

EDWARDS, Kim

The memory keeper's daughter

416 pages

Norah's grieving for her baby girl, Phoebe, who died in childbirth. In another city, another woman raises Norah's little girl as her own. It's 1964 and a blizzard is blowing outside the small-town surgery where Dr David Henry finds himself delivering Norah's twins. Relieved, he sees that his son is born healthy, but recognizes the signs of Down's Syndrome in his daughter's face. In a split-second decision that will haunt their family forever, he asks the nurse, Caroline, to take his daughter away. As his wife mourns the missing piece in their apparently perfect lives, can David prevent his painful secret from pulling his family apart?

ELIOT, George

Silas Marner

239 pages

Wrongly accused of theft and exiled from a religious community many years before, the embittered weaver Silas Marner lives alone in Raveloe, living only for work and his precious hoard of money. But when his money is stolen and an orphaned child finds her way into his house, Silas is given the chance to transform his life. His fate, and that of the little girl he adopts, is entwined with Godfrey Cass, son of the village Squire, who, like Silas, is trapped by his past. Silas Marner, George Eliot's favourite of her novels, combines humour, rich symbolism and pointed social criticism to create an unsentimental but affectionate portrait of rural life.

ENGLANDER, Nathan

The ministry of special cases

339 pages

Kaddish Poznan chips the names off gravestones for a living, removing traces of disreputable ancestors for their more respectable kin. His wife Lillian works in insurance, earning money when people live longer than they fear. As Argentina's Dirty War unfolds around them, their sometimes hilarious misadventures are soon replaced by something much darker. A visit to the dreaded Ministry of Special Cases is only the start of Englander's stunning vision of a nation in the hold of corruption and torture, a place where absurdity, despair and hope are the end products of a bureaucracy run out of control.

EUGENIDES, Jeffrey

Middlesex

544 pages

In the spring of 1974, Calliope Stephanides, a student at a girls' school in Grosse Pointe, finds herself drawn to a chain-smoking, strawberry-blond classmate with a gift for acting. The passion that furtively develops between them leads Callie to suspect that she is not like other girls. In fact, Cal has inherited a rare genetic mutation. The biological trace of a guilty secret, this gene has followed her grandparents from the crumbling Ottoman Empire to Detroit and has outlasted the glory days of the Motor City, the race riots of 1967, and the family's second migration, into the foreign country known as suburbia. Thanks to the gene, Cal is part girl, part boy. And even though the gene's epic travels have ended, her own odyssey has only begun.

EVANS, Ilsa

Broken

368 pages

She'd worn white to her wedding. Huge clouds of frosted white that billowed around her in the wind like fairytale snow. But now the fairytale has ended and Mattie Hampton's marriage is over, or so she thinks. In this extraordinary novel, Ilsa Evans expertly draws the reader into a searing, realistic portrayal of the complexities of relationships, and shows us why some things can never be fixed, once they are broken.

FARRINGTON, Tim

The monk downstairs

371 pages

Tim Farrington's *The Monk Downstairs* follows the beguiling romance between a jaded San Francisco graphic designer and a monk who flips burgers at McDonald's. Rebecca Martin is a 38-year-old single mom who has lost her faith in men; Mike is a disillusioned monk who's lost his faith in God. The two meet just after Mike leaves his monastery of 20 years and rents the downstairs apartment of Rebecca's house. The last thing Rebecca wants is another romantic entanglement, especially since she has the emotional well-being of her 6-year-old daughter, Mary Martha, to consider. And the last thing Mike wants is to agitate his already troubled soul. But after a few backyard cigarettes together at twilight and a few melted barriers, a tentative love story is underway.

FAULKS, Sebastian

Birdsong

528 pages

Set before and during the great war, "Birdsong" captures the drama of that era on both a national and a personal scale. It is the story of Stephen, a young Englishman, who arrives in Amiens in 1910. His life goes through a series of traumatic experiences, from the clandestine love affair that tears apart the family with whom he lives, to the unprecedented experiences of the war itself.

FAULKS, Sebastian

Charlotte Gray

512 pages

Charlotte is a highly educated young Scottish woman who falls passionately in love with an airman, Peter Gregory, emotionally scarred by his many close brushes with death. When he disappears on a mission to France, she follows him as a British secret courier, sent over to help support the Resistance. Having failed to find Gregory, she decides to stay on to do what she can for the France she has loved since childhood. She and the reader are drawn ever deeper into the lives of assimilated French Jews-- the children Andre and Jacob whose parents have already been sent to the death camps, and the Levades, father and son. Though ultimately powerless to help, Charlotte nevertheless learns a far deeper understanding of herself and her own family through them.

FFORDE, Jasper

The Eyre affair

374 pages

Fforde's heroine, Thursday Next, lives in a world where time and reality are endlessly mutable--someone has ensured that the Crimean War never ended for example--a world policed by men like her disgraced father, whose name has been edited out of existence. She herself polices text--against men like the Moriarty-like Acheron Styx, whose current scam is to hold the minor characters of Dickens' novels to ransom, entering the manuscript and abducting them for execution and extinction one by one. When that caper goes sour, Styx moves on to the nation's most beloved novel--an oddly truncated version of *Jane Eyre*--and kidnaps its heroine. The phlegmatic and resourceful Thursday pursues Acheron across the border into a Leninist Wales and further to Mr Rochester's Thornfield Hall, where both books find their climax on the roof amid flames.

FITZGERALD, F Scott

The great Gatsby

177 pages

Jay Gatsby is the man who has everything but one thing will always be out of his reach. Everybody who is anybody is seen at his glittering parties. Day and night his Long Island mansion buzzes with bright young things drinking, dancing and debating his mysterious character. For Gatsby young, handsome, fabulously rich always seems alone in the crowd, watching and waiting, though no one knows what for. Beneath the shimmering surface of his life he is hiding a secret, a silent longing that can never be fulfilled and soon this destructive obsession will force his world to unravel.

FLAGG, Fannie

Standing in the rainbow

512 pages

Fannie Flagg is back - together with the unforgettable residents of Elmwood Springs, Missouri - with another cocktail of humour and poignancy, wit and nostalgia, a fantastic feelgood novel that takes you right to the heart of American life. The time: 1946-2000. The Place: Elmwood Springs, Missouri. Right in the middle of everywhere, which could be anywhere. World War II has ended and the joyous transitions to peace are being - mostly - embraced. At the heart of the novel is the inimitable Neighbour Dorothy, broadcasting daily, with Mother Smith on the organ, from her front room, via the tower in her backyard, to an eager, and at times lonely, audience across the state - who often hear more than her own family would like about the antics of wayward son Bobby and adolescent Anna Lee. And meet the Oatman Family, white Southern Gospel Singers at a pharmaceutical convention in Memphis, where they blow the place away.

FLANAGAN, Richard

Gould's book of fish

404 pages

Finding himself at the mercy of a brutal and insane colonial regime that indulges its bizarre fantasies whatever the cost to the inmates, Gould finds himself commissioned to paint fish indigenous to the island. Gould's beautiful book of fish survives to this day, and his pictures are part of the exquisite design of Flanagan's book, which attempts to reproduce the original feel of Gould's book. But this is the novel's last connection to reality. The book is a picaresque fantasy that encompasses art, science, empire and commerce, as well as sex, murder, liberation, castration, bestiality and a whole host of even more unlikely topics. The writing is extraordinary--luminous, sinewy, at times hilarious, often gruesome.

FLANNERY, Tim

The birth of Melbourne

392 pages

A documentary history of the early years of Melbourne's history edited by one of Australia's best-known historical authors, Tim Flannery.

FLAUBERT, Gustave

Madame Bovary

384 pages

Emma Bovary is beautiful and bored, trapped in her marriage to a mediocre doctor and stifled by the banality of provincial life. An ardent reader of sentimental novels, she longs for passion and seeks escape in fantasies of high romance, in voracious spending and, eventually, in adultery. But even her affairs bring her disappointment and the consequences are devastating. Flaubert's erotically charged and psychologically acute portrayal of Emma Bovary caused a moral outcry on its publication in 1857. It was deemed so lifelike that many women claimed they were the model for his heroine; but Flaubert insisted: 'Madame Bovary, c'est moi'.

FONDA, Jane

My life so far

624 pages

'There are always regrets in life, among them things we've done that we wish we could take back and erase. I have significant ones that will haunt me forever and which I hope I have been brave enough to confront in this book' Jane Fonda in the preface to My Life So Far. Now in her 60s, Fonda looks back over her life but also forward to the future. With unflinching honesty she addresses, amongst other things, her tragic and tortured relationships with her mother and father; her lovers and husbands, from Roger Vadim to Ted Turner; her passions and political views. The result is rare in its readability and sheer page-turning force. This is a powerful account of an extraordinary woman.

FORD, Richard

The sportswriter

367 pages

Frank Bascombe has a younger girlfriend and a job as a sportswriter. To many men of his age, thirty-eight, this would be a cause for optimism, yet Frank feels the pull of his inner despair and especially of his recent losses - his preferred career has ended, his wife has divorced him, and a tragic accident took his elder son. In the course of this Easter weekend, Frank will lose all the remnants of his familiar life, though he will emerge heroic with spirits soaring.

FORSTER, E M

A passage to India

384 pages

When Adela and her elderly companion Mrs Moore arrive in the Indian town of Chandrapore, they quickly feel trapped by its insular and prejudiced British community. Determined to explore 'the real India', they seek the guidance of the charming and mercurial Dr Aziz, a cultivated Indian Muslim. But a mysterious incident occurs while they are exploring the Marabar caves with Aziz, and the well-respected doctor soon finds himself at the centre of a scandal that rouses violent passions among both the British and their Indian subjects. A masterly portrait of a society in the grip of imperialism, *A Passage to India* compellingly depicts the fate of individuals caught between the great political and cultural conflicts of the modern world.

FORSTER, E M

A room with a view

256 pages

Visiting Italy with her prim and proper cousin Charlotte as a chaperone, Lucy Honeychurch meets the unconventional lower-class Mr. Emerson and his son, George. Upon her return to England she becomes engaged to the supercilious Cecil Vyse, but finds herself increasingly torn between the expectations of the world in which she moves and the passionate yearnings of her heart. As Forster writes, "You can transmute love, ignore it, muddle it, but you can never pull it out of you." More than a love story, *A Room With a View* is a perceptive examination of class structure and a penetrating social comedy

FOWLER, Karen Joy

The Jane Austen book club

304 pages

Six people, five women and a man, meet once a month in California's Central Valley to discuss Jane Austen's novels. They are ordinary people, neither happy nor unhappy, but each of them is wounded in different ways, they are all mixed up about their lives and relationships. Over the six months they meet, marriages are tested, affairs begin, unsuitable arrangements become suitable under the guiding eye of Jane Austen a couple of them even fall in love.

FOWLES, John

The French lieutenant's woman

446 pages

Of all John Fowles' novels *The French Lieutenant's Woman* received the most universal acclaim and today holds a very special place in the canon of post-war English literature. From the god-like stance of the nineteenth-century novelist that he both assumes and gently mocks, to the last detail of dress, idiom and manners, his book is an immaculate recreation of Victorian England. Not only is it the epic love story of two people of insight and imagination seeking escape from the cant and tyranny of their age, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* is also a brilliantly sustained allegory of the decline of the twentieth-century passion for freedom.

FRANZEN, Jonathan

The corrections

653 pages

Jonathan Franzen's exhilarating novel *The Corrections* tells a spellbinding story with sexy comic brio, and evokes a quirky family akin to Anne Tyler's, only bitter. Franzen is great at describing Christmas homecomings gone awry, cruise-ship follies, self-deluded academics, breast-obsessed screenwriters, stodgy old farts and edgy Tribeca bohemians equally at sea in their lives, and the mad, bad, dangerous worlds of the Internet boom and the fissioning post-Soviet East. All five members of the Lambert family get their due, as everybody's lives swirl out of control. Paterfamilias Alfred is slipping into dementia, even as one of his inventions inspires a pharmaceutical giant to revolutionize treatment of his disease. His stubborn wife, Enid, specializes in denial; so do their kids, each in an idiosyncratic way. We inhabit these troubled minds in turn, sinking into sorrow punctuated by laughter, reveling in Franzen's satirical eye.

FRAYN, Michael

Celia's secret

128 pages

Who is Celia, and what are the mysterious papers found concealed under the attic floorboards of an old country house? Are they simply instructions for assembling a table-tennis table, written in idiosyncratic German, or could they contain a coded message?

FRIDRIKSSON, Marianne

Hanna's Daughter

314 pages

Sweeping through one hundred years of Scandinavian history, this luminous story follows three generations of Swedish women--a grandmother, a mother, and a daughter--whose lives are linked through a century of great love and great loss. Resonating with truth and revelation, this moving novel deftly explores the often difficult but enduring ties between mothers and daughters, the sacrifices, compromises, and rewards in the relationships between men and women, and the patterns of emotion that repeat themselves through generations. If you have ever wanted to connect with the past, or rediscover family, *Hanna's Daughters* will strike a chord in your heart.

FUNDER, Anna

Stasiland

304 pages

In 1989, the Berlin Wall fell; shortly afterwards the two Germanys reunited, and East Germany ceased to exist. In a country where the headquarters of the secret police can become a museum literally overnight, and one in 50 East Germans were informing on their countrymen and women, there are a thousand stories just waiting to get out. Anna Funder tells extraordinary tales from the underbelly of the former East Germany - she meets Miriam, who as a 16-year-old might have started World War III, visits the man who painted the line which became the Berlin Wall and gets drunk with the legendary "Mik Jagger" of the East, once declared by the authorities to his face to "no longer to exist".

FYFIELD, Frances

The nature of the beast

288 pages

Douglas Petty is a man who enjoys his reputation as an unreconstructed male with a penchant for too much wine and too many women. Inheriting his father's eccentric estate and dog sanctuary quietened him a little, and marriage to Amy a little more. Even so, it seemed out of character for him to sue a tabloid newspaper for libel when it printed a scurrilous story about him. His lawyers told him he had a good chance of winning the case, mainly because Amy's testimony would clearly refute the story. But then Amy is involved in a horrendous train crash and while the authorities assume she died in the resulting fire, there is no body to prove it. And if she wasn't killed why has she disappeared and, with no money and no other family, where is she? In a story of mesmerising suspense, Amy slowly reveals why she cannot return to her beloved home, and why she can never escape from the lies she was told as a child.

GAITA, Raymond

Romulus my Father

208 pages

Romulus Gaita fled his home in his native Yugoslavia at the age of thirteen, and came to Australia with his young wife Christine and their four-year-old son soon after the end of World War II. Tragic events were to overtake them. Raimond Gaita has an extraordinary story to tell about growing up with his father amid the stony paddocks and flowing grasses of country Australia.

Written simply and movingly, *Romulus, My Father* is about how a compassionate and honest man taught his son the meaning of living a decent life. It is about passion, betrayal and madness, about friendship and the joy and dignity of work, about character and fate, affliction and spirituality. No one will read this wonderful book without an enhanced sense of the possibilities of being alive.

GARCIA MARQUEZ, Gabriel

Love in the time of cholera

348 pages

Florentino Ariza has never forgotten his first love. He has waited nearly a lifetime in silence since his beloved Fermina married another man. No woman can replace her in his heart. But now her husband is dead. Finally - after fifty-one years, nine months and four days - Florentino has another chance to declare his eternal passion and win her back. Will love that has survived half a century remain unrequited?

GARDNER, Chris

The pursuit of happiness

320 pages

At the age of twenty, Milwaukee native Chris Gardner, just out of the Navy, arrived in San Francisco to pursue a promising career in medicine. Considered a prodigy in scientific research, he surprised everyone and himself by setting his sights on the competitive world of high finance. Yet no sooner had he landed an entry level position at a prestigious firm, Gardner found himself caught in a web of incredibly challenging

circumstances that left him homeless with his toddler son. Instead of giving in to despair, the two spent almost a year moving from shelters, "HO-tels", and soup-lines, even sleeping in the public restroom of a subway station - ultimately making an astonishing transformation from the bathroom to the boardroom.

GARDNER, Nuala

A friend like Henry

342 pages

This is the inspiring account of a family's struggle to break into their son's autistic world - and how a beautiful retriever dog made the real difference. Dale was still a baby when his parents realised that something wasn't right. Worried, his mother Nuala took him to see several doctors, before finally hearing the word 'autism' for the first time. Scared but determined that Dale should live a fulfilling life, Nuala describes her despair at her son's condition, her struggle to prevent Dale being excluded from a 'normal' education and her sense of hopeless isolation. Dale's autism was severe and violent and family life was a daily battleground. But the Gardner's lives were transformed when they welcomed a gorgeous Golden Retriever into the family. The special bond between Dale and his dog Henry helped them to produce the breakthrough in Dale they had long sought. From taking a bath to saying 'I love you', Henry helped introduce Dale to all the normal activities most parents take for granted, and set him on the road to being the charming and well-adjusted young man he is today.

GARNER, Helen

Joe Cinque's consolation

328 pages

In October 1997 a clever young law student at ANU made a bizarre plan to murder her devoted boyfriend after a dinner party at their house. Some of the dinner guests - most of them university students - had heard rumours of the plan. Nobody warned Joe Cinque. He died one Sunday, in his own bed, of a massive dose of rohypnol and heroin. His girlfriend and her best friend were charged with murder. Helen Garner followed the trials in the ACT Supreme Court. Compassionate but unflinching, this is a book about how and why Joe Cinque died. It probes the gap between ethics and the law: examines the helplessness of the courts in the face of what we think of as 'evil'; and explores conscience, culpability, and the battered ideal of duty of care.

GASKELL, Elizabeth

Cranford

194 pages

'Cranford is in possession of the Amazons; all the holders of houses, above a certain rent, are women.' In this witty and poignant comedy of early-Victorian life in a country town, Elizabeth Gaskell describes the uneventful lives of the lady-like inhabitants so as to offer an ironic commentary on the diverse experiences of men and women. She explores the unlikely juxtapositions of old and new brought about by the pace of change: the effects of Victorian commerce and imperial expansion co-exist with the survival of customs and habits of thought from much earlier times.

GEE, Sue

Reading in bed

352 pages

Opening at the Hay Festival, and ending with the prospect of a spring wedding, Sue Gee's novel is a lively story of tangled relationships and the sustaining powers of good books, loyal friends and conversation. Friends since university, with busy working lives behind them, Dido and Georgia have long been looking forward to carefree days of books and conversation, when each finds herself caught up in unexpected domestic drama. Dido, for the first time, has cause to question her marriage; widowed Georgia feels certain her husband will return to her. Meanwhile, an eccentric country cousin goes wildly off the rails, children are unhappy in love, and perfect health is all at once in question.

GERAS, Adele

Hester's story

544 pages

Hester Fielding was once the leading ballerina of her day. Her life is the stuff of drama: a bleak Yorkshire childhood transformed by the discovery of her amazing gifts as a dancer; a dangerous love affair that can only lead to heartbreak; and a secret that would topple her from her pinnacle of fame if it ever came out. Now Hester has returned to Yorkshire, to Wychwood where, each year at Christmas, a ballet is performed on Twelfth Night in the little theatre there. Just before the company arrives at Wychwood, Hester receives a phone call that brings back haunting memories. As the dancers prepare for the opening night of Sarabande, and loyalties shift and tempers flare, the past comes crashing into the present in ways that Hester could never have predicted.

GERRARD, Nicci

Things we knew were true

320 pages

At sixteen Edie knew things. She knew that her mother was charming and beautiful, that her older sister Stella was the star of the family and that her father, clumsy, quiet Vic, was loving and gentle. Then Edie discovered what it was to fall in love; she dared to let herself be happy. But in one terrible moment of tragedy, her teenage dreams were torn apart. Twenty years on, Edie is now a mother and a wife. When family duty calls, the sisters come together again, and it looks like the truth of what happened all those years ago may finally become clear.

GIBSON, Stella

Cold comfort farm

256 pages

When sensible, sophisticated Flora Poste is orphaned at nineteen, she decides her only choice is to descend upon relatives in deepest Sussex. At the aptly named Cold Comfort Farm, she meets the doomed Starkadders: cousin Judith, heaving with remorse for unspoken wickedness; Amos, preaching fire and damnation; their sons, lustful Seth and despairing Reuben; child of nature Elfine; and crazed old Aunt Ada Doom, who has kept to her bedroom for the last twenty years. But Flora loves nothing better than to organize other people. Armed with common sense and a strong will, she resolves to take each of the family in hand.

GIBSON, William

Neuromancer

271 pages

Neuromancer is the most influential science fiction novel of our time. Cyberspace and virtual reality were invented in this book. It changed forever the way we look at tomorrow. The Matrix unfolds like neon origami beneath clusters and constellations of data. Constructs, AIs, live here. Somewhere, concealed by ice, Neuromancer is evolving.

GILBERT, Elizabeth

Eat, pray, love

335 pages

It's 3 a.m. and Elizabeth Gilbert is sobbing on the bathroom floor. She's in her thirties, she has a husband, a house, they're trying for a baby - and she doesn't want any of it. A bitter divorce and a turbulent love affair later, she emerges battered and bewildered and realises it is time to pursue her own journey in search of three things she has been missing: pleasure, devotion and balance. So she travels to Rome, where she learns Italian from handsome, brown-eyed identical twins and gains twenty-five pounds, an ashram in India, where she finds that enlightenment entails getting up in the middle of the night to scrub the temple floor, and Bali where a toothless medicine man of indeterminate age offers her a new path to peace: simply sit still and smile. And slowly happiness begins to creep up on her.

GORMAN, Vanessa

Layla's story

313 pages

A thirtysomething woman struggles to make all the pieces of her life fit together. She wants a baby, but she also wants her career. She wants the prince of her childhood dreams - but she's madly in love with the one man who's never going to fit that mould. And then, finally, she gets the one thing she wants more than anything else. She falls pregnant . . . This is Vanessa Gorman's extraordinary account of her life before and after losing her baby daughter, Layla, only hours after birth. Sometimes confronting, but always passionately honest, it is a fearless exploration of the depths of grief and the journey back to hope.

GREGORY, Philippa

Bread and chocolate

256 pages

A rich and wonderful selection of short stories. A TV chef who specialises in outrageous cakes tempts a monk who bakes bread for his brothers; a surprise visitor invites mayhem into the perfect minimalist flat in the season of good will; a woman explains her unique view of straying husbands; straying husbands encounter a variety of effective responses. Just some of the delicacies on offer in this sumptuous box of delights...

GREGORY, Philippa

The other Boleyn girl

529 pages

Everyone knows the fate of Anne Boleyn, but not many know the story of her rise to majesty and the part played by her rival and sister, Mary, who was Henry's mistress and mother to two of his bastard children before the dazzling older Boleyn girl caught his eye. *The Other Boleyn Girl* charts the lives of both Boleyns--each in their turn "the other Boleyn Girl"--and their fiercely ambitious, conniving family who used the girls as pawns to advance their own positions at the court of Henry VIII. At 13, Mary is little more than a child when she is presented to Henry, ordered by her scheming family to serve her King and country by opening her legs whenever commanded, or doing anything else the great monarch desires. Inevitably though, the King's eyes soon begin to wander and Mary is overlooked, helpless to do anything but aid her family's plot to advance their fortunes, replace her with Anne and give Henry the greatest gift of all: a son and heir.

GRENVILLE, Kate

The secret river

334 pages

After a childhood of poverty and petty crime in the slums of London, William Thornhill is sentenced in 1806 to be transported to New South Wales for the term of his natural life. With his wife Sal and children in tow, he arrives in a harsh land that feels at first like a death sentence. But among the convicts there is a whisper that freedom can be bought, an opportunity to start afresh. Away from the infant township of Sydney, up the Hawkesbury River, Thornhill encounters men who have tried to do just that: Blackwood, who is attempting to reconcile himself with the place and its people, and Smasher Williams, whose fear of this alien world turns into brutal depravity towards it. As Thornhill and his family stake their claim on a patch of ground by the river, the battle lines between old and new inhabitants are drawn.

GROGAN, John

Marley & me

305 pages

John and Jenny were just beginning their life together. They were young and in love, with a perfect little house and not a care in the world. Then they bought home Marley, a wiggly yellow fur ball of a puppy.

but the whole book turns out to be rather intimate and personal. This is less a comment on Ireland and Germany after the war and more Hugo Hamilton's youthful journey of self discovery.

HAMILTON, Masha

The camel bookmobile

336 pages

Once a fortnight, the nomadic settlement of Madidima, set deep in the dusty Kenyan desert, awaits the arrival of three camels laden down with panniers of books. This is the Camel Bookmobile, a scheme set up to bring books to scattered tribes whose daily life is dominated by drought, famine and disease. Into their world comes an unexpected wealth of literature - from the adventures of Tom Sawyer to strange vegetarian cookbooks and Dr Seuss. Kanika, a young girl who lives with her grandmother, devours every book she can lay her hands on. Her best friend is Scar Boy, a child who was mauled at the age of three by a hyena. They are joined by Matani the village teacher, his alluring wife Jwahir and the drummer Abayomi, as well as Mr Abasi, the camel driver, who is convinced that one of the camels is possessed by the spirit of his dead mother-in-law. The only condition of The Camel Bookmobile is that every book must be returned or else the visits will cease. Then one day a book is stolen...

HAMPSON, Amanda

The olive sisters

300 pages

When Adrienne Bennett's marketing company goes down, her affluent lifestyle and her sense of identity are lost too. She retreats to Duffy's Creek and the abandoned olive grove once owned by her Italian migrant grandparents. Here, Adrienne stumbles on several secrets from the past and finds herself on an unexpected journey with surprising results.

HARDY, Jules

Blue earth

435 pages

The Reichmanns are a prosperous farming family. The envy of Blue Earth County, Minnesota, they delight in their good fortune and their three blond sons. But when World War II shatters the dreams they worked so hard to build, the youngest, Billy-Ray, vows to confront the world that has so betrayed them. It is no accident that he becomes an unrivalled oil prospector, driven to tame the untameable land that makes him so rich and powerful, yet leaves him always wanting. From the oil fields of Alaska, to the country estates of the English aristocracy, Billy-Ray seeks forgiveness in the arms of the women he seduces, and begs deliverance from the landscapes he so ruthlessly exploits.

HARDY, Thomas

The Mayor of Casterbridge

448 pages

The story of Michael Henchard who rises from humble beginnings to become the Mayor of Casterbridge. However, his past comes back to haunt him when a woman and her daughter arrive in Casterbridge. The consequences of past actions and the impossibility of escaping the past are the themes of this classic novel.

HARLEY, Jonathan

Lost in transmission

332 pages

'I grew up with lessons of Australian men as hardy, practical types, strong and stoic. They went off to war for years in jungles and deserts, and never had the need or time to talk about it when they came home. I haven't even fought a war; merely skirted its edges. But if Khurram is right and the soul can only travel at camel's speed, then mine has a lot of catching up to do.' When Jonathan Harley is finally offered his dream job as a foreign correspondent, he is suddenly no longer so sure he wants it. He's just fallen in love, hard. But he can't pass up the chance of becoming the ABC's man in South Asia - and the adventure of a

lifetime. LOST IN TRANSMISSION is his funny, moving and thoroughly entertaining account of what it's really like not only to be a foreign correspondent but to be literally a stranger in an even stranger land, struggling to make sense of life in a region that never makes sense.

HARRIS, Jane

The observations

432 pages

This story is set in Scotland, in the year 1863. In an attempt to escape her not-so-innocent past in Glasgow, Bessy Buckley - the wide-eyed Irish heroine of "The Observations" - takes a job as a maid in a big house outside Edinburgh working for the beautiful Arabella. Bessy is intrigued by her new employer, but puzzled by her increasingly strange requests and her insistence that Bessy keep a journal of her most intimate thoughts. And it seems that Arabella has a few secrets of her own - including her near-obsessive affection for Nora, a former maid who died in mysterious circumstances.

HARRIS, Joanne

Chocolat

336 pages

When an exotic stranger, Vianne Rocher, arrives in the French village of Lansquenet and opens a chocolate boutique directly opposite the church, Father Reynaud identifies her as a serious danger to his flock - especially as it is the beginning of Lent, the traditional season of self-denial. War is declared as the priest denounces the newcomer's wares as instruments of murder. Suddenly Vianne's shop-cum-cafe means that there is somewhere for secrets to be whispered, grievances to be aired, dreams to be tested. But Vianne's plans for an Easter Chocolate Festival divide the whole community in a conflict that escalates into a 'Church not Chocolate' battle. As mouths water in anticipation, can the solemnity of the Church compare with the pagan passion of a chocolate éclair? For the first time, here is a novel in which chocolate enjoys its true importance, emerging as a moral issue, as an agent of transformation - as well as a pleasure bordering on obsession.

HARRIS, Joanne

Five quarters of the orange

368 pages

Framboise returns to the village where she grew up during wartime, and with the help of the recipes scribbled in her mother's album, opens up a small restaurant. However, she is desperate to keep her identity a secret even amongst the aged villagers with whom she played on the banks of the Loire in the years of German occupation during the Second World War. Framboise immerses herself once again in the peaceful rhythms of village life, pungently evoked by Harris's evocative prose. But slowly, reluctantly, Framboise begins to unravel the terrible wartime secret that drove her family away from the village.

HARRIS, Robert

Enigma

390 pages

March 1943, the war hangs in the balance, and at Bletchley Park a brilliant young codebreaker is facing a double nightmare. The Germans have unaccountably changed their U-boat Enigma code, threatening a massive Allied defeat. And as suspicion grows that there may be a spy inside Bletchley, Jericho's girlfriend, the beautiful and mysterious Claire Romilly suddenly disappears.

HAWKS, Tony

Round Ireland with a fridge

264 pages

'I hereby bet Tony Hawks the sum of One Hundred Pounds that he cannot hitchhike round the circumference of Ireland, with a fridge, within one calendar month'. A foolhardy attempt to win a drunken bet led to Tony Hawks having one of the most unforgettable experiences of his life. Joined by his trusty

travelling-companion-cum-domestic-appliance, he found himself in the midst of a remarkable, inspirational and, at times, downright silly adventure. In their month of madness, Tony and his fridge surfed together; entered a bachelor festival; and one of them had sex without the other knowing. The fridge got christened, and they even met the poorest king on Earth.

HAYNES, Melinda

Mother of pearl

544 pages

'There's no television, but daytime dramas unfold...' Welcome to Petal, Mississippi, Summer 1956. Twenty-eight-year-old Even Grade, a black man who grew up an orphan, and Valuable Korner, a fifteen-year-old white girl, daughter of the town whore and an unknown father, are both seeking the family, love and commitment they've never had. When their paths cross through Joody Two Sun, a seer, who sets up camp along the riverbank just outside of town and becomes Even's lover, all three are forced to take on the savage miseries and saving graces of the past and present in the Deep South - in a haunting bittersweet tale of the search for identity and the power of renewal.

HAYNES, Melinda

Willem's field

416 pages

As Willem Fremont's mysterious illness takes its toll on his body and lucrative business he believes that the remedy lies in his return to his roots in Mississippi, where past tragedies haunt him and memories of 1970s Southern life, including political unrest and the decline of the family farm.

HAZZARD, Shirley

The great fire

336 pages

The conflagration of the title is the Second World War. In war-torn Asia and stricken Europe, men and women, still young but veterans of harsh experience, must reinvent their lives and expectations, and learn, from their past, to dream again. Some will fulfill their destinies, others will falter. At the centre of the story, a brave and brilliant soldier finds that survival and worldly achievement are not enough. His counterpart, a young girl living in Occupied Japan and tending her dying brother, falls in love, and in the process discovers herself. In the looming shadow of world enmities resumed, and of Asia's coming centrality in world affairs, a man and a woman seek to recover self-reliance, balance, and tenderness, struggling to reclaim their humanity.

HEARN, Lian

Across the nightingale floor

256 pages

In his palace at Inuyama, Lord Iida Sadamu, warlord of the Tohan clan, surveys his famous nightingale floor. Its surface sings at the tread of every human foot, and no assassin can cross it. But 16-year-old Otori Takeo, his family murdered by Iida's warriors has the magical skills of the Tribe - preternatural hearing, invisibility, a second self - that enable him to enter the lair of the Tohan. He has love in his heart and death at his fingertips. Set in a mythical, feudal, Japanese land, a world both beautiful and cruel, the intense love story of two young people takes place against a background of warring clans, secret alliances, high honour and lightning swordplay.

HELLER, Zoe

Notes on a scandal

256 pages

When the new teacher first arrives, Barbara immediately senses that this woman will be different from the rest of her staff-room colleagues. But Barbara is not the only one to feel that Sheba is special, and before too long Sheba is involved in an illicit affair with a pupil. Barbara finds the relationship abhorrent, of

course, but she is the only adult in whom Sheba can properly confide in. So when the liaison is found out and Sheba's life falls apart, Barbara is there...

HENDERSON, Meg

The holy city

320 pages

This novel tells the story of the people of Clydebank during the Blitz and in the postwar years, depicting their camaraderie and resilience in the face of adversity.

HIGHSMITH, Patricia

Carol

272 pages

Therese first glimpses Carol in the New York department store where she is working as a sales assistant. Carol is choosing a present for her daughter; she looks preoccupied, exuding an aura of elegance as perfect as a secret. Standing there at the counter, Therese suddenly feels wholly innocent - wholly unprepared for the first shock of love. First published under a pseudonym in 1952, Carol is a love story told with compelling wit and eroticism, and consummate tenderness.

HILL, Susan

The woman in black

160 pages

Proud and solitary, Eel Marsh House surveys the windswept reaches of the salt marshes beyond Nine Lives Causeway. Arthur Kipps, a junior solicitor, is summoned to attend the funeral Mrs Alice Drablow, the house's sole inhabitant, unaware of the tragic secrets which lie hidden behind the shuttered windows. It is not until he glimpses a wasted young woman, dressed all in black, at the funeral, that a creeping sense of unease begins to take hold, a feeling deepened by the reluctance of the locals to talk of the woman in black - and her terrible purpose.

HILLENBRAND, Laura

Seabiscuit

453 pages

The true story of three men and their dreams for a racehorse -- Seabiscuit -- that symbolised a pivotal moment in American history, as the twentieth century's greatest nation found the courage to bet on itself to win against the odds. In 1936 the habits of 19th-century America were finally consigned to history just as Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind* was published. In their place, modern America was born. But what defined this new era? Nothing more than the story of Seabiscuit, a stunted colt with asymmetrical knees that had for two years been hacked around no-good race tracks which led to permanent leg damage. Yet by 1937 Seabiscuit could draw crowds of 60,000 and had more newspaper column inches devoted to him than Mussolini, Hitler or Roosevelt, his popularity peaking during his appearances at the Santa Anita Handicap. America had gone to the races for the first time since the Depression and fallen in love with a misshapen colt of great character. Now it wanted a winner. Seabiscuit is also the story of three men: Tom Smith, a former Wild West Showman was the trainer; Red Pollard, abandoned by his poverty stricken family at a race track became the rider; and Charles Howard, a pioneer car manufacturer in San Francisco in the 1920s was the owner and financier. These three combined to create the legend of Seabiscuit and epitomise a dream for the emerging new America.

HIRSI ALI, Ayaan

Infidel

353 pages

Ayaan Hirsi Ali is one of today's most admired and controversial political figures. She burst into international headlines following the murder of Theo van Gogh by an Islamist who threatened she would be next. Her life story shows the coming of age of this elegant, distinguished -- and sometimes reviled --

political superstar and champion of free speech. Ultimately a celebration of triumph over adversity, Hirsi Ali's story tells how a bright, curious, dutiful little girl evolves into a pioneering freedom fighter.

HOFFMAN, Alice

Practical magic

280 pages

A tale of two sisters, Gillian and Sally Owens, brought up by their two elderly guardian aunts in a world of spells and exotica. As the magical charm of their childhood wears away, they escape from this mystical mayhem - one by running away, the other by marrying. Many years go by before strange circumstances thrust them together again, and once more they are in a place that blends the mundane and mysterious, the familiar and fantastic, the normal and the numinous. Three generations of Owens women are brought together in an experience of unexpected insight and revelation, teaching all of them that such perceptions are rare and wonderful and - to be sure - practical.

HOFMANN, Corinne

The white Masai

310 pages

Corinne Hofmann falls in love with a Masai warrior while on holiday with her boyfriend in Kenya. After overcoming all sorts of obstacles, she moves into a tiny shack with him and his mother in his village, and spends four years in Kenya. Slowly but surely the dream starts to crumble until she flees back home with her baby daughter born out of the seemingly indestructible love between a white European woman and a Masai.

HOLDEN, Kate

In my skin

285 pages

Kate Holden is used to being summed up at a glance: arts graduate, history buff, middle-class daughter, dreamer, innocent. But she is a young woman who understands better than most the secrets that people keep hidden. This astonishing debut follows her journey from the safe and leafy suburbs of Melbourne to the all-consuming attractions of heroin and the sex industry. This is a story - confronting and utterly compelling - of survival and resourcefulness; an unflinching look at the consequences of addiction and the struggle of power and control that addicts face. Holden's journey leads her to a world of sex for money, from the seedy netherworld of back lanes and backseats to the security, both real and imagined, provided by brothels. This is a moving, at times brutal, memoir from a prodigiously talented new voice. Kate Holden has produced a searingly honest and wonderfully written account of a life on the streets, on drugs and on the skids.

HOLLINGHURST, Alan

The line of beauty

501 pages

It is the summer of 1983, and young Nick Guest, an innocent in the matters of politics and money, has moved into an attic room in the Notting Hill home of the Feddens: Gerald, an ambitious new Tory MP, his wealthy wife Rachel, and their children Toby and Catherine. Nick had idolized Toby at Oxford, but in his London life it will be the troubled Catherine who becomes his friend and his uneasy responsibility. At the boom years of the mid-80s unfold, Nick becomes caught up in the Feddens' world. In an era of endless possibility, Nick finds himself able to pursue his own private obsession, with beauty - a prize as compelling to him as power and riches are to his friends.

HOPKINS, Sarah

The crimes of Billy Fish

294 pages

After serving three years for a violent robbery, Billy Fish is granted parole and walks out the prison gates. His pattern has been a simple one of drugs, crime and custody. Billy's sister Rose has taken a different path. Her life is filled with work and caring for her infant son, a structured existence that has become a buffer between Rose and the outside world. Both Billy and Rose are fighting against their past in very different ways. Then one rainy morning, Rose's son is killed in an accident. The lives of Billy and Rose begin to unravel, testing the strength of their sibling love and forcing them to face the reality of their terrifying past.

HOSPITAL, Janette Turner

Due preparations for the plague

390 pages

Lowell feels contagious with doom. A divorced father with young children, he dreads the anniversary of a hijacked Paris-New York flight on which his mother was killed when he was sixteen years old. Samantha, a survivor of the disaster, is plaguing Lowell with phone calls. She says she has information from declassified documents and is obsessed with learning the whole truth about Air France 64. 'What can be worse than not knowing?' she asks. But Lowell only wants to forget. When his father dies suddenly and mysteriously on the anniversary of the hijacking, leaving Lowell the key to a locker in an airport terminal, a terrible story unfurls before him. Together, he and Samantha find the inescapable truth bearing down on them with the force of a jumbo jet.

HOSPITAL, Janette Turner

Orpheus lost

358 pages

In this compelling reimagining of the Orpheus myth, Leela, a young mathematician, encounters gifted Australian musician Mishka performing in the subway. The connection is immediate; a steamy love affair ensues. Insulated by their love, the pair ignores the anxious urban landscape. But when Leela is picked up off the street and taken to an interrogation center and an explosion rocks the subway, the fabric of their bond--and their very identities--begins to unravel.

HOSSEINI, Khaled

The kite runner

340 pages

Narrated by Amir, a 40-year-old novelist living in California, *The Kite Runner* tells the gripping story of a boyhood friendship destroyed by jealousy, fear, and the kind of ruthless evil that transcends mere politics. Running parallel to this personal narrative of loss and redemption is the story of modern Afghanistan and of Amir's equally guilt-ridden relationship with the war-torn city of his birth. The first Afghan novel to be written in English, *The Kite Runner* begins in the final days of King Zahir Shah's 40-year reign and traces the country's fall from a secluded oasis to a tank-strewn battlefield controlled by the Russians and then the trigger-happy Taliban. When Amir returns to Kabul to rescue Hassan's orphaned child, the personal and the political get tangled together in a plot that is as suspenseful as it is taut with feeling.

HOSSEINI, Khaled

A thousand splendid suns

372 pages

Mariam is only fifteen when she is sent to Kabul to marry the troubled and bitter Rasheed, who is thirty years her senior. Nearly two decades later, in a climate of growing unrest, tragedy strikes fifteen-year-old Laila, who must leave her home and join Mariam's unhappy household. Laila and Mariam are to find consolation in each other, their friendship to grow as deep as the bond between sisters, as strong as the ties between mother and daughter. With the passing of time comes Taliban rule over Afghanistan, the streets of Kabul loud with the sound of gunfire and bombs, life a desperate struggle against starvation, brutality and fear, the women's endurance tested beyond their worst imaginings. Yet love can move a person to act in

unexpected ways, lead them to overcome the most daunting obstacles with a startling heroism. In the end, it is love that triumphs over death and destruction.

HOUGH, Robert

The final confession of Mabel Stark

432 pages

Mabel Stark was one of the most famous women of her time, the centre-ring finale act of the Ringling Brothers Barnum and Bailey circus in the 1920s and 1930s when circus was the most popular form of entertainment in North America.

HUSTVEDT, Siri

What I loved

384 pages

This is the story of two men who first become friends in 1970s New York, of the women in their lives, and of their sons, born the same year. Both Leo Hertzberg, an art historian, and Bill Weschler, a painter, are cultured, decent men, but neither is equipped to deal with what happens to their children – Leo's son drowns when he's 12, while Bill's son Mark grows up to be a delinquent, and the acolyte of a sinister, guru-like artist who spawns murder in his wake. Spanning the hedonism of the eighties and the chill-out nineties, this multi-layered novel combines a plot of mounting menace with a deeply moving account of familial relationships and a superbly observed portrait of an artist, set against the backdrop of a society reaching new depths of depravity in its frenetic quest for the next fashion, drug and thrill.