

## ERL BOOKCLUB TITLES M-P

**MCBRIDE, James**

**The colour of water**

**291 pages**

The remarkable story of Ruth McBride Jordan, the two good men she married and the 12 good children she raised. Ruth was born a Polish Jew, immigrated to America, and moved to New York as an adult, leaving her family behind in Virginia. She met and married a black man, making her isolation even more profound. Jordan battled not only racism but also poverty to raise her children, and her indomitable will never wavered. This is her son's tribute to her struggles and addresses racial identity with compassion, insight and realism

**MCBRIDE, James**

**Miracle at St Anna**

**386 pages**

Based on the historical incident of an unspeakable massacre at the site of Sant'Anna Di Stazzema, a small village in Tuscany, and on the experiences of the famed Buffalo soldiers from the 92nd Division in Italy during World War II, *Miracle at St Anna* is a singular evocation of war, cruelty, passion, and heroism. It is the story of four American Negro soldiers, a band of partisans, and an Italian boy who encounter a miracle - though perhaps the true miracle lies in themselves. Traversing class, race, and geography, *Miracle at St Anna* is above all a hymn to the brotherhood of man and the power to do good that lives in each of us.

**MCCALL SMITH, Alexander**

**44 Scotland Street**

**325 pages**

The story revolves around the comings and goings at No. 44 Scotland Street, a fictitious building in a real street in Edinburgh. Immediately recognisable are the Edinburgh chartered surveyor, stalwart of the Conservative Association, who dreams of membership of Scotland's most exclusive golf club. We have the pushy Stockbridge mother, and her prodigiously talented five-year-old son, who is making good progress with the saxophone and with his Italian. Then there is Domenica Macdonald who is that type of Edinburgh lady who sees herself as a citizen of a broader intellectual world. In McCall Smith's hands such characters retain charm and novelty, simultaneously arousing both mirth and empathy. Clever, elegant and funny, this is a novel that provides huge entertainment but which is underpinned by the moral dilemmas of everyday life and the characters' struggles to resolve them.

**MCCALL SMITH, Alexander**

**No 1 ladies detective agency**

**235 pages**

Wayward daughters. Missing Husbands. Philandering partners. Curious conmen. If you've got a problem, and no one else can help you, then pay a visit to Precious Ramotswe, Botswana's only -

and finest - female private detective. Her methods may not be conventional, and her manner not exactly Miss Marple, but she's got warmth, wit and canny intuition on her side, not to mention Mr J.L.B. Maketoni, the charming proprietor of Tlokweng Road Speedy Motors. And Precious is going to need them all as she sets out on the trail of a missing child, a case that tumbles our heroine into a hotbed of strange situations and more than a little danger ...

**MCCARTHY, Cormac**

**No country for old men**

**309 pages**

Llewlyn Moss, hunting antelope near the Rio Grande, stumbles upon a transaction gone horribly wrong. Finding bullet-ridden bodies, several kilos of heroin, and a caseload of cash, he faces a choice - leave the scene as he found it, or cut the money and run. Choosing the latter, he knows, will change everything. And so begins a terrifying chain of events, in which each participant seems determined to answer the question that one asks another: how does a man decide in what order to abandon his life?

**MCCARTHY, Cormac**

**The road**

**307 pages**

A father and his son walk alone through burned America, heading through the ravaged landscape to the coast. This is the profoundly moving story of their journey. "The Road" boldly imagines a future in which no hope remains, but in which two people, 'each the other's world entire', are sustained by love. Awesome in the totality of its vision, it is an unflinching meditation on the worst and the best that we are capable of: ultimate destructiveness, desperate tenacity, and the tenderness that keeps two people alive in the face of total devastation.

**MCCRUM, Robert**

**My year off**

**221 pages**

At the age of forty-two, happy, successful and newly married, Robert McCrum suffered a devastating stroke. It occurred without explanation, leaving his left arm and leg completely paralysed, his speech virtually absent, and his sense of himself radically altered. My Year Off is the searingly honest account of what followed: of McCrum's anger, despair and frustration; his violent mood swings; and his gradual recovery of sensation, movement, confidence and self-esteem. Including extracts from his diary and that of his wife Sarah, it is not only an invaluable insight into the suffering of stroke victims and their families, but also a moving story of determination, courage and love.

**MCCULLOUGH, Colleen**

**Angel puss**

**423 pages**

1960, Sydney's Kings Cross. Harriet Purcell leaves her conventional, respectable home and respectable, passionless boyfriend and moves into a rooming house owned by Mrs. Delvecchio Schwartz. There, Harriet finds a life she relishes -- excitement, adventure and passion. Mrs. Delvecchio Schwartz makes a living from telling fortunes, and is mother to 4-year-old Flo. Beautiful little Flo is mute, and Harriet comes to love her as if Flo were her own -- and must protect her at all costs when tragedy strikes. - Amazon

**MCCULLOUGH, Colleen**

**The thorn birds**

**592 pages**

A robust, romantic saga of three generations. It begins in the early years of the twentieth century when Paddy Cleary moves his wife and seven children to Drogheda, an Australian sheep station, owned by his autocratic and childless older sister. For more than half a century we follow their fates, particularly those of Meggie, the only Cleary daughter, and the one man she truly loves, Ralph de Bricassart - stunningly handsome, ambitious, and a priest. As background to the Cleary family's lives there is the land itself: relentless in its demands, brilliant in its flowering.

**MCDERMOTT, Alice**

**Charming Billy**

**280 pages**

The late Billy Lynch's family and friends gather at a bar in the Bronx to remember better times. They admire the way his widow, Maeve, is holding up but one cannot think of Billy without saying "There was that girl." Soon the twisted grief of Maeve, Billy and his cousin Dennis becomes apparent. Even at his funeral party, Billy Lynch's life remains up for debate. This soft-spoken, poetry lover's drinking was as legendary among his Queens', New York, family and friends as was his disappointment in love. But the latter, as his cousin Dennis knows, "was, after all, yet another sweet romance to preserve." After World War II, both young men had spent one sun-swept week on Long Island, renovating a house and falling in with two Irish sisters--nannies to a wealthy family--"marvelling, marvelling still, that this Eden was here, at the other end of the same island on which they had spent their lives." By the end of their idyll, Billy and Eva were engaged, though she was set to return to County Wicklow.

**MCDONALD, Roger**

**Mr Darwin's shooter**

**364 pages**

This work chronicles the life of Syms Covington, who becomes Charles Darwin's shooter and collector of specimens, from his early maritime adventures to his later years, as he awaits his copy of "The Origin of Species" and ponders his part in altering the way the world thinks.

**MACDONALD, Sarah**

**Holy cow**

**298 pages**

After backpacking her way around India Sarah Macdonald decides she hates the country with a passion. When a beggar reads her palm and insists she will one day return - and for love - she screams 'Never!'. But twelve years later the prophecy comes true.

When the love of her life is posted to India, Sarah follows him to the most polluted city on earth, New Delhi. It seems like the ultimate sacrifice for love and it almost kills her - literally. After being cursed by a naked sadhu smeared in human ashes Sarah almost dies from double pneumonia, but not before facing some serious questions about her fragile mortality and inner spiritual void - not to mention some unsightly hair loss.

It's enough to send a rapidly balding atheist on a wild rollercoaster ride through India in search of the meaning of life and death. With the help of the Dalai Lama, a goddess of healing hugs and a couple of Bollywood stars - among many, many others - Sarah discovers a hell of a lot more.

**MCEWAN, Ian**

**Atonement**

**384 pages**

The novel begins on the hottest day of the summer of 1935 in a country house in England. Thirteen-year-old Briony witnesses an incident which will change the lives of many people. Briony's vivid imagination will lead her to commit a crime which she will spend the rest of her life trying to atone for. The novel moves from 1930's England, to France during WWII and ends in contemporary London.

**MCEWAN, Ian**

**On Chesil beach**

**176 pages**

It is June 1962. In a hotel on the Dorset coast, overlooking Chesil Beach, Edward and Florence, who got married that morning, are sitting down to dinner in their room. Neither is entirely able to suppress their anxieties about the wedding night to come. A story about how the entire course of a life can be changed by a gesture not made or a word not spoken.

**MCEWAN, Ian**

**Saturday**

**304 pages**

Saturday, February 15, 2003. Henry Perowne is a contented man - a successful neurosurgeon, the devoted husband of Rosalind and proud father of two grown-up children. Unusually, he wakes before dawn, drawn to the window of his bedroom and filled with a growing unease. What troubles him as he looks out at the night sky is the state of the world - the impending war against Iraq, a gathering pessimism since 9/11, and a fear that his city and his happy family life are under threat. Later, Perowne makes his way to his weekly squash game through London streets filled with hundreds of thousands of anti-war protestors. A minor car accident brings him into a confrontation with Baxter, a fidgety, aggressive, young man, on the edge of violence. To Perowne's professional eye, there appears to be something profoundly wrong with him. Towards the end of a day rich in incident and filled with Perowne's celebrations of life's pleasures, his

family gathers for a reunion. But with the sudden appearance of Baxter, Perowne's earlier fears seem about to be realised.

**MCGAHAN, Andrew**

**White earth**

**448 pages**

One spring day in late 1992, when William was halfway between his eighth birthday and his ninth, he looked out from the back verandah of his home and saw, huge in the sky, the mushroom cloud of a nuclear explosion. He stared at it, wondering. The thunderhead was dirty black, streaked with billows of grey. It rolled and boiled as it climbed into the clear blue day, casting a vast shadow upon the hills beyond. But there was no sound, no rumble of an explosion. William was aware of the smell of burning... but it was a good smell, a familiar smell. The smell of grass, of wheat, of the farm itself. His father dead by fire and his mother plagued by demons of her own, William is cast upon the charity of his unknown uncle - an embittered old man encamped in the ruins of a once great station homestead, Kuran House. It's a baffling and sinister new world for the boy, a place of decay and secret histories.

**MCGINNIS, Kerry**

**Pieces of blue**

**295 pages**

At the age of 6, Kerry McGinnis loses her mother. Her grief-stricken father, Mac, is left with 4 young children to raise. After a desperate attempt to manage alone, Mac gathers up his family and leaves the city to go droving. For the next 15 years, the McGinnis clan travels the continent, droving, horse breaking and living off the land. Schoolrooms, comfort and civilisation are a long way off as Kerry grows up in the harsh outback, where the animals are often her closest friends. With the memory of her absent mother ever present, Kerry begins her difficult journey to young womanhood.

**MCGIRR, Michael**

**Things you get for free**

**296 pages**

When Maureen McGirr finally takes the big trip she had planned for her honeymoon, she still has the cosmetic case she was given for her wedding almost forty years before. She also has another lifetime's experience and a thirty-something son, a Jesuit priest, to take with her. Mother and son make unlikely companions as they travel through Europe, but not as unlikely as the tourists they encounter.

**MCGREGOR, Ewan**

**Long way round**

**368 pages**

It started as a daydream. Poring over a map of the world at home one quiet Saturday afternoon, Ewan McGregor - actor and self-confessed bike nut - noticed that it was possible to ride all the way round the world, with just one short hop across the Bering Strait from Russia to Alaska. So he picked up the phone and called Charley Boorman, his best friend, fellow actor and bike

enthusiast. 'Charley,' he said. 'I think you ought to come over for dinner.' Riding 20,000 miles across increasingly tough terrain, Ewan and Charley chased their shadows through Europe, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Russia, across the Pacific to Alaska, then down through Canada and America. As they travelled they documented their trip, taking photographs, and writing diaries by the campfire. Long Way Round is the result of their adventures - a fascinating, frank and highly entertaining travel book about two friends riding round the world together and, against all the odds, realising their dream.

**MCINERNEY, Monica**

**The alphabet sisters**

**452 pages**

Anna, Bett and Carrie Quinlan were childhood singing stars, The Alphabet Sisters. As adults they haven't spoken for years, ever since Bett's fiance left her for another sister. Now Lola, their larger-than-life grandmother, summons them home for her 80th birthday extravaganza and a surprise announcement - she wants them to revive their singing careers and stage a musical she has written. Rehearsals get underway, and family secrets begin to be shared and revealed. But just as the rifts begin to close, the Alphabet Sisters face a test they never imagined.

**MCINNES, William**

**A man's got to have a hobby**

**281 pages**

A tail-end baby boomer, William recalls summer holidays that seemed to go on forever, when he and his mates would walk down to fish in the bay, a time when the Aussie battler stood as the local Labor candidate and looked out for his mates, and a time when the whole family would rush into the lounge room to watch a new commercial on TV. This is a book about people who aren't famous but should be. It's about cane toads and families, love and hope and fear, laughter, death and life. Most of all, it is a realistic, down-to-earth book by a man who had a great time growing up. His warmth and humour come through on every page.

**MCKAY, Ami**

**The birth house**

**352 pages**

Epic and enchanting, 'The Birth House' is a gripping saga about a midwife's struggles in the wilds of Nova Scotia. As a child in the small village of Scot's Bay, Dora Rare -- the first female in five generations of Rares -- is befriended by Miss Babineau, an elderly midwife with a kitchen filled with folk remedies and a talent for telling tales. Dora becomes her apprentice at the outset of World War I, and together they help women through difficult births, unwanted pregnancies and even unfulfilling marriages. But their traditions and methods are threatened when a Doctor comes to town with promises of painless childbirth, and sets about undermining Dora's

credibility. Death and deception, accusations and exile follow, as Dora and her friends fight to protect each other and the women's wisdom of their community.

**MALONEY, Shane**

**Sucked in**

**276 pages**

Now pushing fifty, Murray Whelan is spinning his wheels in parliament - a toothless cog in Labor's stalled political machine. But when the remains of a long-lost union official are found in dried-up Lake Nillahcootie, Murray soon gets sucked into some murky waters. For a start, it seems that his old mate Charlie Talbot was implicated. But Charlie has just dropped dead of a coronary occlusion in the dining room of the Mildura Grand Hotel, leaving behind a lot of unanswered questions. The press are sniffing around and Labor's enemies are lining up for a free kick. Then there's the blackmail attempt. And as if that wasn't enough, there's an ALP preselection going pear-shaped.

**MANTEL, Hilary**

**Beyond black**

**451 pages**

Alison Hart is a medium by trade: dead people talk to her, and she talks back. With her flat-eyed, flint-hearted sidekick, Colette, she tours the dormitory towns of London's orbital road, passing on messages from dead ancestors: 'Granny says she likes your new kitchen units.' Alison's ability to communicate with spirits is a torment rather than a gift. Behind her plump, smiling and bland public persona is a desperate woman. She knows that the next life holds terrors that she must conceal from her clients. Her days and nights are haunted by the men she knew in her childhood, the thugs and petty criminals who preyed upon her hopeless, addled mother, Emmie. They infiltrate her house, her body and her soul; the more she tries to be rid of them, the stronger and nastier they become.

**MARNHAM, Patrick**

**Wild Mary**

**304 pages**

Mary Wesley famously began writing at the age of 70. Her ten best-selling novels won her thousands of fans, and described a world that she had known in her youth - the world of war-time London, with its fear and high-spirits and casual sex. They created an image of Mary that her fans took to their hearts, but it was an image that was carefully created and one that raised more questions than it answered. The real Mary Wesley had lived a life more fascinating, scandalous and passionate than any she created for her heroines. Behind the legend of Mary Wesley the novelist, was another woman, Mary Siepmann, who guarded her privacy fiercely. In the last year of her life she decided to reveal more of herself to her biographer, Patrick Marnham. Through hours of interviews and access to Mary's diaries, letters and unpublished memoirs, Patrick

Marnham discovered her extraordinary true story. It is a story of near-suicide and reckless courage and tells of how a passionate and headstrong woman, born into a ruling class in decline turned her back on her privileged position; she knew both poverty and fame, but more than anything succeeded in living life on her own uncompromising terms.

**MARTEL, Yann**

**The life of Pi**

**384 pages**

Like its noteworthy ancestors (Robinson Crusoe, Gulliver's Travels, the Ancient Mariner and Moby Dick) Life of Pi is a tale of disaster at sea. Both a boys' own adventure (for grown-ups) and a meditation on faith and the value of religious metaphor, it was one of the most extraordinary and original novels of 2002. The only survivor from the wreck of a cargo ship on the Pacific, 16 year old Pi spends 221 days on a lifeboat with a hyena, a zebra (with a broken leg), a female orang-utan and a 450-pound Royal Bengal Tiger called Richard Parker ...

**MASON, Daniel**

**The piano tuner**

**368 pages**

On a misty London afternoon in 1886, piano tuner Edgar Drake receives a strange request from the War Office: he must leave his wife, and his quiet life in London, to travel to the jungles of Burma to tune a rare Erard grand piano. The piano belongs to Surgeon-Major Anthony Carroll, an enigmatic British officer, whose success at making peace in the war-torn Shan States is legendary, but whose unorthodox methods have begun to attract suspicion. So begins the journey of the soft-spoken Edgar across Europe, the Red Sea, India, Burma, and at last into the remote highlands of the Shan States. En route he is entranced by the Doctor's letters and by the shifting cast of tale-spinners, soldiers and thieves who cross his path.

**MAYES, Frances**

**Under the Tuscan Sun**

**280 pages**

Frances Mayes starts off by saying "I am about to buy a house in a foreign country. A house with the beautiful name of Bramasole." Tall, square and apricot-colored with faded green shutters, the lovely old farm house that Frances and her husband buy is in Tuscany. They return every summer, they tend the olives and grapes, they plant potatoes and build a stone wall. The book has Tuscan soil under its fingernails, Tuscan sun on its back and the flavor of Tuscany throughout.

**MAYES, Frances**

**A year in the world**

**420 pages**

Frances Mayes brings to the page the curiosity of an intrepid explorer, remarkable insights into the wonder of the everyday, and a compelling narrative style that entertains as it informs. With her beloved Tuscany as a home base, Mayes travels to Spain and Portugal, France, the British Isles, and the Mediterranean world of Turkey, Greece, the south of Italy, and North Africa. In Andalusia, she relishes the intersection of cultures. She cooks in Portugal, gathers ideas in the gardens of England and Scotland, takes a literary pilgrimage to Burgundy, discovers an ideal place to live in Mantova, and explores the essential Moroccan city of Fez. Weaving together personal perceptions and informed commentary on art, architecture, history, landscape, and the social and culinary traditions of each area, Mayes brings the immediacy of life in her temporary homes to the reader.

**MAZARI, Najaf**

**The rugmaker of Mazar-e-Sharif**

**262 pages**

Traces the story of Najaf Mazari, an Afghani refugee living in Australia. It recounts his amazing journey, from shepherd boy in the mountains of northern Afghanistan, to successful owner of a traditional Afghani rug shop in Melbourne. This is the first book-length account of an asylum seeker in Australia in his own voice.

**MILLER, Alex**

**Journey to the stone country**

**372 pages**

Following the sudden end of her marriage, Annabelle Beck returns from Melbourne to the sanctuary of her old family home in North Queensland. There, on an archaeological survey, she discovers that the aboriginal field officer, Bo Rennie, knows her from her childhood. Initially intrigued by his old-fashioned manners, she finds herself increasingly captivated by his modest assurance that he holds the key to her future. Eventually she sets out with him on a path of discovery that leads back to her childhood and to the uncovering of family secrets that have lain buried for a generation or more, secrets that will challenge their future together and force them to question whether their love can survive.

**MILTON, Giles**

**Nathaniel's nutmeg**

**388 pages**

In 1616, an English adventurer, Nathaniel Courthope, stepped ashore on a remote island in the East Indies on a secret mission - to persuade the islanders of Run to grant a monopoly to England over their nutmeg, a fabulously valuable spice in Europe. This infuriated the Dutch, who were determined to control the world's nutmeg supply. For five years Courthope and his band of thirty men were besieged by a force one hundred times greater - and his heroism set in motion the events that led to the founding of the greatest city on earth.

**MITCHELL, David**

**Cloud atlas**

**544 pages**

A reluctant voyager crossing the Pacific in 1850; a disinherited composer blagging a precarious livelihood in between-the-wars Belgium; a high-minded journalist in Governor Reagans California; a vanity publisher fleeing his gangland creditors; a genetically modified dinery server on death-row; and Zachry, a young Pacific Islander witnessing the nightfall of science and civilisation the narrators of CLOUD ATLAS hear each others echoes down the corridor of history, and their destinies are changed in ways great and small.

**MOORE, Tim**

**Do not pass Go**

**352 pages**

A book that tells the story of London since the thirties through the 28 streets, stations and utilities of the Monopoly board. In the wonderful world of Monopoly it still only cost 50 pounds to buy a house in Islington, you can move around London with the shake of a dice and even park your car for free. In Do Not Pass Go Tim Moore, belying his reputation as a player who always paid that 10 pounds fine rather than take a Chance, fearlessly tackles the real thing and along the way tells the story of a game and the city that frames it. Sampling the rags and the riches he stays in a hotel in Mayfair and one in the Old Kent Road, enjoys quality time with Dr Crippen in Pentonville Prison and even winds up at the wrong end of the Water Works pipe. And, solving all the mysteries you'll have pondered whilst languishing in jail and many others you certainly wouldn't, Tim Moore reveals how Pall Mall got its name, which three addresses you won't find in your A-Z and why the sorry cul-de-sac that is Vine Street has a special place in the heart of Britain's most successful Monopoly champion.

**MORTON, Kate**

**The shifting fog**

**469 pages**

Summer 1924: On the eve of a glittering Society party, by the lake of a grand English country house, a young poet takes his life. The only witnesses, sisters Hannah and Emmeline Hartford, will never speak to each other again. Winter 1999: Grace Bradley, 98, one-time housemaid of Riverton Manor, is visited by a young director making a film about the poet's suicide. Ghosts awaken and memories, long-consigned to the dark reaches of Grace's mind, begin to sneak back through the cracks. A shocking secret threatens to emerge; something history has forgotten but Grace never could.

**MURAKAMI, Haruki**

**Kafka on the shore**

**505 pages**

Kafka Tamura runs away from home at fifteen, under the shadow of his father's dark prophesy. The aging Nakata, tracker of lost cats, who never recovered from a bizarre childhood affliction, finds his pleasantly simplified life suddenly turned upside down. Their parallel odysseys are enriched throughout by vivid accomplices and mesmerising dramas. Cats converse with people; fish tumble from the sky; a ghostlike pimp deploys a Hegel-spouting girl of the night; a forest

harbours soldiers apparently un-aged since WWII. There is a savage killing, but the identity of both victim and killer is a riddle.

**MURDOCH, Iris**

**The bell**

**330 pages**

A lay community of thoroughly mixed-up people is encamped outside Imber Abbey, home of an enclosed order of nuns. A new bell is being installed and then the old bell, legendary symbol of religion and magic, is rediscovered. Dora Greenfield, erring wife, returns to her husband. Michael Meade, leader of the community, is confronted by Nick Fawley, with whom he had disastrous homosexual relations, while the wise old Abbess watches and prays and exercises discreet authority. And everyone, or almost everyone, hopes to be saved, whatever that may mean.

**NAFISI, Azar**

**Reading Lolita in Tehran**

**368 pages**

For two years before she left Iran in 1997 (an Iran by then well settled into its Islamic revolutionary garb), Nafisi gathered seven young women at her house every Thursday morning to read and discuss frowned-upon works of Western literature. They were all former students whom she had taught at university. Some came from conservative and religious families, others were progressive and secular; several had spent time in prison. They were shy and uncomfortable at first, unaccustomed to being asked to speak their minds, but soon they began to open up and speak more freely, not only about the novels they were reading, but also about themselves, their dreams and disappointments. Their stories intertwined with those they were reading – *Pride and Prejudice*, *Washington Square*, *Daisy Miller* and *Lolita* – their *Lolita*, as they imagined her in Tehran.

**NAIR, Preethi**

**One hundred shades of white**

**304 pages**

A magical mixture of East meets West, mothers in conflict with daughters, and the healing power of food. 'I cannot easily put into words why I told my children their father had died. What was I supposed to tell them? The truth? "Monu, Mol, your father has had enough of responsibility, he has another family, he's gone, left us." Maybe there are one hundred shades for explaining truth, a spectrum from light to dark, depending on the vulnerability of those who have to hear it. Things are not always clear cut, they are not either black or white, life just isn't like that.' Nalini and her two young children are transplanted from luxury in India to the bewildering confusion of London, only to be abandoned by her negligent husband. At first survival is a struggle, but Nalini turns to what she does best: cooking.

**NEGUS, George**

**The world from Islam**

**292 pages**

George Negus draws on his broad experience with the subject of Islam via his international journalistic work spanning more than 25 years in most of the world's Muslim countries. Negus has set out to demystify the issues and prejudice that have set the Islamic and non-Islamic worlds against each other. Why do so many in the western world fear Islam? Should they? What is it that Muslims believe... and why? Negus returned to the Gulf region both before and after the war in Iraq and spent weeks researching, writing and talking to the locals - from students and academics to sheiks and former slaves.

**NEMIROVSKY, Irene**

**Suite Francaise**

**403 pages**

In 1941, Irene Nemirovsky sat down to write a book that would convey the magnitude of what she was living through, not in terms of battles and politicians, but by evoking the domestic lives and personal trials of the ordinary citizens of France. She did not live to see her ambition fulfilled, or to know that sixty-five years later, "Suite Francaise" would be published for the first time, and hailed as a masterpiece. Set during a year that begins with France's fall to the Nazis in June 1940 and ends with Germany turning its attention to Russia, "Suite Francaise" falls into two parts. The first is a brilliant depiction of a group of Parisians as they flee the Nazi invasion and make their way through the chaos of France; the second follows the inhabitants of a small rural community under occupation who find themselves thrown together in ways they never expected.

**NEWELL, Patrice**

**The olive grove**

**276 pages**

When Patrice Newell left a highly charged urban life to live in the country, friends warned her she'd be bored in no time. Fifteen years later, she's doing more in a day than most of us do in a week. And Elmswood is no ordinary property, it's a biodynamic farm with beef cattle and olives.

**NICHOLSON, Gillian**

**This way to the sea**

**280 pages**

Gillian Nicholson and her husband, Christo, impulsively buy a 20 acre banana farm. Their knowledge of banana farming? Zero. Their knowledge of how to work the land in general? Miniscule. Their irrational joy and confidence that things will work out? Total. This is Gillian's funny, involving and moving account of their piece of paradise.

**NIFFENEGGER, Audrey**

**The time traveller's wife**

**518 pages**

This extraordinary, magical novel is the story of Clare and Henry who have known each other since Clare was six and Henry was thirty-six, and were married when Clare was twenty-two and Henry thirty. Impossible but true, because Henry is one of the first people diagnosed with Chrono-Displacement Disorder: periodically his genetic clock resets and he finds himself pulled suddenly into his past or future. His disappearances are spontaneous and his experiences are alternately harrowing and amusing. The Time Traveler's Wife depicts the effects of time travel on Henry and Clare's passionate love for each other with grace and humour. Their struggle to lead normal lives in the face of a force they can neither prevent nor control is intensely moving and entirely unforgettable.

**NOBLE, Elizabeth**

**The reading group**

**429 pages**

A group of friends, a few bottles of wine and a good book. What could be better? The women who form the Reading Group are as varied as the books they choose to read. But can they find the answers to life's problems in the pages of a good book?

**NORMAN, Diana**

**A catch of consequence**

**320 pages**

Makepeace Burke, keeper of a tavern on the waterfront in Boston, could no more watch a fellow creature drown than she could stop the wind blowing. But the price she paid for rescuing an English aristocrat after he had been attacked by the mob was high. She might be a supporter of the more reasonable colonists but she had committed an apparently unforgiveable sin. So her inn became deserted, her brother was tarred and feathered, and her respectable fiancée and his family deserted her. When the Patriots turned to burning her home, she knew she had to take the offer of the much despised Englishmen and so, saved by the Navy and accompanied by her remarkable retinue, she sails for London. She marries her Englishman as his second wife but finds that English society does not easily accept uneducated, colonial, ex-tavernkeepers -- and the first wife, well connected and refusing to acknowledge a divorce, proves a dirty fighter.

**OATES, Joyce Carol**

**We were the Mulvaney's**

**464 pages**

After decades of marriage, Mum and Dad are still in love--and the proud parents of a brood of youngsters, which includes a star athlete, a class valedictorian and a popular cheerleader. Home is an idyllic place called High Point Farm, and the bonds of attachment within this all-American clan do seem deep and unconditional.

But as we all know, Eden can't last forever. And in the hands of Joyce Carol Oates, who's chronicled just about every variety of familial dysfunction, you know the fall from grace is going to be memorable. By the time all is said and done, a rape occurs, a daughter is exiled, much alcohol is consumed and the farm is lost. Even to recount these events in retrospect is a trial for the Mulvaney offspring, one of whom declares: "When I say this is a hard reckoning I mean it's been like squeezing thick drops of blood from my veins."

**OBAMA, Barack**

**Dreams from my father**

**442 pages**

The son of a black African father and a white American mother, Obama was only two years old when his father walked out on the family. Many years later, Obama receives a phone call from Nairobi: his father is dead. This sudden news inspires an emotional odyssey for Obama, determined to learn the truth of his father's life and reconcile his divided inheritance. Written at the age of thirty-three, *Dreams from my Father* is an unforgettable read. It illuminates not only Obama's journey, but also our universal desire to understand our history, and what makes us the people we are.

**O'BEIRNE, Kathy**

**Don't ever tell: Kathy's story**

**256 pages**

Kathy O'Beirne's earliest memories are of being battered and sexually abused. Unable to confide in anyone about the beatings she regularly received from her father or about the boys who made her play dirty games, she became withdrawn and self-destructive, leading a psychiatrist to diagnose her as 'a child with a troublesome mind'. As a result, aged only eight, Kathy was removed from the family home and incarcerated in a series of institutions. In the first, a reformatory school run by a holy order on behalf of the Irish State, she was raped by a visiting priest. When she tried to get help, she was transferred to a psychiatric hospital, where the abuse continued, along with the administration of large amounts of drugs and electric shock treatment. At the age of twelve, Kathy was sent to a Magdalen laundry. These notorious workhouses operated in Ireland throughout the twentieth century and during that time thousands of young girls, some orphans, some pregnant and some considered 'at risk' in the community, were forced to slave in horrendous conditions.

**O'BRIEN, Edna**

**Wild Decembers**

**304 pages**

When a young man arrives from Australia to claim his inheritance, he changes a small Irish town for ever. Joseph Brennan sees Michael Bugler, the returned exile, as a threat. And for Breege, Joseph's younger sister, Bugler is an irresistible stranger to whose charms she must not succumb for fear of betraying her brother. A love-hate story on many levels, *Wild Decembers* explores the depth and darkness at the root of all ownership. With a rich and comic cast of characters, this primal story is a complex and daring work, fixed in a time and place, yet imbued with the permanence of myth.

**O'NEILL, Anthony**

**The Lamplighter**

**368 pages**

In Edinburgh, 1886, the brutal murder of a university professor, coming soon after the killing of a retired lighthouse keeper and quickly followed by a bizarre exhumation, has the entire city on edge. Carus Groves, a conceited and prejudiced police inspector, is assigned the case. Baffled by the superhuman strength required to rip two men apart and drag up a coffin, Groves latches on to the odd behaviour of an anguished young woman, Evelyn Todd, who claims to have dreamed of the crimes in great detail. Meanwhile, two unlikely friends - Thomas McKnight, a jaded Professor of Logic and Metaphysics, and Joseph Canavan, a compassionate cemetery attendant - are drawn inexorably towards Evelyn and the secrets of her tormented psyche. They discover her extraordinary imagination was violently suppressed in childhood, but in her dreams she retains the image of 'the lamplighter' - whose presence outside her orphanage she heard each evening, and whose face is concoction of all the friendly men she knew. Evelyn now insists the killer is this lamplighter.

**O'RIORDAN, Kate**

**The memory stones**

**374 pages**

Set in Paris and Ireland, this is a moving story about a woman in her forties, dealing with her sexuality, a damaged daughter and a fear of returning to her roots. Nell, a rare female Master of Wine, enjoys an uncluttered and elegant life in Paris, sharing her days with Lulu - the cantankerous poodle her best friend bequeathed to her as a joke on her deathbed - and sharing her passion for wine with Henri, her lover and married vineyard owner. Until a phone call shatters the peace of her carefully constructed world...It is her daughter's neighbour in Ireland, with news so worrying that Nell can no longer avoid the inevitable. She must return home for the first time in over thirty years. But why has it taken Nell so long to swap the boulevards of Paris for the green fields of Western Ireland? And why didn't she even go back for her own mother's funeral?

**ORWELL, George**

**Nineteen eighty-four**

**336 pages**

Hidden away in the Record Department of the sprawling Ministry of Truth, Winston Smith skilfully rewrites the past to suit the needs of the Party. Yet he inwardly rebels against the totalitarian world he lives in, which demands absolute obedience and controls him through the all-seeing telescreens and the watchful eye of Big Brother, symbolic head of the Party. In his longing for truth and liberty, Smith begins a secret love affair with a fellow-worker Julia, but soon discovers the true price of freedom is betrayal.

**OWENS, Sharon**

**The tea house on Mulberry Street**

**309 pages**

Penny Stanley's seventeen year old marriage to Daniel is falling apart and so is their shabby tea house on Mulberry Street. But its regular customers love the cosy atmosphere and luscious desserts. Penniless artist Brenda Brown sits in the cafe signing letters to Nicolas Cage. Will they ever be answered? Sadie Smith finds refuge from her diet and her husband's ultra-slim mistress in a slice of the cafe's cherry cheesecake and Clare Fitzgerald returns to the tea house after twenty years in New York. But the tea house needs more than a coat of paint and as Penny takes action she discovers it is a magical place with secrets of its own.

**PAINTER, Shirley**

**The bean patch**

**310 pages**

Shirley Painter is 83 years old. She shouldn't be. When she was four years old she was so badly injured she was pronounced dead and taken to the morgue. The man who so severely injured her was her father. Told in the third person, this is the story of how a young girl survived growing up in a volatile household in the 1920s and 1930s. How school and later university became her escape route from a family filled with secrets and violence. It is also a story of how, as a mature woman and a mother herself, she came to face what had happened to her as a child. How she had to bring long-buried memories into the light in order to move on.

**PATCHETT, Ann**

**Bel canto**

**318 pages**

In Ann Patchett's *Bel Canto*, an unnamed South American country, a world-renowned soprano sings at a birthday party in honour of a visiting Japanese industrial titan. Alas, in the opening sequence, just as the accompanist kisses the soprano, a ragtag band of 18 terrorists enters the vice-presidential mansion through the air-conditioning ducts. Their quarry is the president, who has unfortunately stayed home to watch a favourite soap opera--and thus, from the beginning, things go awry. Among the hostages are not only Hosokawa and Roxanne Coss, the American soprano, but an assortment of Russian, Italian and French diplomats. A Swiss Red Cross negotiator named Joachim Messner is roped into service while on holiday. He comes and goes, wrangling over terms and demands, and the days stretch into weeks, the weeks into months.

**PATCHETT, Ann**

**Patron saint of liars**

**352 pages**

It is the 1960s. Rose Clinton arrives at St Elizabeth's, a Roman Catholic home for unwed mothers in Habit, Kentucky. Rose is a young woman who has decided, to be "a liar for the rest of my life".

**PATCHETT, Ann**

**Run**

**295 pages**

Tip and Teddy are becoming men under the very eyes of their adoptive father, Bernard Doyle. A student at Harvard, Tip is happiest in a lab, whilst Teddy thinks he has found his calling in the church, and both are increasingly strained by their father's protective plans for them. But when they are involved in an accident on an icy road, the DoYLES are forced to confront certain truths about their lives, how the death of Doyle's wife Bernadette has affected the family, and an anonymous figure who is always watching.

**PENNEY, Stef**

**The tenderness of wolves**

**466 pages**

It is 1867, Canada: as winter tightens its grip on the isolated settlement of Dove River, a man is brutally murdered and a 17-year old boy disappears. Tracks leaving the dead man's cabin head north towards the forest and the tundra beyond. In the wake of such violence, people are drawn to the township - journalists, Hudson's Bay Company men, trappers, traders - but do they want to solve the crime or exploit it? One-by-one the assembled searchers set out from Dove River, pursuing the tracks across a desolate landscape home only to wild animals, madmen and fugitives, variously seeking a murderer, a son, two sisters missing for 17 years, a Native American culture, and a fortune in stolen furs before the snows settle and cover the tracks of the past for good.

**PERLMAN, Elliot**

**Three dollars**

**381 pages**

Three Dollars is about Eddie, an honest, compassionate man who finds himself, at the age of 38, with a wife, a child and three dollars. How did he get that way? And who is Amanda? He cared about people; he was, Amanda notwithstanding, a good husband, father and son. At any other time the world would have smiled on him. But this was the nineties and the world valued other things. *Three Dollars* chronicles the present breach of the social contract and its effect on a home near you. It is a brilliantly deft portrait of a man attempting to retain his humanity, his family and his sense of humour in grim and pitiless times: times of downsizing, outsourcing and privatising. It is about the legacy of Thatcherism and its effects on people and their relationships.

**PESSL, Marisha**

**Special topics in calamity physics**

**514 pages**

'It had been almost a year since I'd found Hannah dead, and I thought I'd managed to erase all traces of that night within myself. I was wrong.' is a mesmerizing debut. As teenager Blue van Meer tells her story we are hurled into a dizzying world of murder and butterflies, womanizing and wandering, American McCulture, the Western Canon, political radicalism and juvenile crushes. Structured around a syllabus for a Great Works of Literature class (with hand-drawn Visual Aids), Blue's wickedly funny yet poignant tale reveals how the imagination finds meaning

in the most bewildering times, the ways people of all ages strive for connection, and how the darkest of secrets can set us free.

**PICOULT, Jodi**

**My sister's keeper**

**416 pages**

Anna is not sick, but she might as well be. By age thirteen, she has undergone countless surgeries, transfusions, and shots so that her older sister, Kate, can somehow fight the leukemia that has plagued her since childhood. The product of preimplantation genetic diagnosis, Anna was conceived as a bone marrow match for Kate -- a life and a role that she has never challenged...until now. Like most teenagers, Anna is beginning to question who she truly is. But unlike most teenagers, she has always been defined in terms of her sister -- and so Anna makes a decision that for most would be unthinkable, a decision that will tear her family apart and have perhaps fatal consequences for the sister she loves.

**PICOULT, Jodi**

**Nineteen minutes**

**455 pages**

Peter Houghton, 17, has been the victim of bullying since his first day of kindergarten, made all the more difficult by two factors: In small-town Sterling, N.H., Peter is in high school with the kids who've tormented him all his life; and his all-American older brother eggs the bullies on. Peter retreats into a world of video games and computer programming, but he's never able to attain the safety of invisibility. And then one day he walks into Sterling High with a knapsack full of guns, kills ten students and wounds many others. Peter is caught and thrown in jail, but with over a thousand witnesses and video tape of the day, it will be hard work for the defense to clear him. His attorney, Jordan McAfee, hits on the only approach that might save the unlikable kid - a variation of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder caused by bullying. Thrown into the story is Judge Alex Cormier, and her daughter Josie, who used to be best friends with Peter until the popular crowd forced the limits of her loyalty. Also found dead was her boyfriend Matt, but Josie claims she can't remember anything from that day.

**PICOULT, Jodi**

**Vanishing acts**

**418 pages**

When is it right to steal a child from her mother? Delia Hopkins has led a charmed life. Raised in rural New Hampshire by her widowed father Andrew, she now has a young daughter, a handsome fiance, and her own Search and Rescue bloodhound - which she uses to find missing persons. But as she plans her wedding, she is plagued by flashbacks of a life she can't recall. Then a policeman shows up at her door, arresting her father for the kidnap of a little girl. And Delia's past and present fracture into little pieces. "Vanishing Acts" is a book about the very nature and power of memory. It explores what happens when the past we have been running from catches up to us, and questions who we trust to tell us the story of our lives before we are capable of remembering it ourselves.

**PILCHER, Rosamunde**

**Winter solstice**

**698 pages**

The story is told, chapter by chapter, from the perspectives of an eclectic array of characters. Former actress Elfrida--not very good by her own admission--leaves London for a geriatric bolt-hole in the country where she meets retired schoolmaster and organist, Oscar. Carrie, meanwhile (Elfrida's second cousin), returns to London from Austria and her brilliant career in the tourist industry, only to find her niece, 14-year-old Lucy, sadly neglected by her selfish mother and equally spoiled grandmother. Finally, handsome Sam is recalled from New York by his company chairman to rekindle an ailing Scottish textile mill. As one after another must learn to live with their own kinds of loss, they find themselves collectively spirited northwards, from Sussex to Scotland, by way of Cornwall. And, as events unfurl, slowly, surely, but inevitably, those in need find solace in unexpected places.

**PILKINGTON, Doris**

**Follow the rabbit-proof fence**

**136 pages**

A story of the stolen generations. In 1931, three young Aboriginal girls walked over 1600 kilometres to return to the mothers from whom they had been stolen as part of Western Australia's "removal" policy. Led by Molly (the mother of the author) they followed the rabbit-proof fence all the way home, with the authorities tracking them all the way.

**POITIER, Sidney**

**The measure of a man**

**272 pages**

In this beautifully written, candid memoir, legendary actor Sidney Poitier reveals the spiritual depth, passion and intellectual fervour that has driven his remarkable life. Poitier credits his childhood of poverty on idyllic Cat Island in the Bahamas for equipping him with the unflinching sense of self-worth, family values and simple ethics that he has never since surrendered and that have dramatically shaped his world. Just a few years after his introduction to indoor plumbing and the automobile, Poitier broke countless barriers to launch a pioneering career portraying important, dignified characters in some of the most morally significant films of the late 20th century. His engaging memoir spans a time in American history from segregation, through the early Civil Rights conflicts, to present-day cultural struggles.

**PROULX, Annie**

**Brokeback Mountain**

**320 pages**

This is Proulx's second collection of short stories, including the acclaimed novella, "Brokeback Mountain". Described by one critic as a "profanely poetic and beautiful elegy on doomed manhood," this story of love and sex--"a shared and sexless hunger"--between two cowboys exemplifies the world of *Close Range*. "If you can't fix it you've got to stand it": that could be the motto of any one of these eleven tales of lives lived out in the relentless, sometimes sickening, brutality of ranch and range. From "The Half-Skinned Steer" (take the title literally) to "55 Miles

to the Gas Pump" and "People in Hell Just Want a Drink of Water", bodies (often male) are broken and mangled; a nervous woman throws her baby daughter away and a prodigal son rots with gangrene; women are confused with bulls, lovemaking with riding a rodeo. Grotesque, damaged: lost bodies, and dreams, are the themes of this relentless and skillfully crafted book.

**PROULX, Annie**

**That old ace in the hole**

**352 pages**

A richly textured story of one man's struggle to make good in the inhospitable ranch country of the Texas panhandle, told with razor wit and a masterly sense of place. Some folks in the Texas panhandle do not like hog farms. But Bob Dollar, the newly-hired hog site scout for Global Pork Rind, intends to do his job. Bob must contend with tough men and women like ancient Freda Beautyrooms who controls a ranch he covets, and Ace Crouch, the windmill who defies the hog farms. As Bob settles in at La Von Fronk's bunkhouse and lends a hand at Cy Frease's Old Dog Cafe, he is forced to question everything.

**PUNG, Alice**

**Unpolished gem**

**282 pages**

"This story does not begin on a boat." So commences Alice Pung's memoir. This is an original take on a classic story - how a child of immigrants moves between two cultures. In place of piety and predictability, however, Unpolished Gem offers a vivid and ironic sense of both worlds. It combines the story of Pung's life growing up in suburban Footscray with the inherited stories of the women in her family - stories of madness, survival and heartbreak. Original and brave, this is a girl's own story that introduces an unforgettable voice and captures the experience of Asian immigrants to Australia.