



BOOKS FOR EVERYONE

RGS Recommended reading for year 9

About this list

Most of the books on this list are recommended by students. Their English teachers and the RGS librarians have added to it.

We aim to provide you with a starting point with this list: when you find a book you like, you can branch out into other books by the same writer or in the same style or genre. There are plenty of recommendations for further reading, but we can't list them all here! Ask your English teacher or the librarian for further suggestions; there is also a new reading list for year 8, with plenty of advanced suggestions still relevant to your year, so you may wish to consider them too – just ask your teacher.

If you read something which should be on the list, please do let us know. And if any title has over-stayed its welcome here, we want to know that too. **Use the Library, it's a wonderful resource** – these books (and very many more) are available through it.

Please make sure you keep a full list of the books you read this year – the last page of this booklet has been set aside for you to keep a record, so keep it up to date and enjoy your reading. After all, there are plenty of books here for everyone!

Year nine class readers

PLEASE NOTE: these books may be read in your English class.
Please check with your teacher before you start reading

Novels

Bradbury, Ray *Fahrenheit 451*
Golding, William *Lord of the Flies*
Orwell, George *Animal Farm, 1984*

Plays

Shakespeare *Othello, Macbeth*

A selection of classics

Many students still make the strongest connections with established and well-loved classic novels, books which have been capturing the imagination of bright readers for many generations...

Angelou, Maya	<i>I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings</i>
Atwood, Margaret	<i>The Handmaid's Tale</i>
Austen, Jane	<i>Pride and Prejudice, Mansfield Park</i>
Brontë, Charlotte	<i>Jane Eyre</i> (see also other Brontë sister novels)
Burgess, Anthony	<i>A Clockwork Orange</i>
Carter, Angela	<i>Wise Children</i>
Dickens, Charles	<i>Great Expectations, Oliver Twist, Hard Times</i>
Du Maurier, Daphne	<i>Jamaica Inn</i>
Forster, E. M.	<i>Howards End, A Room with a View</i>
Greene, Graham	<i>Brighton Rock</i>
Hemingway, Ernest	<i>A Farewell to Arms, The Old Man and the Sea</i>
Heller, Joseph	<i>Catch-22</i>
Huxley, Aldous	<i>Brave New World</i>
James, Henry	<i>The Turn of the Screw</i>
Paton, Alan	<i>Cry the beloved Country</i>
Remarque, Erich Maria	<i>All Quiet on the Western Front</i>
Salinger, J.D.	<i>The Catcher in the Rye</i>
Solzenitsyn, Alexander	<i>One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich</i>
Stoker, Bram	<i>Dracula</i>
Taylor, Mildred D.	<i>Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry</i>
Walker, Alice	<i>The Color Purple</i>

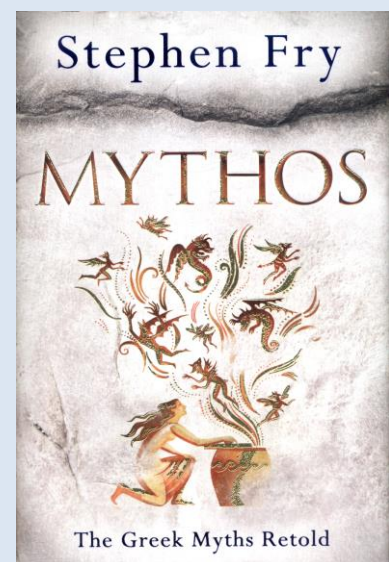
Mythos

Stephen Fry

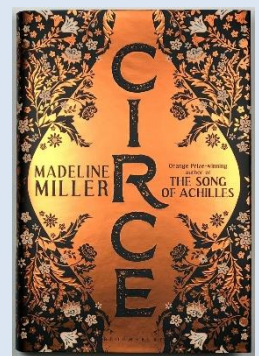
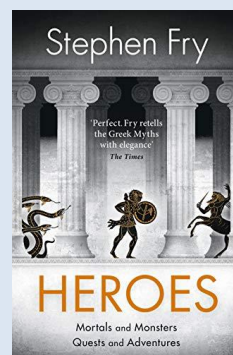
The Greek myths are amongst the greatest stories ever told, passed down through millennia and inspiring writers and artists from Shakespeare to Walt Disney. In Mythos, Stephen Fry retells these ancient tales with trademark wit and warmth, bringing the gods, monsters, and mortals vividly to life.

Marvel at the birth of Athena, wince at Cronus and Gaia's revenge on Ouranos, weep with King Midas and hunt with the ferocious Artemis.

Accessible and gripping for modern readers, whether you're a mythology enthusiast or brand new to the stories, Fry's storytelling makes the epic feel intimate—and often very funny.

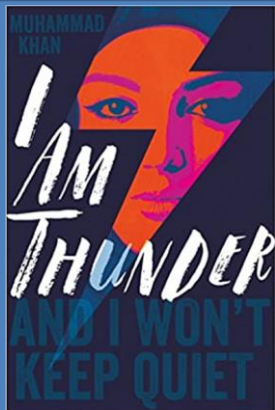
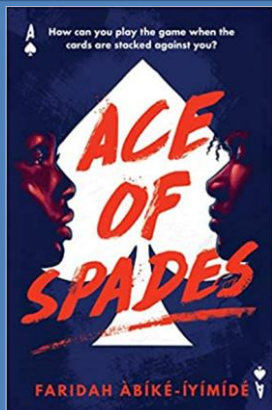


You may also enjoy **Stephen Fry's Heroes**, which continues the mythological journey with tales of Perseus, Heracles, and other legendary figures. Also try **Circe** by Madeline Miller, which gives voice to one of mythology's most misunderstood women.



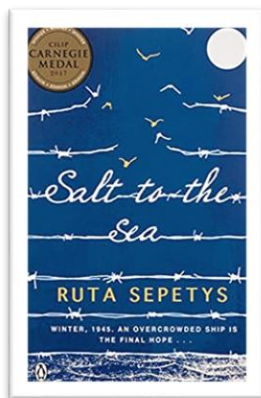
Ace of Spades by Faridah Ābiké-Íyimidé is an explosive debut novel. Welcome to Niveus Private Academy, where money paves the hallways, and the students are never less than perfect. Until now. Because anonymous texter, Aces, is revealing the darkest secrets of two students. Talented musician Devon buries himself in rehearsals, until his private photos go public and soon everyone will know the price head girl Chaimaka has paid for power. Someone is out to get them both. Someone who holds all the aces.

Try also **Muhammad Khan's I Am Thunder**, another tale of school and secrets and being a modern urban teenager.

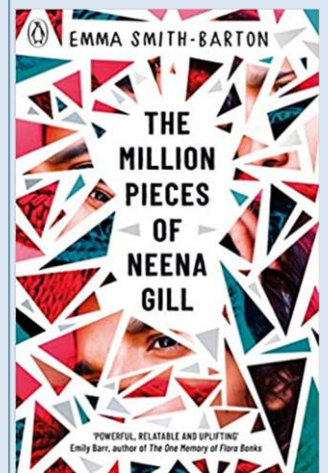


Toffee by Sarah Crossan is the remarkable story Allison, a girl who runs away from home and is taken in by a old lady with dementia who mistakes her for an old friend. And so Toffee is who she becomes, as she discovers what home really means.

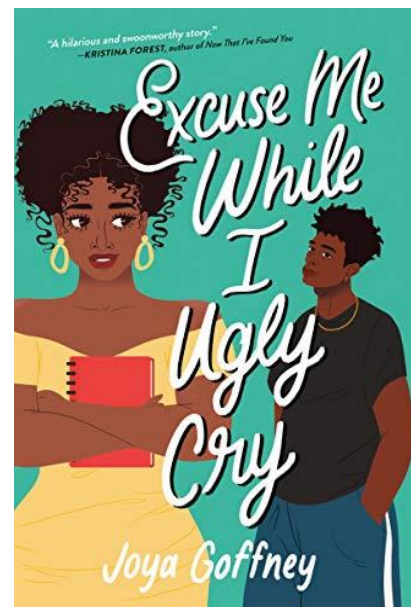
Based on a true story, **Ruth Sepetys' Salt to the Sea** is set in early 1945 and describes the journeys of four very different young people, each one of them carrying a dark secret and each trying to make their way out of Nazi Germany.



In **Emma Smith-Barton's The Million Pieces of Neena Gill**, Neena's always been a good girl - great grades, parent-approved friends and absolutely no boyfriends. But ever since her brother Akash left, she's been slowly falling apart - and uncovering a new version of herself who is freer, but altogether more dangerous. As her wild behaviour spirals, Neena's grip on her wellbeing begins to weaken. And when her parents announce two life-changing bombshells, she finally reaches breaking point. But as Neena is about to discover, when your life falls apart, only love can piece you back together



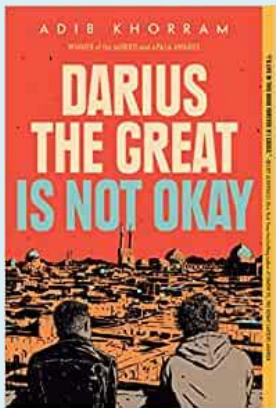
In **Joya Goffney's Excuse Me While I Ugly Cry**, Quinn keeps lists of everything - from the days she's ugly cried, to all the boys she'd like to kiss. One day her journal goes missing... An anonymous account posts one of her lists on Instagram and blackmails her into facing seven of her greatest fears, or else her entire journal will go public. Desperate, she faces everything she's been too afraid to face, and along the way, she finds the courage to live in the moment, and to fall in love...



The Lion Women of Tehran
Marjan Kamali

In 1950s Tehran, seven-year-old Ellie lives in grand comfort until the untimely death of her father, forcing Ellie and her mother to move to a tiny home downtown. Luckily, on the first day of school, she meets Homa, a kind girl with a brave and irrepressible spirit.

But their happiness is disrupted when Ellie and her mother are afforded the opportunity to return to their previous bourgeois life. Now a popular student at the best girls' high school in Iran, Ellie's memories of Homa begin to fade. Years later, however, her sudden reappearance in Ellie's privileged world alters the course of both of their lives.

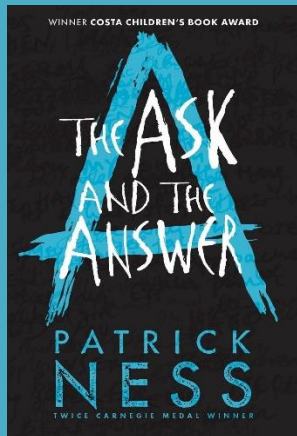
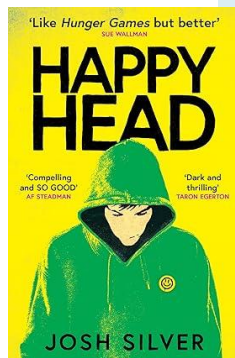


In *Darius the Great is Not Okay* by Adib Khorram, Darius Kellner speaks better Klingon than Farsi, and he knows more about Hobbit social cues than Persian ones. He's a Fractional Persian - half, his mum's side - and his first-ever trip to Iran is about to change his life. Darius has never really fit in at home, and he's sure things are going to be the same in Iran. His clinical depression doesn't exactly help matters, and trying to explain his medication to his grandparents only makes things harder. But then one day he finds a soul mate on the city's rooftops.

HappyHead
Josh Silver

In this fast-paced, unsettling, and emotionally charged dystopian thriller, teenagers are selected to attend a mental-health retreat designed to 'cure' adolescent unhappiness. Here, assessments push boundaries, and trust is weaponised. Then Seb meets a mysterious participant named Finn who has drawn unwanted attention to himself by resisting the program's rules. As the challenges grow darker, Seb must decide who—and what—he fights for.

Shortlisted for the 2024 YA Book Prize and nominated for the 2024 Carnegie Medal.

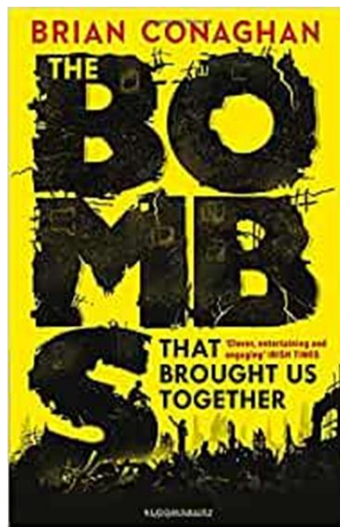


Chaos Walking Trilogy
Patrick Ness

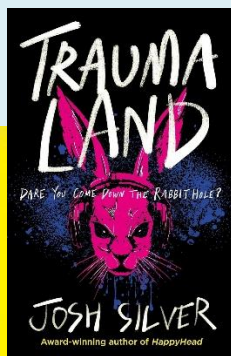
Imagine a world where everyone can hear your thoughts—every secret, every fear, every lie. That's the terrifying reality for Todd Hewitt, who lives in a town with no women and too many secrets. But when he discovers a patch of silence in the noise—and the girl it belongs to—everything begins to unravel.

Across three explosive novels (*The Knife of Never Letting Go*, *The Ask and the Answer*, and *Monsters of Men*), Todd and Viola are pulled into a brutal fight for truth, freedom, and the future of New World. This is a story of survival, trust, and how power can twist even the best intentions.

If you're gripped by this series, try *Noughts and Crosses* by Malorie Blackman, or Neil Gaiman's *American Gods*. You might also enjoy Stephen King's dystopian vision of the United States, *The Long Walk*.

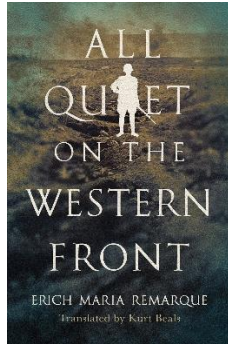
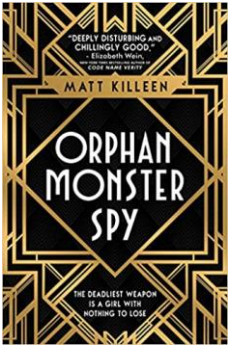


Brian Conaghan's *The Bombs That Brought Us Together* is set in a war-torn place - fourteen-year-old Charlie Law has lived in Little Town, on the border with Old Country, all his life. He knows the rules: no going out after dark; no drinking; no litter; no fighting. You don't want to get on the wrong side of the people who run Little Town. When he meets Pavel Duda, a refugee from Old Country, the rules start to get broken. Then the bombs come, and the soldiers from Old Country, and Little Town changes for ever.



What if the most devastating moments of your life could be performed—and watched—like theatre?

In *Traumaland* by Josh Silver, 17-year-old Eli Pugh is left numb after an accident that stole his memories. Desperate to feel anything—fear, joy, despair—he discovers an underground club called Traumaland, where people immerse themselves in simulated traumas. But when the lines between fiction and reality begin to blur, what price will Eli pay to reclaim his past—and his emotions?



In **Matt Killeen's** dark and disturbing war-time adventure **Orphan Monster Spy**, Sarah realises that there's only one way for a teenage Jewish spy to survive undetected as a school for the Nazi elite. And that's to become a monster like them.

"This clever novel explores how unacceptable attitudes can take hold, which makes it timely as well as tense."

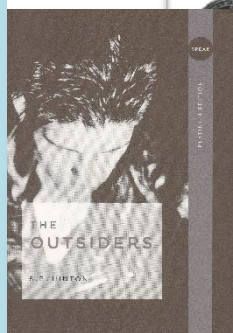
--The Sunday Times

All Quiet on the Western Front
Erich Maria Remarque

One by one the boys begin to fall...

In 1914 a room full of German schoolboys, fresh-faced and idealistic, are goaded by their schoolmaster to troop off to the glorious war. With the fire and patriotism of youth they sign up. What follows is an unforgettable story of friendship, fear, survival, and the futility of war. Written shortly after the end of WWI, and based on the author's own experiences, this classic of the genre has lost none of its power or its pathos.

The Outsiders by **S. E. Hinton** is a classic of teenage trouble and discontent. Teenagers in a small Oklahoma town have split into two gangs. The Socs' idea of having a good time is beating up Greasers like Ponyboy Curtis. Ponyboy knows what to expect until the night someone takes things too far, and life is changed forever.



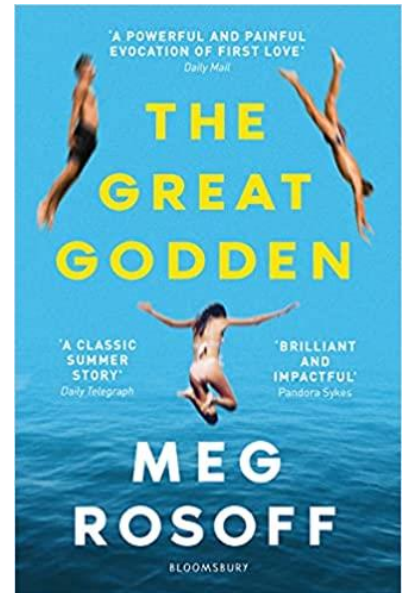
Bone Talk
Candy Gourlay

Little Luki and I were tossing pebbles into the eye socket of a water buffalo skull when Father came to fetch me. 'Samkad, the ancients want you', he murmured.

The Philippines, 100 years ago. A boy called Samkad wants to become a man. He is desperate to be given his own shield, spear and axe. His best friend, Luki, wants to be a warrior too - but she is a girl and that is forbidden. Then a new boy arrives in the village and everything changes. He brings news that a people called 'Americans' are bringing war right to his home...

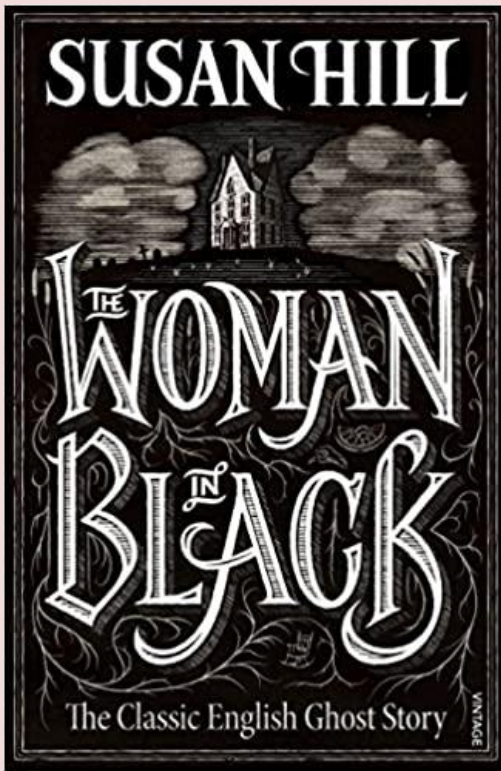
Meg Rosoff's The Great Godden is the story of one family, one dreamy summer - the summer when everything changes. It all takes place around the holiday house by the sea, in a big, messy family, where one teenager watches as brothers and sisters, parents and older cousins fill hot days with wine and games and planning a wedding. Enter the Goddens - irresistible, charming Kit and the surly, silent Hugo. But suddenly there's a serpent in this paradise - and the consequences will be devastating for everyone.

If you enjoy this story, you should dig out **Dodie Smith's I Capture the Castle**.



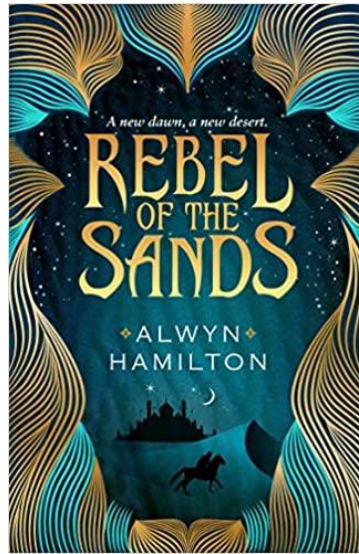
In **The Hate U Give** by **Angie Thomas**, sixteen-year-old Starr Carter moves between two worlds: the poor neighbourhood where she lives and the fancy suburban prep school she attends. The uneasy balance between these worlds is shattered when Starr witnesses the fatal shooting of her childhood friend Khalil at the hands of a police officer. Khalil was unarmed. Soon afterward, his death is a national headline. Some are calling him a thug, maybe even a drug dealer and a gangbanger. Protesters are taking to the streets in Khalil's name. What everyone wants to know is: what really went down that night? And the only person alive who can answer that is Starr.





Made into a chilling film with Daniel Radcliffe, **Susan Hill's *The Woman in Black*** is a must-read for those who like atmospheric supernatural stories. Arthur Kipps, a junior solicitor, is summoned to attend the funeral of Mrs Alice Drablow, the sole inhabitant of Eel Marsh House. The house stands at the end of a causeway, wreathed in fog and mystery, but 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 and her terrible purpose.

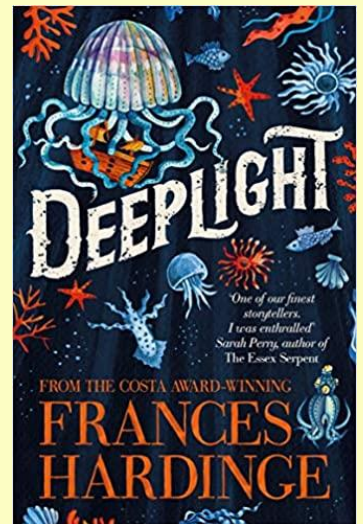
If you like horror stories like this, you should also try **M. R. James' *Ghost Stories***.



Set in the sweeping desert where a rebel prince seeks to overthrow a wicked sultan, **Alwyn Hamilton's *Rebel of the Sands*** is a rebel fantasy in the style of *Arabian Nights*.

Frances Hardinge's *Deeplight* is set on the island of Lady's Crave where 14-year-old urchins Hark and his best friend Jelt live. They are scavengers: diving for relics of the gods, desperate for anything they can sell. But there is something dangerous in the deep waters of the undersea, calling to someone brave enough to retrieve it.

If you like Hardinge's wild, vivid fantasy, try also her novels ***A Skinful of Shadows*** and ***The Lie Tree*** as well as Leigh Bardugo's ***Shadow and Bone*** and ***Six of Crows***.

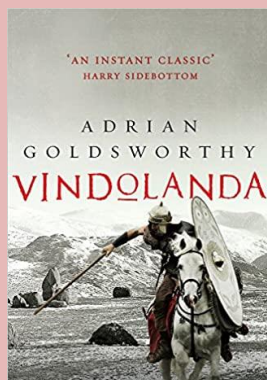
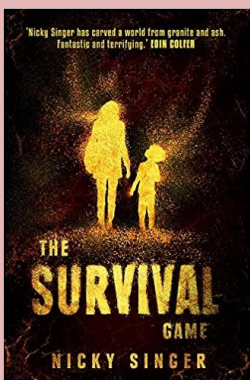


The world is overheated and scorched and your only hope is to journey north past the controls and checkpoints, Welcome to **Nicky Singer's *The Survival Game***.

Adrian Goldsworthy's *Vindolanda* is a powerful historical novel set in the army base at Vindolanda on the northern frontier of Britannia and the Roman empire. Here, one man tries to keep the peace.



In **John le Carré's** riveting classic of Cold War espionage, ***Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy***, a mole, implanted by Moscow Centre, has infiltrated the highest ranks of the British Intelligence Service. Thus, former spymaster George Smiley has been brought out of retirement to hunt down the traitor at the very heart of the Circus - even though it may be one of those closest to him.



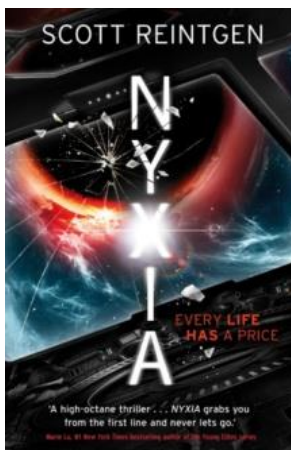
The Inheritance Games
Jennifer Lynn Barnes

An ingenious thriller about family secrets...

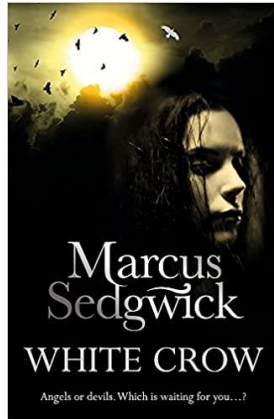
Avery has a plan: keep her head down, work hard for a better future. Then an eccentric billionaire dies, leaving her almost his entire fortune. And no one, least of all Avery, knows why. Now she must move into the mansion she's inherited, filled with secrets and codes, and the old man's surviving relatives hell-bent on discovering why she got 'their' money.



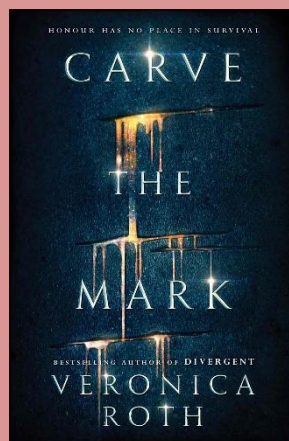
The Man in the High Castle is a cult novel by the great science fiction writer **Philip K Dick** and it gives us a horrifying glimpse of an alternative reality - one where the Allies have lost the Second World War. In this nightmare dystopia the Nazis have taken over New York and every step involves risk.



Inspired by Hans Christian Andersen's *The Little Mermaid*, **Zoe Marriott's The Book of Snow and Silence** is a different kind of fairy tale, in which Princess Theoai, exiled across the sea to wed a prince she has never met, is more interested in a local girl.



In **Marcus Sedgwick's White Crow**, an eerie, modern gothic thriller about what awaits us after death - angels or the devil? – Rebecca is taken from London to become an unwilling visitor to a land called Winterfold. You may also enjoy Sedgwick's other darker tales, including *Witch Hill*.



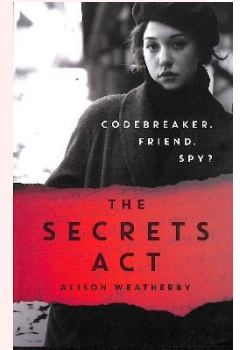
In *Carve the Mark*, **Veronica Roth** (author of the *Divergent* series) the power of friendship – and love – has to fight to survive on a planet where danger and vengeance rule.

If you like your fantasy worlds to be dark and other-worldly, you should also read **Victoria Aveyard's Red Queen** or **Leigh Bardugo's Shadow and Bone** trilogy.

Alison Weatherby's The Secrets Act is set in wartime Britain.

Pearl, a messenger, and Ellen, a codebreaker, work at top-secret HQ, Bletchley Park. But when tragedy strikes, their logical world is upended, with both friends caught in a spy plot that rocks the very heart of the war effort.

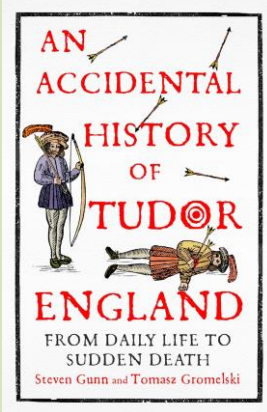
If you like fiction with wartime settings, you might also try **Theresa Breslin's World War One**-set novel *Remembrance*.



The Song of Achilles
Madeline Miller

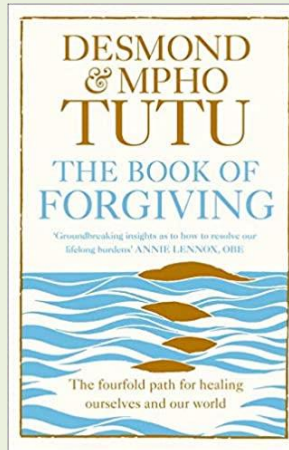
Greece in the age of heroes: awkward young Prince Patroclus has been exiled to the court of King Peleus and his perfect son Achilles. Despite their differences, Achilles befriends the shamed prince, and as they grow into young soldiers and prepare for war in distant Troy, their bond blossoms into something deeper despite the displeasure of Achilles's mother. If you enjoy this, try **Benjamin Alire Sáenz's Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe**.

Scott Reintgen's Nyxia is the story of Emmett, a poor kid plucked from the streets of Detroit. But now he and nine teenagers like him are travelling to a distant planet. Before they get there, they are told, two of them will be eliminated. Those who survive will hunt for Nyxia, the most extraordinary substance in the universe. If you enjoy this, try the sequels and **Arthur C. Clarke's Rendezvous with Rama**.



This delicious slice of riveting history writing explores Tudor England from a fresh and surprising angle, opening up the period through stories of the untimely deaths of ordinary people.

Drawing from thousands of real coroners' reports, **Gunn and Gromelski's *An Accidental History of Tudor England*** uncovers a world where fruit trees killed more people than guns, knights were felled by haystacks and potholes, and men injured themselves playing football—all in a day's work. It's social history like you've never read before. Odd, illuminating, and utterly human.



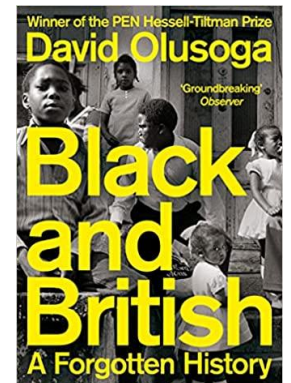
The Book of Forgiving by Nobel Peace Prize winner Desmond Tutu and his daughter Mpho is written as a guide to help us to towards tolerance and mercy. How do we forgive? All of us have at times needed both to forgive and be forgiven – whether small, everyday harms or real traumas. But the path to forgiveness is not easy, and the process unclear.

You might also try ***Failing Up: How to Take Risks, Aim Higher, and Never Stop Learning***, an inspirational book of life advice written by the Hamilton actor Leslie Odom Jr.

David Olusoga's *Black and British* tells the rich and revealing story of the relationship between the British Isles and the people of Africa and the Caribbean.

'[A] comprehensive and important history of black Britain. Written with a wonderful clarity of style and with great force and passion.' – Kwasi Kwarteng, *Sunday Times*

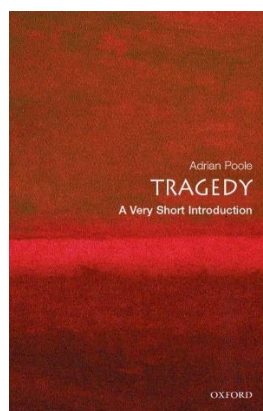
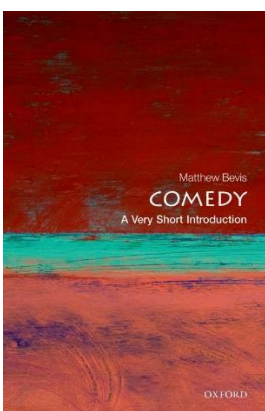
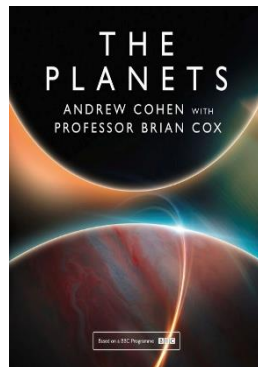
Another vital and urgent book is ***Why We Kneel, How We Rise*** by cricket legend **Michael Holding**.



Why are we here? Are we alone? And what is our place in the vastness of space and time?

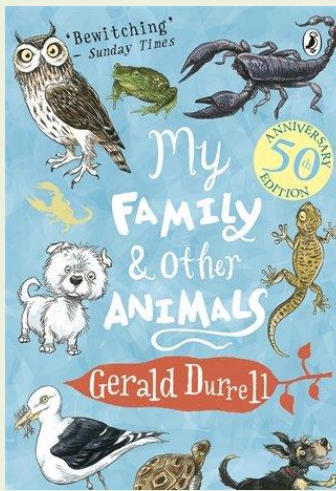
In ***Human Universe***, physicist **Brian Cox** takes us on an awe-inspiring journey from the origins of life on Earth to the edges of the observable universe. Perfect for readers who want to see how history, biology, and cosmology connect in the grand story of humanity.

The Planets is a breathtaking guided tour of our solar system. From the scorching surface of Mercury to the icy edges of Neptune, Brian Cox reveals the beauty and science of each world. He uncovers the forces that shaped the planets, the mysteries that remain unsolved, and what they can teach us about Earth's past — and future.



What makes a story a tragedy? **Tragedy: A Very Short Introduction** by **Adrian Poole** traces the origins and development of the genre from ancient Greek theatre to modern drama. Concise and accessible, this book explains what tragedies reveal about human nature, fate, and moral dilemmas through stories of suffering and loss.

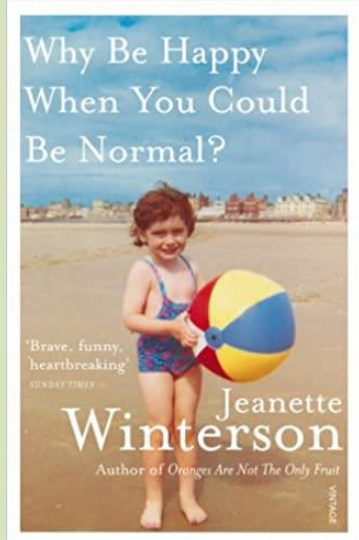
In the same Oxford series, **Matthew Bevis'** short introduction to **Comedy** raises diverse questions: what is humour, and how may it be used, or abused? When do we laugh, and why? Dip into the history and variety of comedy, from Shakespeare's wit to modern sitcoms and stand-up.



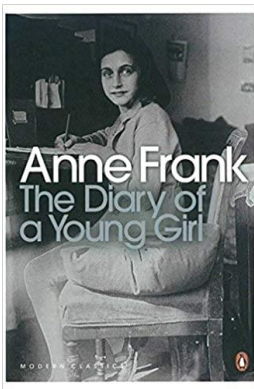
My Family and Other Animals
Gerald Durrell

Escaping the ills of the British climate, the Durrell family - acne-ridden Margo, gun-toting Leslie, bookworm Lawrence and budding naturalist Gerry, along with their long-suffering mother and Roger the dog - take off for the island of Corfu.

If you enjoy this, you may also like family-themed fiction including *The Darling Buds of May* by H.E. Bates. Very different depictions of the fabric of family life are found in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, set in 19th century Nigeria, and Betty Smith's *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*.



In 1985 Jeanette Winterson's first novel, *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*, was a fictionalised version of her own Lancashire childhood, a girl with gay instincts adopted by strongly evangelical parents. In *Why Be Happy When You Could Be Normal* she tells the real story,

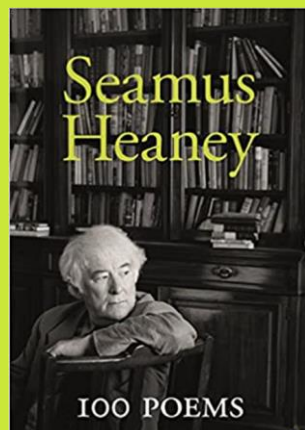
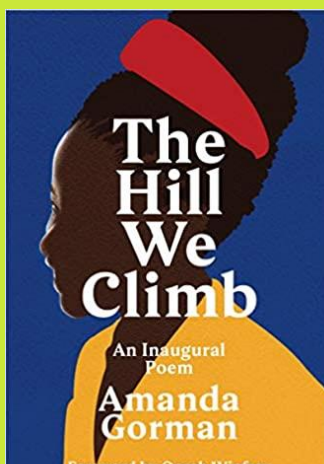


Anne Frank's Diary is the compelling account of a 13-year old girl living under Nazi occupation, and a testament to the abiding human spirit.

Set amid the civil rights movement, **Margot Lee Shetterly's Hidden Figures** tells of the African-American women who played such a crucial role in America's space programme.

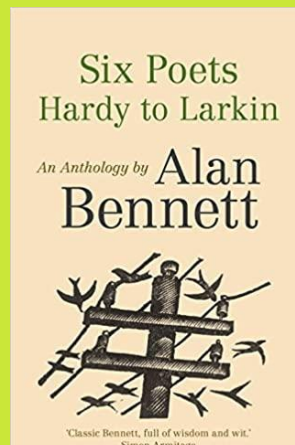


The Hill We Climb by Amanda Gorman is the remarkable poem read aloud at the 2021 Presidential Inauguration in America, offering us courage, consolation and the inspiration to make change. Ambitious readers might try Claudia Rankine's *Citizen* after this.



One of the most powerful poets of the last century, **Seamus Heaney** won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1995 "for works of lyrical beauty and ethical depth, which exalt everyday miracles and the living past."

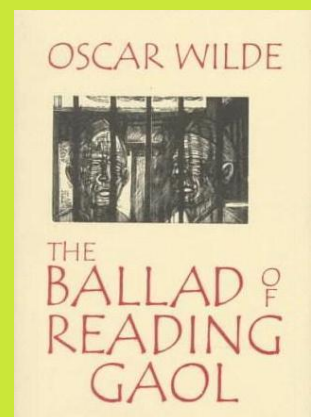
This selection of **100 Poems**, selected by Heaney's family, collects a treasury of his work.



In this personal anthology, **Alan Bennett** has chosen over seventy poems by six of Britain's best-loved poets, discussing the writers and their verse in his customary conversational style through anecdote and shrewd appraisal. You might also wish to try **John Betjeman's Selected Poems**.

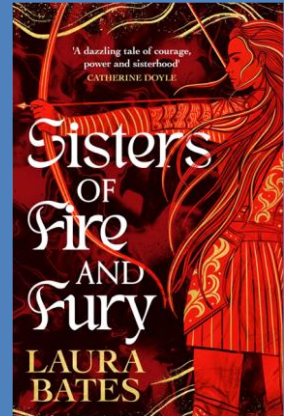
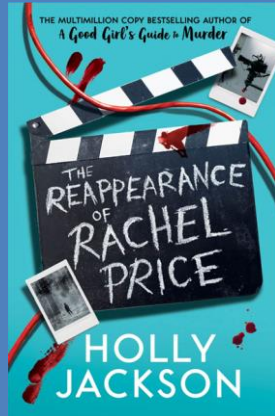
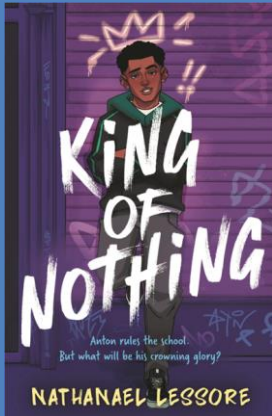
Some love too little, some too long.

Oscar Wilde's The Ballad of Reading Gaol is a story poem about the brutality of imprisonment, written by a great Irish writer who went to jail in the 1890s for what was then the crime of loving another man. Try also **Federico Garcia Lorca's Selected Poems**.



New titles for 2025-26

The following is a selection of books published recently:



FICTION

Nathanael Lessore *King of Nothing*

Anton and his friends are the kings of year 9 – until Anton's mum makes him join a local activity group where he meets the biggest loser in school. Hilarious and heartwarming, this is a sharp-witted coming-of-age story set in South London.

Holly Jackson *The Reappearance of Rachel Price*

Bel's mother vanished sixteen years ago, but the case is dragged up from the past when her family agree to a true crime documentary. Bel can't wait for filming to end, for life to go back to normal. But then Rachel Price reappears, and life will never be normal again.

Suzanne Collins *Sunrise on the Reaping*

In this gripping prequel to *The Hunger Games*, 16-year-old Haymitch Abernathy of District 12 is thrust into the brutal 50th Hunger Games. Facing overwhelming odds, how will he change in order to survive?

Lauren Bates *Sisters of Fire and Fury*

Filled with old magic and unimaginable dangers, this sublime sequel to the bestselling *Sisters of Sword and Shadow* continues Cass' journey through an epic reimagined world where a woman, not King Arthur, is destined to unite Britain.

NON-FICTION

Simon Squibb *What's Your Dream?*

Drawing on his own journey from struggle to success, Squibb offers practical insight into entrepreneurship, finding purpose, and making the pursuit of a dream feel attainable.

Robert Macfarlane *Is a River Alive?*

In a captivating blend of travel writing, environmental science, and philosophy, Macfarlane journeys to rivers in Ecuador, India, and Canada to explore a radical idea: what if rivers were recognised as living beings with rights?

My reading list

Use this space to keep a record of your own reading through the year...

	Title	Author	Date Finished	No. of Pages	Rating
1					☆☆☆☆☆
2					☆☆☆☆☆
3					☆☆☆☆☆
4					☆☆☆☆☆
5					☆☆☆☆☆
6					☆☆☆☆☆
7					☆☆☆☆☆
8					☆☆☆☆☆
9					☆☆☆☆☆
10					☆☆☆☆☆

Reward:

	Title	Author	Date Finished	No. of Pages	Rating
1					☆☆☆☆☆
2					☆☆☆☆☆
3					☆☆☆☆☆
4					☆☆☆☆☆
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6					☆☆☆☆☆
7					☆☆☆☆☆
8					☆☆☆☆☆
9					☆☆☆☆☆
10					☆☆☆☆☆

Reward:

My personal book notes