



Book sets available to borrow from Barnet Book Club

Information key on abbreviations used:

LP Sets which include a Large Print copy

NF Non-fiction titles

S Shorter read titles

YP Sets which are suitable for young people

Borrow Box (BB) or Libby (L) book versions are available in either eAudiobook or eBook to make sets of books more accessible for all Book Club members. See Barnet Libraries Online Resources for further information by visiting: <https://www.barnet.gov.uk/libraries/online-resources>

Barnet Book Club sets for 2024

Lessons in chemistry – Bonnie Garmus

Chemist Elizabeth Zott is not your average woman. In fact, Elizabeth Zott would be the first to point out that there is no such thing.

But it's the early 1960s and her all-male team at Hastings Research Institute take a very unscientific view of equality. Except for one: Calvin Evans; the lonely, brilliant, Nobel-prize nominated grudge-holder who falls in love with - of all things - her mind. True chemistry results.

But like science, life is unpredictable. Which is why a few years later, Elizabeth Zott finds herself not only a single mother, but the reluctant star of America's most beloved cooking show *Supper at Six*. Elizabeth's unusual approach to cooking ('combine one tablespoon acetic acid with a pinch of sodium chloride') proves revolutionary.

But as her following grows, not everyone is happy. Because as it turns out, Elizabeth Zott isn't just teaching women to cook. She's daring them to change the status quo.

Meet the unconventional, uncompromising Elizabeth Zott.

Available in BB and L formats

The escape artist: the man who broke out of Auschwitz to warn the world- Jonathan Freedland

In April 1944 nineteen-year-old Rudolf Vrba and fellow inmate Fred Wetzler became the first Jews ever to break out of Auschwitz. Under electrified fences and past armed watchtowers, evading thousands of SS men and slavering dogs, they trekked across marshlands, mountains and rivers to freedom. Vrba's mission: to reveal to the world the truth of the Holocaust.

In the death factory of Auschwitz, Vrba had become an eyewitness to almost every chilling stage of the Nazis' process of industrialised murder.

The more he saw, the more determined he became to warn the Jews of Europe what fate awaited them.

A brilliant student of science and mathematics, he committed each detail to memory, risking everything to collect the first data of the Final Solution. After his escape, that information would form a priceless thirty-two-page report that would reach Roosevelt, Churchill and the pope and eventually save over 200,000 lives.

But the escape from Auschwitz was not his last. After the war, he kept running - from his past, from his home country, from his adopted country, even from his own name. Few knew of the truly extraordinary deed he had done.

Now, at last, Rudolf Vrba's heroism can be known - and he can take his place alongside those whose stories define history's darkest chapter.

NF

The Midnight Library – Matt Haig

Between life and death there is a library.

When Nora Seed finds herself in the Midnight Library, she has a chance to make things right. Up until now, her life has been full of misery and regret. She feels she has let everyone down, including herself. But things are about to change.

The books in the Midnight Library enable Nora to live as if she had done things differently. With the help of an old friend, she can now undo every one of her regrets as she tries to work out her perfect life. But things aren't always what she imagined they'd be, and soon her choices place the library and herself in extreme danger. Before time runs out, she must answer the ultimate question: what is the best way to live?

Available in BB and L formats

The seven husbands of Evelyn Hugo: a novel – Taylor Jenkins Reid

Aging and reclusive Hollywood movie icon Evelyn Hugo is finally ready to tell the truth about her glamorous and scandalous life.

But when she chooses unknown magazine reporter Monique Grant for the job, no one is more astounded than Monique herself.

Why her? Why now?

Monique is not exactly on top of the world. Her husband has left her, and her professional life is going nowhere.

Regardless of why Evelyn has selected her to write her biography, Monique is determined to use this opportunity to jumpstart her career.

Summoned to Evelyn's luxurious apartment, Monique listens in fascination as the actress tells her story. From making her way to Los Angeles in the 1950s to her decision to leave show business in the '80s, and, of course, the seven husbands along the way, Evelyn unspools a tale of ruthless ambition, unexpected friendship, and a great forbidden love.

Monique begins to feel a very real connection to the legendary star, but as Evelyn's story near its conclusion, it becomes clear that her life intersects with Monique's own in tragic and irreversible ways.

A mesmerizing journey through the splendour of old Hollywood into the harsh realities of the present day as two women struggle with what it means-and what it costs-to face the truth.

Available in L format

Victoria Park – Gemma Reeves

Mona and Wolfie have lived on Victoria Park for over fifty years. Now, on the eve of their sixty-fifth wedding anniversary, they must decide how to navigate Mona's declining health. Bookended by the touching exploration of their love, *Victoria Park* follows the disparate lives of twelve people over the course of a single year.

Told from their multiple perspectives in episodes which capture feelings of alienation and connection, the lingering memory of an acid attack in the park sends ripples of unease through the community. By the end of the novel, their carefully interwoven tales create a rich tapestry of resilience, love and loss.

With sharply observed insight into contemporary urban life, and characters we take to our hearts, Gemma Reeves has written a moving, uplifting debut which reflects those universal experiences that connect us all.

Available in BB and L formats

Ways of living – Gemma Seltzer

Andie can see no other way to escape a wedding than by hiding in a tree. Esther starts a new life in a King's Cross hotel with a bad-tempered ventriloquist dummy, while Gina finally leaves a group of infuriating friends - but not before providing them with a suitable replacement.

Ways of Living is Gemma Seltzer's keen exploration of what it means to be a modern woman inhabiting the urban landscape. Ten stories of ordinary women going to extraordinary lengths to be understood, acting in bold and unpredictable ways as they map their identities onto London's streets.

How do we speak and listen to each other? Who gets to talk? And what is the true power of quiet in a noisy world?

Available in L format

Barnet Book Club sets for 2023

Dear little corpses – Nicola Upson

It takes a village to bury a child.

1 September 1939. As the mass evacuation takes place across Britain, thousands of children leave London for the countryside, but when a little girl vanishes without trace, the reality of separation becomes more desperate and more deadly for those who love her.

In the chaos and uncertainty of war, Josephine struggles with the prospect of change. As a cloud of suspicion falls across the small Suffolk village she has come to love, the conflict becomes personal, and events take a dark and sinister turn.

Available in L format

Edith and Kim – Charlotte Philby

In June 1934, Kim Philby met his Soviet handler, the spy Arnold Deutsch. The woman who introduced them was called Edith Tudor-Hart. She changed the course of 20th century history.

Then she was written out of it.

Drawing on the Secret Intelligence Files on Edith Tudor-Hart, along with the private archive letters of Kim Philby, this finely worked, evocative and beautifully tense novel - by the granddaughter of Kim Philby - tells the story of the woman behind the Third Man.

Available in L format

Miss Aldridge regrets – Louise Hare

London, 1936.

Lena Aldridge is wondering if life has passed her by. The dazzling theatre career she hoped for hasn't worked out. Instead, she's stuck singing in a sticky-floored basement club in Soho and her married lover has just left her. She has nothing to look forward to until a stranger offers her the chance of a lifetime: a starring role on Broadway and a first-class ticket on the Queen Mary bound for New York.

After a murder at the club, the timing couldn't be better and Lena jumps at the chance to escape England. Until death follows her onto the ship and she realises that her greatest performance has already begun.

Because someone is making manoeuvres behind the scenes, and there's only one thing on their mind.

Murder

Miss Aldridge Regrets is the exquisite new novel from Louise Hare. A brilliant murder mystery, it also explores class, race and pre-WWII politics, and will leave readers reeling from the beauty and power of it.

Available in L format

The Paris connection – Lorraine Brown

Hannah and Si are in love and on the same track - that is, until their train divides on the way to a wedding. The next morning, Hannah wakes up in Paris and realises that her boyfriend (and her ticket) are 300 miles away in Amsterdam!

But then Hannah meets Leo on the station platform, and he's everything Si isn't. Spending the day with him in Paris forces Hannah to question how well she really knows herself - and whether, sometimes, you need to go in the wrong direction to find everything you've been looking for...

The skeleton key – Erin Kelly

This reunion will tear a family apart...

Summer, 2021. Nell has come home at her family's insistence to celebrate an anniversary. Fifty years ago, her father wrote *The Golden Bones*. Part picture book, part treasure hunt, Sir Frank Churcher created a fairy story about Elinore, a murdered woman whose skeleton was scattered all over England. Clues and puzzles in the pages of *The Golden Bones* led readers to seven sites where jewels were buried - gold and precious stones, each a different part of a skeleton. One by one, the tiny golden bones were dug up until only Elinore's pelvis remained hidden.

The book was a sensation. A community of treasure hunters called the Bonehunters formed, in frenzied competition, obsessed to a dangerous degree. People sold their homes to travel to England and search for Elinore. Marriages broke down as the quest consumed people. A man died. The book made Frank a rich man. Stalked by fans who could not tell fantasy from reality, his daughter, Nell, became a recluse.

But now the Churchers must be reunited. The book is being reissued along with a new treasure hunt and a documentary crew are charting everything that follows. Nell is appalled, and terrified. During the filming, Frank finally reveals the whereabouts of the missing golden bone. And then all hell breaks loose.

These streets – Luan Goldie

Jess is a single mother to two teenage children, and although life can be tough she's just about keeping things together. But when her landlord asks her to move on so he can sell the house they're living in without warning, Jess's worries take on a whole new meaning.

As Jess struggles to regain her footing, cracks begin to appear in other areas of her life and suddenly she feels she's failing at everything.

Her daughter Hazel is becoming more and more distant, her son Jacob is struggling to find where he fits in the world, and the menacing spectre of Jess's older brother, someone she cut out of her life years ago, begins to make his presence felt again.

Jess knows she's the only one who can keep her family together, but how can she keep going when life keeps beating her back?

Set on the streets of East London, *These Streets* is a searing and powerful novel that explores how we are meant to find our place in a world that is designed for only the privileged to succeed. Beautiful and honest, it is an essential story about living in Britain today.

Available in L format

Barnet Book Club sets for 2022

The Young Survivors - Debra Barnes

What if everyone you loved was suddenly taken away? Five siblings struggle to stay together as the tides of war threaten to tear them apart.

When Germany invades France in the Second World War, the five Laskowski children lose everything: their home, their Jewish community and most devastatingly their parents who are abducted in the night. There is no safe place left for them to evade the Nazis, but they cling together, never certain when the authorities will come for what is left of them.

Inspired by the poignant, true story of the author's mother, this moving historical novel conveys the hardship, the uncertainty, and the impossible choices the Laskowski children were forced to make to survive the horrors of the Holocaust.

Ridley Road - Jo Bloom

Twenty-year-old Vivien Epstein, a Jewish hairdresser from Manchester, arrives in London following the death of her father. She has travelled to the city to make a new start, and quickly finds herself swept up in a city buzzing with life. Landing a job at Oscar's salon, she thrives amid the vibrant cafe culture of Soho and the warm camaraderie of the other hairdressers.

But beneath the surface, Vivien is desperate to find Jack Fox, a man she had a brief but intense romance with some months before. Her search leads to confront the dark resurgence of fascism, countered by the Jewish community in street battles around Ridley Road in the East End of London. Amid the growing tensions, can her love survive.

Childhood, Youth, Dependency: The Copenhagen Trilogy - Tove Ditlevsen

Following one woman's journey from a troubled girlhood in working-class Copenhagen through her struggle to live on her own terms, *The Copenhagen Trilogy* is a searingly honest, utterly immersive portrayal of love, friendship, art, ambition, and the terrible lure of addiction, from one of Denmark's most celebrated twentieth-century writers.

The Long, Long Afternoon - Inga Vesper

Yesterday, I kissed my husband for the last time ...

It's the summer of 1959, and the well-trimmed lawns of Sunnyslakes, California, wilt under the sun. At some point during the long, long afternoon, Joyce Haney, wife, mother, vanishes from her home, leaving behind two terrified children and a bloodstain on the kitchen floor.

While the Haney's neighbours get busy organising search parties, it is Ruby Wright, the family's 'help', who may hold the key to this unsettling mystery. Ruby knows more about the secrets behind Sunnyslakes' starched curtains than anyone, and it isn't long before the detective in charge of the case wants her help. But what might it cost her to get involved?

In these long hot summer afternoons, simmering with lies, mistrust and prejudice, it could only take one spark for this whole 'perfect' world to set alight...

Available in L format

Spymaster: The Man Who Saved MI6 - Helen Fry

The dramatic story of a man who stood at the center of British intelligence operations, the ultimate spymaster of World War Two: Thomas Kendrick.

Thomas Kendrick (1881-1972) was central to the British Secret Service from its beginnings through to the Second World War. Under the guise of "British Passport Officer," he ran spy networks across Europe, facilitated the escape of Austrian Jews, and later went on to set up the "M Room," a listening operation which elicited information of the same significance and scope as Bletchley Park. Yet the work of Kendrick, and its full significance, remains largely unknown. **(Warning: this is a hardback book set, and the box is heavy).**

NF

Barnet Book Club sets for 2021

Abigail Melton & Lilith Cooper - Gears for Queers Keen to see some of Europe, queer couple Lilith and Abigail get on their old bikes and start pedalling. Along flat fens and up Swiss Alps, they will meet new friends and exercise old demons as they push their bodies and their relationship to the limit.

NF Available in L format

Angela Carter - The Passion of New Eve

I know nothing. I am a tabula rasa, a blank sheet of paper, an unhatched egg. I have not yet become a woman, although I possess a woman's shape. Not a woman, no: both more and less than a real woman. Now I am a being as mythic and monstrous as Mother herself. New York has become the City of Dreadful Night where dissolute Leilah performs a dance of chaos for Evelyn. But this young Englishman's fate lies in the arid desert, where a many-breasted fertility goddess will wield her scalpel to transform him into the new Eve.

Bernardine Evaristo - Girl, Woman, Other

Teeming with life and crackling with energy a love song to modern Britain and black womanhood. Girl, Woman, Other follows the lives and struggles of twelve very different characters. Mostly women, black and British, they tell the stories of their families, friends, and lovers, across the country and through the years. Joyfully polyphonic and vibrantly contemporary, this is a gloriously new kind of history, a novel of our times: celebratory, ever dynamic, and utterly irresistible.

Available in BB and L formats

Michelle Obama - Becoming

In a life filled with meaning and accomplishment, Michelle Obama has emerged as one of the most iconic and compelling women of our era. As First Lady of the United States of America - the first African American to serve in that role she helped create the most welcoming and inclusive White House in history. She also established herself as the most powerful advocate for women and girls in the U.S. and around the world, dramatically changing the ways that families pursue healthier and more active lives and standing with her husband as he led America through some of its most harrowing moments. Along the way, she showed us a few dance moves, crushed Carpool Karaoke, and raised two down-to-earth daughters under an unforgiving media glare.

In her memoir, a work of deep reflection and mesmerizing storytelling, Michelle Obama invites readers into her world, chronicling the experiences that have shaped her-from her childhood on the South Side of Chicago to her years as an executive balancing the demands of motherhood and work, to her time spent at the world's most famous address. With unerring honesty and lively wit, she describes her triumphs and her disappointments, both public and private, telling her full story as she has lived it-in her own words and on her own terms. **(Warning: this is a hardback book set, and the box is heavy).**

NF Available in BB and L formats

Octavia E. Butler – Kindred

Octavia E. Butler's 1979 masterpiece and ground-breaking exploration of power and responsibility, the extraordinary story of two people bound by blood, separated by so much more than time. Perfect for fans of *The Handmaid's Tale*, *The Power* and Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing*. With an original foreword by Ayobami Adebayo. Her evocative, often troubling, novels explore far-reaching issues of race, sex, power and, ultimately, what it means to be human - *New York Times*. In 1976, Dana dreams of being a writer. In 1815, she is assumed a slave. When Dana first meets Rufus on a Maryland plantation, he's drowning. She saves his life and it will happen again and again. Neither of them understands his power to summon her whenever his life is threatened, nor the significance of the ties that bind them. And each time Dana saves him, the more aware she is that her own life might be over before it's even begun.

Available in L format

Reni Eddo-Lodge - Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People About Race

I'm no longer engaging with white people on the topic of race. Not all white people, just the vast majority who refuse to accept the legitimacy of structural racism and its symptoms. You can see their eyes shut down and harden. It's like treacle is poured into their ears, blocking up their ear canals. It's like they can no longer hear us. In 2014, award-winning journalist Reni Eddo-Lodge wrote about her frustration with the way that discussions of race and racism in Britain were being led by those who weren't affected by it. She posted a piece on her blog, entitled: 'Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People About Race'. Her words hit a nerve. The post went viral and comments flooded in from others desperate to speak up about their own experiences. Galvanised by this clear hunger for open discussion, she decided to dig into the source of these feelings. Exploring issues from eradicated black history to the political purpose of white dominance, whitewashed feminism to the inextricable link between class and race, Reni Eddo-Lodge offers a timely and essential new framework for how to see, acknowledge and counter racism. It is a searing, illuminating, necessary exploration of what it is to be a person of colour in Britain today.

NF Available in BB and L formats

Richard Osman - The Thursday Murder Club

In a peaceful retirement village, four unlikely friends meet up once a week to investigate unsolved murders. But when a brutal killing takes place on their very doorstep, the Thursday Murder Club find themselves in the middle of their first live case. Elizabeth, Joyce, Ibrahim, and Ron might be pushing eighty, but they still have a few tricks up their sleeves. Can our unorthodox but brilliant gang catch the killer before it's too late? **(Warning: this is a hardback book set, and the box is heavy).**

Available in BB and L formats

Tomasz Jedrowski - Swimming in the Dark

Anxious, disillusioned Ludwik Glowacki, soon to graduate university, has been sent along with the rest of his class to an agricultural camp. Here he meets Janusz - and together, they spend a dreamlike summer swimming in secluded lakes, reading forbidden books - and falling in love. But with summer over, the two are sent back to Warsaw, and to the harsh realities of life under the Party. Exiled from paradise, Ludwik and Janusz must decide how they will survive; and in their different choices, find themselves torn apart.

Available in BB format

Barnet Book Club sets for 2020

Heidi Amsinck - The Last Train to Helsingor

Copenhagen is a mysterious city where strange and sinister things often happen. Menacing and at times darkly humorous there are echoes of Roald Dahl and Daphne du Maurier in these stories, many of which have been specially commissioned for Radio 4.

Available in L formats

Margaret Atwood - The Handmaid's Tale

Offred is a Handmaid in The Republic of Gilead, a religious totalitarian state in what was formerly known as the United States. She is placed in the household of The Commander, Fred Waterford – her assigned name, Offred, means ‘of Fred.’ She has only one function: to breed. If Offred refuses to enter sexual servitude to repopulate a devastated world, she will be hanged. Yet even a repressive state cannot eradicate hope and desire. As she recalls her pre-revolution life in flashbacks, Offred must navigate through the terrifying landscape of torture and persecution in the present day, and between two men upon which her future hangs.

Available in BB and L formats

Jane Austen - Pride and Prejudice

When Elizabeth Bennet first meets eligible bachelor Fitzwilliam Darcy, she thinks him arrogant and conceited; he is indifferent to her good looks and lively mind. When she later discovers that Darcy has involved himself in the troubled relationship between his friend Bingley and her beloved sister Jane, she is determined to dislike him more than ever. In the sparkling comedy of manners that follows, Jane Austen shows the folly of judging by first impressions and superbly evokes the friendships, gossip, and snobberies of provincial middle-class life.

Available in BB and L formats

Edmund de Waal - The Hare With Amber Eyes: A Hidden Inheritance 264 wood and ivory carvings, none of them bigger than a matchbox:

Edmund de Waal was entranced when he first encountered the collection in his great uncle Iggy's Tokyo apartment. When he later inherited the 'netsuke', they unlocked a story far larger and more dramatic than he could ever have imagined. From a burgeoning empire in Odessa to fin de siècle Paris, from occupied Vienna to Tokyo, Edmund de Waal traces the netsuke's journey through generations of his remarkable family against the backdrop of a tumultuous century.

NF & Available in L format

Adam Kay - This is Going to Hurt: Secret Diaries of a Junior Doctor

Welcome to the life of a junior doctor: 97-hour weeks, life and death decisions, a constant tsunami of bodily fluids, and the hospital parking meter earns more than you.

Scribbled in secret after endless days, sleepless nights and missed weekends, Adam Kay's This is Going to Hurt provides a no-holds-barred account of his time on the NHS front line. Hilarious, horrifying, and heart-breaking, this diary is everything you wanted to know – and more than a few things you didn't – about life on and off the hospital ward.

NF, Available in BB and L formats

Yrsa Sigurdardottir - I Remember You

The crunching noise had resumed, now accompanied by a disgusting, indefinable smell. It could best be described as a blend of kelp and rotten meat. The voice spoke again, now slightly louder, and clearer:

Don't go. Don't go yet. I'm not finished. In an isolated village in the Icelandic Westfjords, three friends set to work renovating a derelict house. But soon they realise they are not alone there - something wants them to leave, and it's making its presence felt. Meanwhile, in a town across the fjord, a young doctor investigating the suicide of an elderly woman discovers that she was obsessed with his vanished son. When the two stories collide, the terrifying truth is uncovered.

Ben Aaronovitch – Rivers of London

Probationary Constable Peter Grant dreams of being a detective in London's Metropolitan Police. Peter's prospects change in the aftermath of a puzzling murder, when he gains exclusive information from an eyewitness who happens to be a ghost. Peter's ability to speak with the lingering dead brings him to the attention of Detective Chief Inspector Thomas Nightingale, who investigates crimes involving magic and other manifestations of the uncanny.

Poppy Adams – The behaviour of moths

Shortlisted for the Costa Award for best first novel. Two elderly sisters meet in the crumbling family mansion after many years apart, and dark secrets are revealed. Claustrophobic and creepy, but funny and compassionate as well.

Aravind Adiga – The white tiger

The Man Booker Prize winner. A harsh and very black comedy set in present-day India. The narrator is a peasant turned entrepreneur, very well placed to expose the corrupt and cruel underside of India's rise as a global economic power. Not for the squeamish.

LP

Naomi Alderman - Disobedience

The story of Ronit, the daughter of an Orthodox Jewish Rabbi originally from Hendon now living in Manhattan, her childhood friend Esti and her husband David. The story tells of the contrasts between modern life, religious belief, spirituality, and community.

Maya Angelou – I know why the caged bird sings

In this first volume of her six books of autobiography, Maya Angelou beautifully evokes her childhood with her grandmother in the American south of the 1930s. She learns the power of the white folks at the other end of town and suffers the terrible trauma of rape by her mother's lover.

NF

Kate Atkinson – A god in ruins

Explores the life of Teddy Todd, would-be poet, heroic World War II bomber pilot, husband, father, and grandfather as he navigates the perils and progress of the 20th century. For all Teddy endures in battle, his greatest challenge will be to face living in a future he never expected to have.

James Baldwin – Go tell it on the mountain

First published in the 1950, this is a powerful and partly biographical debut novel exploring the life of the Grimes family in Harlem during the Depression era. Emotive and lyrically written.

J G Ballard – High Rise

Within the concealing walls of an elegant forty-storey tower block, the affluent tenants are hell-bent on an orgy of destruction. Cocktail parties degenerate into marauding attacks on 'enemy' floors and the once-luxurious amenities become an arena for riots and technological mayhem.

Iain Banks - The Crow Road

Prentice McHoan finds that death always draws him back to his hometown in Scotland and the bosom of his family. A study of family, love, grief, death with overtones of a horror novel.

Pat Barker - Toby's Room

Elinor receives news that her brother Toby is 'Missing, Believed Killed' during World War One but is desperate to know what happened to him. The novel depicts the pioneering work done at Queen Mary's Hospital with facially disfigured soldiers.

Sebastian Barry – The secret scripture

Costa Award winner. A very sane hundred-year-old Irishwoman in a mental hospital in County Sligo narrates her life story. Shocking and sad, but hopeful, and exquisitely written.

Alan Bennett – The uncommon reader

The Uncommon Reader is none other than HM the Queen who drifts accidentally into reading when her corgis stray into a mobile library parked at Buckingham Palace. Her reading naturally changes her world view and her relationship with people like the oleaginous prime minister and his repellent advisers. She comes to question the prescribed order of the world and loses patience with much that she must do.

LP & S**John Berendt – Midnight in the garden of good and evil**

A nineties non-fiction bestseller made into a film directed by Clint Eastwood. A journalist visits the extraordinary city of Savannah, Georgia. A true story of intrigue, murder, and eccentricity. Part travelogue, part quirky thriller.

Malorie Blackman – Noughts and crosses

Sephy is a Cross – a member of the dark-skinned ruling class. Callum is a nought – a ‘colourless’ member of the underclass who were once slaves to the Crosses. The two have been friends since early childhood. But that’s as far as it can go. Until the first steps are taken towards more social equality and a limited number of Noughts are allowed into Cross schools.

YP**William Boyd – Any human heart**

A life-long series of journals by a fictional British upper-class writer and adventurer spanning the years 1906-1991. Poignant and entertaining, it plays with the idea of literary celebrity, and gives insight into many aspects of twentieth century history and culture.

LP

Bill Bryson - Notes from a small island

One of Bill Bryson's most popular books. A travelogue written by an American who lived in Britain for twenty years, this book provides an interesting and humorous account of Britain.

NF

Jessie Burton – The Miniaturist

On an autumn day in 1686, eighteen-year-old Nella Oortman knocks at the door of a grand house in the wealthiest quarter of Amsterdam. She has come from the country to begin a new life as the wife of illustrious merchant trader Johannes Brandt, but instead she is met by his sharp-tongued sister, Marin. Only later does Johannes appear and present her with an extraordinary wedding gift: a cabinet-sized replica of their home. It is to be furnished by an elusive miniaturist; whose tiny creations mirror their real-life counterparts in unexpected ways.

Jessie Burton – The Muse

On a hot July day in 1967, Odelle Bastien climbs the stone steps of the Skelton gallery in London, knowing that her life is about to change forever. Having struggled to find her place in the city since she arrived from Trinidad five years ago, she has been offered a job as a typist under the tutelage of the glamorous and enigmatic Marjorie Quick. But though Quick takes Odelle into her confidence, and unlocks a potential she didn't know she had, she remains a mystery - no more so than when a lost masterpiece with a secret history is delivered to the gallery.

LP, Available in BB and L formats

A S Byatt - Possession

Booker Prize winner. Contemporary academics investigate the life of a Victorian poet, discover controversial secrets, and fall in love. A historical novel, a romance, and a thriller all at the same time. Complex and very entertaining. The pastiche of Victorian verse is clever but can be skipped!

Truman Capote – In cold blood

Controversial and compelling, *In Cold Blood* reconstructs the murder in 1959 of a Kansas farmer, his wife and both their children. Truman Capote's comprehensive study of the killings and subsequent investigation explores the circumstances surrounding this terrible crime and the effect it had on those involved. At the centre of his study are the amoral young killers Perry Smith and Dick Hickcock, who, vividly drawn by Capote, are shown to be reprehensible yet entirely and frighteningly human.

Tracy Chevalier – The last runaway

Honor Bright is a sheltered Quaker who has rarely ventured out of 1850s Dorset when she impulsively emigrates to America. Opposed to the slavery that defines and divides the country, she finds her principles tested to the limit when a runaway slave appears at the farm of her new family. In this tough, unsentimental place, where whisky bottles sit alongside quilts, Honor befriends two spirited women who will teach her how to turn ideas into actions.

Clare Clark – Savage Lands

It is 1704 and, in the swamps of Louisiana, France is clinging on to its new colony with less than two hundred men. Into this hostile land comes Elisabeth Savaret, one of twenty-three women sent from Paris to marry men they have never met. With little expectation of happiness, Elisabeth is stunned to find herself falling passionately in love with her husband, infantryman Jean-Claude Babelon. But Babelon is a dangerous man to love.

LP

Chris Cleave – Gold

Kate and Zoe are friends but also ardent rivals - athletes at the top of their game, fighting to compete in the world's greatest sporting contest. Each scarred by tragedy, and each with a great deal to lose, they must choose between family and glory and ask themselves: what will I sacrifice? *GOLD* captures the extraordinary effort and dedication that go into the pursuit of victory.

Marika Cobbold – Drowning Rose

It is winter in London. Eliza Cummings, a ceramics restorer at the V&A Museum, is leaving work when she receives an unexpected phone call. Standing in the haze of the Christmas lights she hears a voice which draws her back twenty-five years - to the tragic death of her best friend.

Paulo Coelho – The alchemist

An Andalusian shepherd boy named Santiago travels from his homeland in Spain to the Egyptian desert in search of a treasure buried in the Pyramids. What starts out as a journey to find worldly goods turns into a discovery of the treasure found within.

Hunter Davies – The Co-Op's got Bananas

Despite the struggle to make ends meet during the tough years of warfare in the 1940s and rationing persisting until the early 1950s, life could still be sweet. Especially if you were a young boy, playing football with your pals, saving up to go to the movies at the weekend, and being captivated by the latest escapade of Dick Barton on the radio.

NF**Sallie Day - The palace of strange girls**

The Singleton family visit Blackpool every year for their holiday. It is 1959 and Jack is considering his future career at the Yorkshire cotton mill. Meanwhile his wife and two daughters are each facing their own issues. Emotive and an excellent representation of family life during the period.

LP**Patrick DeWitt – The Sisters brothers**

An offbeat and modern twist on the Western genre. Charlie and Eli Sisters are gunmen for hire in the 1850s Gold Rush. Nominated for 2011 Man Booker prize.

Anthony Doerr – All the Light we cannot see

A beautiful, stunningly ambitious novel about a blind French girl and a German boy whose paths collide in occupied France as both try to survive the devastation of World War II

Sarah Dunant – Blood and beauty: the Borgias

A powerhouse of the Italian Renaissance, their very name epitomizes the ruthless politics and sexual corruption of the Papacy. Stripping away the myths around the Borgias, Blood & Beauty breathes life into the astonishing family of Alexander VI and celebrates the raw power of history itself: compelling, complex, and relentless.

Sarah Dunant – Sacred hearts

1570 in the Italian city of Ferrara. Sixteen-year-old Serafina is ripped by her family from an illicit love affair and forced into the convent of Santa Caterina, renowned for its superb music. Serafina's one weapon is her glorious voice, but she refuses to sing. However, watching over Serafina is Zuana, the sister in charge of the infirmary, who understands and might even challenge her incarceration.

Jennifer Egan - A visit from the goon squad

Winner of the 2011 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction, Egan's novel is told through a variety of narrators, each linking to the last, switching between time periods and locations. Focuses on themes of youth culture, the music industry, aging and friendship.

LP

Ben Elton – Two Brothers

Two babies are born. Two brothers. United and indivisible, sharing everything. Twins in all but blood. As Germany marches into its Nazi Armageddon, the ties of family, friendship and love are tested to the very limits of endurance. And the brothers are faced with an unimaginable choice. Which one of them will survive?

Available in L format

Gavin Extence - The Universe Versus Alex Woods

17-year-old Alex is stopped at Dover customs with a 113g of marijuana in the glove compartment and the ashes of his dead friend Mr Peterson on the seat next to him. How did he get here? A quirky tale that follows Alex's teenage years.

Sebastian Faulks – Birdsong

A story of love, death, sex, and survival. Stephen Wraysford, a young Englishman, arrives in Amiens in northern France in 1910 to stay with the Azaire family, and falls in love with unhappily married Isabelle. But, with the world on the brink of war, the relationship falters, and Stephen volunteers to fight on the Western Front.

F Scott Fitzgerald – The great Gatsby

An American classic, published in 1925. A critique of the American Dream, and a portrait of the excesses of the Jazz Age. Self-made millionaire Jay Gatsby falls in love and falls from grace. Events unfold with tragic inevitability.

LP & S**Gillian Flynn - Gone Girl**

Nick Dunne discovers that his wife, Amy, has gone missing on the morning of their fifth wedding anniversary. The police immediately suspect him, but Nick protests his innocence. What happened to her? A best-selling psychological thriller.

Gillian Flynn – Sharp objects

When two girls are abducted and killed in Missouri, journalist Camille Preaker is sent back to her hometown to report on the crimes. Long-haunted by a childhood tragedy and estranged from her mother for years, Camille suddenly finds herself installed once again in her family's mansion, reacquainting herself with her distant mother and the half-sister she barely knows - a precocious 13-year-old who holds a disquieting grip on the town.

Jonathan Safran Foer - Extremely loud and incredibly close

Nine-year-old Oskar lost his father in 9/11, two years before this story begins. He sets out on a mission to search for information on a key he finds that belonged to his father. The tale is narrated both by Oskar and his paternal grandparents, mostly via a series of letters.

Robert Galbraith – The cuckoo’s calling

A gripping, elegant mystery steeped in the atmosphere of London from J K Rowling writing under a pseudonym. When a troubled model falls to her death from a snow-covered Mayfair balcony, it is assumed that she has committed suicide. However, her brother has his doubts, and calls in private investigator Cormoran Strike to consider the case.

Jane Gardam – Old Filth

Long ago, Old Filth was a Raj orphan - one of the many young children sent 'Home' from the East to be fostered and educated in England. Jane Gardam's novel tells his story, from his birth in what was then Malaya to the extremities of his old age.

Sally Gardner – Maggot moon

Winner of the Carnegie Medal and a 2012 Costa Award winner.

Narrated against the backdrop of a ruthless regime determined to beat its enemies in the race to the moon. When his best friend Hector is suddenly taken away, Standish Treadwell realises that it is up to him, his grandfather, and a small band of rebels to confront and defeat the ever-present oppressive forces of the Motherland.

YP

Alex Garland – The Beach

Richard lands in East Asia in search of an earthly utopia. In Thailand, he is given a map promising an unknown island, a secluded beach, and a new way of life. What Richard finds when he gets there is breath taking: more extraordinary, more frightening than his wildest dreams. But how long can paradise survive here on Earth? And what lengths will Richard go to save it?

Available in BB and L formats

Lisa Genova – Still Alice

A moving story of a woman with early onset Alzheimer's disease. Alice Howland is proud of the life she worked so hard to build. At fifty, she's a cognitive psychology professor at Harvard and a renowned expert in linguistics, with a successful husband and three grown children. When she begins to grow forgetful and disoriented, she dismisses it for as long as she can until a tragic diagnosis changes her life.

LP

Ciara Geraghty - Finding Mr Flood

Dara Flood's father walked away from the family home thirteen days before she was born. She has now grown up, but her sister Angel has a chronic illness and needs a kidney. Neither Dara nor her mother are a match, can Dara find her absent father in time, and will he help?

Kathleen Grissom – The kitchen house

Set in 1791, this novel sees poor Irish orphan Lavinia sent to Virginia to work in the kitchen of a wealthy plantation owner. Her life becomes entwined with a family of black slaves, however as time progresses her skin colour begins to set her apart.

George & Weedon Grossmith – Diary of a nobody

A classic late-Victorian work of humour set in a respectable but dull London suburb. Describes 15 months in the life of Mr Pooter, a clerk with absurd social aspirations, and his family.

S

Sara Gruen - Water for elephants

Jacob, a veterinary student joins the Benzini Brothers' circus to care for the animals just before taking his final exams. Written as a series of memoirs as Jacob remembers this period of his life whilst in a retirement home aged 70. Contains vivid descriptions of life in the Big Top.

Joanne Harris – Chocolat

Vianne Rocher and her six-year-old daughter arrive in the small French Village of Lansquenet-sous-Tannes and set up a Chocolate shop, but trouble ensues as it is Lent, the shop is located opposite a Church, and opens on Sunday. Parish priest Francis Reynaud is furious but soon the villagers are won over.

Jane Hawking – Travelling to infinity: my life with Stephen

In this compelling memoir Stephen Hawking's first wife, Jane Hawking, relates the inside story of their extraordinary marriage. As Stephen's academic renown soared, his body was collapsing under the assaults of motor neurone disease, and Jane's candid account of trying to balance his 24-hour care with the needs of their growing family will be inspirational to anyone dealing with family illness.

NF

Paula Hawkins – The girl on the train

Rachel catches the same commuter train every morning. She knows it will wait at the same signal each time, overlooking a row of back gardens. She's even started to feel like she knows the people who live in one of the houses. 'Jess and Jason,' she calls them. Their life, as she sees it, is perfect. If only Rachel could be that happy. And then she sees something shocking. It's only a minute until the train moves on, but it's enough. Now everything's changed.

Emma Henderson - Grace Williams says it loud

Grace Williams is sent to a mental institution aged 11 in the 1950s. Here she meets Daniel and a love story follows. Vivid descriptions of the treatment of mentally ill people in this era are intertwined with the warmth and compassion Grace and Daniel show to each other. An emotive story.

Susan Hill – The woman in black

A chilling ghost story. A young solicitor is sent to the English countryside to attend the funeral of a reclusive widow who lived alone. He glimpses a strange woman in black at the cemetery, and strange events begin to unfold.

LP & S**Victoria Hislop – The Sunrise**

In the summer of 1972, Famagusta in Cyprus is the most desirable resort in the Mediterranean, a city bathed in the glow of good fortune. An ambitious couple open the island's most spectacular hotel, where Greek and Turkish Cypriots work in harmony. Two neighbouring families, the Georgious and the Özkans, are among many who moved to Famagusta to escape the years of unrest and ethnic violence elsewhere on the island. But beneath the city's façade of glamour and success, tension is building.

Victoria Hislop – The thread

Set in the city of Thessaloniki, this third novel from Hislop expertly depicts events in Greece from 1917 onwards as Dimitri and Katerina grow up during a period of great unrest. An emotive, fascinating read.

Amanda Hodgkinson - 22 Britannia Road

A husband waits for his wife and son to join him in Ipswich at the start of World War Two, but she holds a terrible secret after living in the Polish forests for years. They have spent six years apart and things have changed dramatically.

LP

Alice Hoffman - The Dovekeepers

Set during the Roman siege of the fortress Masada in 70AD, this novel tells the tale of a group of four women who cared for the doves in the fortress. Supplies are dwindling, and times are desperate. All are the keepers of secrets, as well as doves.

Gail Honeyman – Eleanor Oliphant is completely fine

Eleanor Oliphant leads a simple life. She wears the same clothes to work every day, eats the same meal deal for lunch every day and buys the same two bottles of vodka to drink every weekend. Eleanor Oliphant is happy. Nothing is missing from her carefully timetabled life. Except, sometimes, everything. One simple act of kindness is about to shatter the walls Eleanor has built around herself. Now she must learn how to navigate the world that everyone else seems to take for granted – while searching for the courage to face the dark corners she's avoided all her life.

Available in BB and L formats & LP

Anthony Horowitz – House of Silk

The first new Sherlock Holmes novel to be approved by the Conan-Doyle estate. Dr Watson is elderly and reflecting on one of the pair's early adventures together. A reimagining of the classic novels.

LP

Khaled Hosseini – A thousand splendid suns

In this novel Hosseini takes us through more than forty years of Afghan history, and how Miriam and Laila rise through challenges and victimisation against all odds. Captivating with remarkable characters.

Khaled Hosseini – And the mountains echoed

Ten-year-old Abdullah would do anything for his younger sister. In a life of poverty and struggle, with no mother to care for them, Pari is the only person who brings Abdullah happiness. Hosseini explores the many ways in which families' nurture, wound, betray, honour, and sacrifice for one another; and how often we are surprised by the actions of those closest to us, at the times that matter most.

Kazuo Ishiguro – Never let me go

Short-listed for The Man Booker Prize in 2005. A remarkable novel of love, loss and hidden truth set in English countryside with a science-fiction leaning. This book will make you think.

Marlon James – A brief history of seven killings

Winner of the Man Booker Prize 2015. Jamaica 1976.

Seven gunmen storm Bob Marley's house, machine guns blazing. The reggae superstar survives, but the gunmen are never caught. Spanning three decades and crossing continents, this chronicles the lives of a host of unforgettable characters – slum kids, drug lords, journalists, prostitutes, gunmen and even the CIA.

Wendy Jones-The Thoughts and Happenings of Wilfred Price, Purveyor of Superior Funerals

Young undertaker Wilfred Price proposes to a girl he barely knows whilst on a summer's picnic and soon regrets his actions. Set in a 1920s Welsh village, this is an emotional story of love and secrets.

Alan Johnson – This Boy

Alan Johnson's childhood was not so much difficult as unusual, particularly for a man who was destined to become Home Secretary. Played out against the background of a vanishing community living in condemned housing, the story moves from post-war austerity in pre-gentrified Notting Hill, through the race riots, school on the Kings Road, Chelsea in the Swinging 60s, to the rock-and-roll years, making a record in Denmark Street and becoming a husband and father whilst still in his teens.

NF

Jonas Jonasson – Hundred-year-old man...

Allan Karlsson is waiting for his hundredth birthday party to commence when he decides to climb out of his bedroom window and begin an unlikely journey. A feel-good international bestseller.

Hillary Jordan - Mudbound

Bellwether prize-winner. Mudbound is a story of Laura, a schoolteacher married to Henry who buys a farm in Mississippi Delta, but it becomes a struggle for Laura to adapt to life in the countryside with her two children.

LP

Sue Monk Kidd - The secret life of bees

Humorous and tragic by turns, a teenage girl grows up in racially divided America in the 1960s. Memorable for its portrayal of the eccentricities of South Carolina and tender description of relationships forged in the absence of traditional family bonds.

LP

Harper Lee - To Kill a Mockingbird

Pulitzer Prize winning novel set in the 1930s American South and the only book by Harper Lee. Narrated by a young girl who understands only a fraction of what she observes so closely, this is the tale of lawyer Atticus Finch and his fight for racial justice in an eccentric small town.

Harper Lee – Go set a watchman Maycomb, Alabama. Twenty-six-year-old Jean Louise Finch – ‘Scout’ – returns home from New York City to visit her ageing father, Atticus. Set against the backdrop of the civil rights tensions and political turmoil that were transforming the South, Jean Louise’s homecoming turns bittersweet when she learns disturbing truths about her close-knit family, the town, and the people dearest to her.

Laurie Lee – Cider with Rosie

Laurie Lee's depiction of life growing up in the Cotswolds and attending school in a remote village close to Stroud during the pre-war years is a classic. A trip down memory lane.

NF

Doris Lessing – The golden notebook

The inner and outer life of a young woman who is a writer, a single mother and a Communist. A worldwide bestseller, and a key text for any feminist. Necessarily complex, fusing sex, love, politics, madness, and motherhood. A portrait of the intellectual and moral climate of Britain in the 1950s.

Ira Levin – The Stepford wives

A journey to the heart of darkness set in Connecticut's wealthy suburbs. A newcomer wonders why all the housewives in Stepford are so perfect, then is terrified by what she discovers in this 1970s thriller.

LP

Andrea Levy – The long song

Levy, winner of the Orange Prize and Whitbread for her novel Small Island about the black experience in Britain, reaches further back. Set in Jamaica in during the period of Abolition, this is the harrowing tale of a slave named July, narrated in a distinctive voice.

LP

Eric Lomax – Railway man

During the Second World War Eric Lomax was forced to work on the notorious Burma-Siam Railway and was tortured by the Japanese for making a crude radio. Left emotionally scarred and unable to form normal relationships, Lomax suffered for years until, with the help of his wife, Patti Lomax, and of the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture, he came to terms with what happened. Fifty years after the terrible events, he could meet one of his tormentors.

LP

Carson McCullers – The heart is a lonely hunter

A deaf-mute becomes the touchstone for blacks and whites living in isolation in the American South in the 1930s. Published in 1940, this is an astonishing, resonant novel about the human need for relationships and the forces that keep us separate.

Helen Macdonald – H is for hawk

As a child, Helen Macdonald was determined to become a falconer, learning the arcane terminology, and reading all the classic books. Years later, when her father died and she was struck deeply by grief, she became obsessed with the idea of training her own goshawk. She bought Mabel for £800 on a Scottish quayside and took her home to Cambridge, ready to embark on the long, strange business of trying to train this wildest of animals.

NF

Paula McLain - The Paris wife

In 1920s Chicago Hadley Richardson meets Ernest Hemmingway and the pair set off to France. Set amid the Paris Jazz scene this is a tale of the pair's relationship and Ernest's early literary career.

LP

Alexander Maksik – You deserve nothing

See through the eyes of three characters, this is the tale of the influence of a teacher over his pupils at an international school in Paris.

LP

Hilary Mantel - Bring up the Bodies

Winner of the 2012 Man Booker Prize, and the sequel to Wolf Hall, this book continues the story of Thomas Cromwell and his attempts to secure the future of the British monarchy through his role as Henry VIII's Chief Minister in 1535.

LP

Hilary Mantel – Assassination of Margaret Thatcher

A short story collection by this prize-winning author. Whether set in a claustrophobic Saudi Arabian flat or on a precarious mountain road in Greece, these stories share an insight into the darkest recesses of the spirit.

David Mitchell – Cloud atlas

Six interlocking lives - one amazing adventure. In a narrative that circles the globe and reaches from the 19th century to a post-apocalyptic future, Cloud Atlas erases the boundaries of time, genre and language to offer an enthralling vision of humanity's will to power, and where it will lead us.

Erin Morganstern - The Night Circus

It's 1886 and the mysterious Cirque des Rêves appears one day as if from nowhere and opens only at night. The story centres on two young magicians, surrounded by the fantastical setting of the circus. Escapism at its best.

LP

Liane Moriarty – The husband’s secret

Mother of three and wife of John-Paul, Cecilia discovers an old envelope in the attic. Written in her husband's hand, it says: to be opened only in the event of my death. Curious, she opens it - and time stops. John-Paul's letter confesses to a terrible mistake which, if revealed, would wreck their family as well as the lives of others.

Heather Morris –The Tattooist of Auschwitz

For readers of Schindler's List, The Man Who Broke into Auschwitz and The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas comes a heart-breaking story of the very best of humanity in the very worst of circumstances. I tattooed a number on her arm. She tattooed her name on my heart. In 1942, Lale Sokolov arrived in Auschwitz-Birkenau. He was given the job of tattooing the prisoners marked for survival - scratching numbers into his fellow victims' arms in indelible ink to create what would become one of the most potent symbols of the Holocaust.

Available in BB and L formats

Toni Morrison - Beloved

A Pulitzer Prize winning novel, this is a searing, beautifully written story of an ex-slave living with the ghost of a child. Using matter of fact language, Beloved’s portrayal of slavery and freedom in America is memorable.

Jojo Moyes - Me before you

Lou takes on a job caring for Will after he is involved in a motorcycle accident. Will, a previous high-flying career man, needs encouragement to enjoy life again and Lou may provide a solution. Chick-lit in appearance, but with a serious message.

LP

Neel Mukherjee – The lives of others

Shortlisted for the Man Booker and Costa prizes.

Calcutta, 1967. Unnoticed by his family, Supratik has become dangerously involved in extremist political activism. Compelled by an idealistic desire to change his life and the world around him, all he leaves behind before disappearing is a note. At home, his family slowly begins to unravel.

Haruki Murakami - Norwegian Wood

Japan's bestselling author rose to fame with this tale of teenage love and madness in 1960's Tokyo. A spare style, wistful mood and perfect ear for dialogue are Murakami hallmarks.

Patrick Ness – A monster calls

Conor has the same dream every night, ever since his mother first fell ill, ever since she started the treatments that don't quite seem to be working. But tonight, is different. Tonight, when he wakes, there's a visitor at his window. It's ancient, elemental, a force of nature. And it wants the most dangerous thing of all from Conor. It wants the truth.

YP & S**David Nicholls – One Day**

On 15th July 1988 Emma and Dexter meet for the first time on the night of their graduation. Tomorrow they must go their separate ways. This story catches up with them on the same date over a twenty-year period. Will they remain friends?

LP

Maggie O'Farrell - The hand that first held mine

A gorgeously written story of love and motherhood at the heart of the 1950s Soho art scene and in the present day. An extraordinary portrait of two women is revealed, separated by fifty years, but connected in ways that neither could ever have expected.

LP

Catherine O'Flynn – The news where you are

Set in Birmingham, this is the funny, touching story of Frank, a local TV news presenter haunted by disappearances. A page-turning novel which asks the big questions in an accessible way, and is laugh-out-loud funny, genuinely moving and ultimately uplifting.

LP

Tea Obreht – The tiger's wife

An Orange Prize winning debut novel. A tiger escapes from the local zoo in the Balkan village of Galina. His nocturnal visits hold the villagers in a terrified thrall. But for one boy, the tiger is a thing of magic.

R J Palacio – Wonder

Auggie wants to be an ordinary ten-year-old. He does ordinary things - eating ice cream, playing on his Xbox. He feels ordinary - inside. But ordinary kids don't make other ordinary kids run away screaming in playgrounds. Ordinary kids aren't stared at wherever they go. Born with a terrible facial abnormality, Auggie has been home-schooled by his parents his whole life. Now, for the first time, he's being sent to a real school - and he's dreading it.

YP

S.J. Parris – Prophecy

Cityread 2017 title. A Tudor thriller featuring Giordano Bruno, renegade monk, philosopher and heretic. Autumn, 1583. The skies above England harbour dark omens. An astrological phenomenon heralds the dawn of a new age and a young maid of honour is murdered; occult symbols carved into her flesh.

Jodi Picoult - My sister's keeper

This story covers the issue of genetically engineered children who are born to save their siblings lives. Anna fights for the rights to her own body, whilst sister Kate suffers from cancer.

LP

Jodi Picoult – Small Great Things

When a newborn baby dies after a routine hospital procedure, there is no doubt about who will be held responsible: the nurse who had been banned from looking after him by his father. What the nurse, her lawyer and the father of the child cannot know is how this death will irrevocably change all their lives, in ways both expected and not.

Available in BB and format

Chaim Potok – The chosen Set in 1940s New York, this is the story of the lives of two Jewish boys and their friendship despite their religious differences. Danny is from an orthodox background, whilst Reuven's father is keen, he is grounded in the twenty-first century.

Barbara Pym – Excellent Women

This is an endearing and amusing minor classic, set amongst contemporary hard-up English gentlefolk who try to keep up appearances. Beautifully written, this will particularly appeal to fans of Jane Austen.

LP

Charlotte Rogan – The lifeboat

When an ocean liner sinks, just years after the loss of Titanic, the survivors take to the lifeboats. But they soon must face up to the reality that rescue may not be coming. A gripping, multi-layered debut novel.

J.K. Rowling - The Casual Vacancy

Pagford is a cobbled English town, but behind the idyllic façade the townspeople are at war. When Parish Councillor Barry Fairbrother dies, the fight for his empty seat becomes a catalyst for conflict.

Sunjeev Sahota – The year of the runaways

Tells of the bold dreams and daily struggles of an unlikely family thrown together by circumstance. Thirteen young men live in a house in Sheffield, each in flight from India and in desperate search of a new life. Tarlochan, a former rickshaw driver, will say nothing about his past in Bihar; and Avtar has a secret that binds him to protect the chaotic Randeep. Randeep, in turn, has a visa-wife in a flat on the other side of town: a clever, devout woman whose cupboards are full of her husband's clothes, in case the immigration men surprise her with a call.

Sathnam Sanghera – Boy with the Topknot

A Memoir of Love Secrets and Lies in Wolverhampton is a hilarious and heart-rending reinvention of the modern British memoir. For Sathnam Sanghera, growing up in Wolverhampton in the eighties was a confusing business. On the one hand, these were the heady days of George Michael mixtapes, Dallas on TV and, if he was lucky, the occasional Bounty Bar. On the other, there was his wardrobe of tartan smocks, his 30p-an-hour job at the local sewing factory and the ongoing challenge of how to tie the perfect topknot.

Available in L format**Maria Semple - Where'd You Go Bernadette?**

Bernadette is a mother, wife, famous architect and considered a menace by local school mums, but why has she disappeared, and where has she gone? It is up to daughter Bee to discover the truth through a series of journal entries, emails and letters written between various characters in Bernadette's life.

Lynn Shepherd – Tom-All-Alone's

The story of Tom-All-Alone's takes place in the 'space between' two masterpieces of mid-Victorian fiction: Bleak House and The Woman in White - overlapping with them and re-imagining them for a contemporary reader. The novel explores a dark underside of Victorian life that Dickens and Collins hinted at - a world in which young women are sexually abused, unwanted babies summarily disposed of, and those that discover the grim secrets of great men brutally eliminated.

Sara Sheridan – The secret of the sands

1833 – The British Navy are conducting a survey of the Arabian Peninsula where slavery is as rife as ever despite being abolition. Zena, a headstrong and determined young Abyssinian beauty has been torn from her remote village, subjected to a tortuous journey and is now being offered for sale in the market of Muscat. Zena finds herself the property of Lieutenant James Wellstead, now on a daring rescue mission into forbidding territory.

LP

Martin Sixsmith – Philomena

The true story of Philomena Lee. When she fell pregnant as a teenager in Ireland in 1952, Philomena was sent to the convent at Roscrea in Co. Tipperary to be looked after as a fallen woman. She cared for her baby for three years until the Church took him from her and sold him, like countless others, to America for adoption. Coerced into signing a document promising never to attempt to see her child again, she nonetheless spent the next fifty years secretly searching for him, unaware that he was searching for her from across the Atlantic.

NF

Tom Rob Smith – Child 44

Stalin's Soviet Union is an official paradise, where citizens live free from crime and fear only one thing: the all-powerful state. Defending this system is idealistic security officer Leo Demidov, a war hero who believes in the iron fist of the law, but when a murderer starts to kill at will and Leo dares to investigate, the State's obedient servant finds himself demoted and exiled.

Natasha Solomons - Mr Rosenblum's List

Jack and Sadie Rosenblum move to England from Germany in the 1930s. Jack is keen to blend in with the locals and devises a list of rules on how to behave, however Sadie is missing home and the loved ones left behind.

Elizabeth Speller - The return of Captain John Emmett

It's 1920 and Laurence Bartram is trying to establish what caused his old school friend to commit suicide following the end of World War 1, but Laurence also has his own personal traumas to deal with along the way.

LP

M L Stedman – The light between oceans

A boat washes up on the shore of a remote lighthouse keeper's island. It holds a dead man - and a crying baby. The only two islanders, Tom, and his wife Izzy, are about to make a devastating decision. They break the rules and follow their hearts.

Mari Strachan – The earth hums in B flat

A warm but unsentimental story, set in a small Welsh town in the 1950's. The quirky teenage heroine investigates a mystery and uncovers secrets which she does not altogether understand. Moving and funny.

LP

Cheryl Strayed – Wild

At twenty-six, Cheryl Strayed thought she had lost everything. In the wake of her mother's rapid death from cancer, her family disbanded, and her marriage crumbled. With nothing to lose, she made the most impulsive decision of her life: to walk eleven-hundred miles of the west coast of America - from the Mojave Desert, through California and Oregon, and into Washington state - and to do it alone.

NF

John Steinbeck – Of mice and men

George thinks of himself as an intelligent man and is searching for work in the fields of California with his friend, gentle giant Lenny. However, Lenny doesn't know his own strength and gets into trouble along the way. A Classic American novel.

Kathryn Stockett - The help

Set in Jackson, Mississippi in 1962, this book tells the story of a group of black maids and the white families they work for. A fascinating study of race relations in the USA during this period, particularly as members of the two groups attempt to work together.

LP

Donna Tartt – The goldfinch

Aged thirteen, Theo Decker, son of a devoted mother and a reckless, largely absent father, survives an accident that otherwise tears his life apart. Alone and rudderless in New York, he is taken in by the family of a wealthy friend. He is tormented by an unbearable longing for his mother, and down the years clings to the thing that most reminds him of her: a small, strangely captivating painting that ultimately draws him into the criminal underworld.

Roma Tearne – Brixton Beach

Alice moves with her parents to England to escape the turmoil of the conflict in Sri Lanka. A story of conflict and assimilation written in a vivid and evocative style.

Colm Toibin – Brooklyn

Eilis Lacey moves from Ireland to 1950s New York, but just as she establishes herself events draw her home and the gap between her two lives is revealed. Evocative and beautifully crafted portrait of a young woman.

LP

Anne Tyler – A spool of blue thread

Shortlisted for the Man Booker and Baileys prizes, and a Richard & Judy pick. "It was a beautiful, breezy, yellow-and-green afternoon." This is how Abby Whitshank always begins the story of how she fell in love with Red that day in July 1959. The Whitshanks are one of those families that radiate togetherness: an indefinable, enviable kind of specialness. But they are also like all families, in that the stories they tell themselves reveal only part of the picture.

Alice Walker – The Color Purple

A wonderfully moving modern classic, told in the voice of a poor black woman born in 1909 in the American South. She suffers terribly but has enough spirit to resist her oppression and is transformed by love.

Katie Ward – Girl reading

Seven artists, seven portraits, seven eras, seven women reading, yet one unusual debut novel. Spans from the medieval period to the modern day.

S J Watson – Before I go to sleep

A vivid psychological thriller in which Christine loses her memory each time she goes to sleep and struggles to make sense of her life and relationships. A widely praised and accomplished debut novel.

Sarah Ward – In bitter chill

Rachel Jones has tried to put the past behind her and move on with her life. But news of the suicide re-opens old wounds and Rachel realises that the only way she can have a future is to finally discover what really happened all those years ago. This is a story about loss and family secrets, and how often the very darkest secrets are those that are closest to you.

Winifred Watson – Miss Pettigrew lives for a day

Conservative governess Miss Pettigrew is accidentally sent to the house of flamboyant night club singer Delysia La Fosse by her employers. This book, written in 1937, depicts their twenty-four hours spent together, and the ways in which they learn from one another.

Evelyn Waugh – Vile Bodies

Vile Bodies reveals the darkness and vulnerability that lurks beneath the glittering surface of the high life. In the years following the First World War a new generation emerges, wistful and vulnerable beneath the glitter. The Bright Young Things of twenties' Mayfair, with their paradoxical mix of innocence and sophistication, exercise their inventive minds and vile bodies in every kind of capricious escapade - whether promiscuity, dancing, cocktail parties, or sports cars. In a quest for treasure, a favourite party occupation, a vivid assortment of characters, among them the struggling writer Adam Fenwick-Symes and the glamorous, aristocratic Nina Blount, hunt fast and furiously for ever greater sensations and the fulfilment of unconscious desires.

Available in L format

Scott Westerfeld – Uglies

Tally lives in a world where your sixteenth birthday brings aesthetic perfection: an operation which erases all your flaws, transforming you from an 'Ugly' into a 'Pretty'. She is on the eve of this important event and cannot wait for her life to change. But then she meets Shay, who is also fifteen - but with a very different outlook on life. Shay isn't sure she wants to be Pretty and plans to escape to a community in the forest - the Rusty Ruins - where Uglies go to escape 'turning'.

YP

Edith Wharton - The house of mirth

A modern classic. Lily Bart is impoverished and attempting to find a rich husband to establish herself within the social elite. A study of changing morality and social structure at the turn of the century.

LP

Colson Whitehead – The Underground Railway

Cora is a slave on a cotton plantation in Georgia. All the slaves lead a hellish existence, but Cora has it worse than most; she is an outcast even among her fellow Africans and she is approaching womanhood, where it is clear even greater pain awaits. When Caesar, a slave recently arrived from Virginia, tells her about the Underground Railroad, they take the perilous decision to escape to the North.

John Williams – Stoner

William Stoner enters the University of Missouri at nineteen to study agriculture. A seminar on English literature changes his life, and he never returns to work on his father's farm. Stoner becomes a teacher. He marries the wrong woman. His life is quiet, and after his death his colleagues remember him rarely. Stoner tells of the conflicts, defeats and victories of the human race that pass unrecorded by history and reclaims the significance of an individual life.

P G Wodehouse – Leave it to Psmith

A typical Wodehouse romance, quite daft but blissfully hilarious and cleverly written, played out against the background of Blandings Castle, home of the dotty and pig-obsessed Lord Emsworth. A book to cheer anyone up.

John Wyndham – The Chrysalids

David Storm's father doesn't approve of Angus Morton's unusually large horses, calling them blasphemies against nature. Little does he realise that his own son, and his son's cousin Rosalind and their friends, have their own secret aberration which would label them as mutants. This is a post-nuclear apocalypse story of genetic mutation in a devastated world and explores the lengths the intolerant will go to keep themselves pure.

Louisa Young – My dear I wanted to tell you

Moving between Ypres, London, and Paris. My Dear I Wanted to Tell You I is a deeply affecting, moving and brilliant novel of love and war, and how they affect those left behind as well as those who fight.

Hanya Yanagihara – A little life

Shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize 2015 and Bailey's Prize for Women's Fiction 2016. When four graduates from a small Massachusetts college move to New York to make their way, they're broke, adrift, and buoyed only by their friendship and ambition. There is kind, handsome Willem, an aspiring actor; JB, a quick-witted, sometimes cruel Brooklyn-born painter seeking entry to the art world; Malcolm, a frustrated architect at a prominent firm; and withdrawn, brilliant, enigmatic Jude, who serves as their centre of gravity.

Marcus Zusak – The book thief

The bestselling literary debut novel of 2007 narrated by Death and set against the dark days of the Third Reich.

YP & LP

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