

Moving on 2

1 = most accessible 5 = most challenging

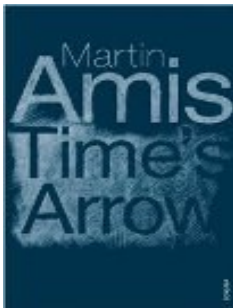


ACKROYD, Peter

Hawksmoor

4

Alternating between the eighteenth century, when Nicholas Dyer, assistant to Christopher Wren, builds seven London churches that house a terrible secret, and the 1980s, when London detective Nicholas Hawksmoor is investigating a series of gruesome murders on the sight of certain old churches, Hawksmoor is a brilliant tale of darkness and shadow.

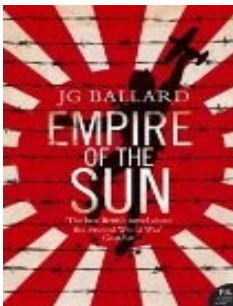


AMIS, Martin

Time's Arrow

3

In this novel a man's life is portrayed backwards, from death to birth, as are some of the scenes - for example, sex begins with climax, moves through foreplay and exhausts itself on flirtation. The plot is about a doctor whose story begins with his death.

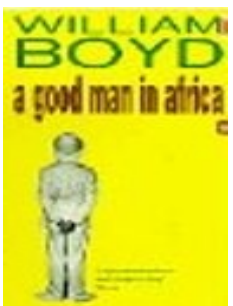


Ballard, J G

Empire of the Sun

2

The heartrending story of a British boy's four year ordeal in a Japanese prison camp during the Second World War. Based on J. G. Ballard's own childhood, this is the extraordinary account of a boy's life in Japanese-occupied wartime Shanghai -- a mesmerising, hypnotically compelling novel of war, of starvation and survival, of internment camps and death marches.

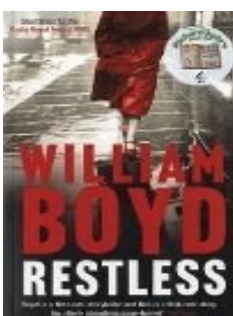


BOYD, William

A Good Man in Africa

2

Escapee from suburbia, overweight and oversexed; Morgan Leafy isn't overburdened with worldly success. Actually, he is refreshingly free from it. But then, as a representative of Her Britannic Majesty in tropical Kinjanja, it was not very constructive of him to get involved in wholesale bribery. Nor was it exactly oiling his way up the ladder to hunt down his boss's daughter when officially banned from horizontal delights by a nasty dose ... Falling back on his deep-laid reserves of misanthropy and guile, Morgan has to fight off the sea of humiliation, betrayal and ju-ju that threatens to wash over him.

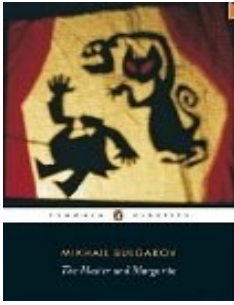


BOYD, William

Restless

2

Restless is a spy thriller, with two strong and interesting central characters, fast paced, well plotted, and with a couple of good, original twists. The story is told in alternating first and third person chapters; the first person narrator being Ruth, a single mother in 1970s Britain; the third person narrative telling the story of Eva, a young woman recruited into the murky world of British spying/propaganda in Europe and America during WWII. The lives of the two overlap in modern times as Eva turns out to be Ruth's mother - now living an apparently ordinary life as an English widow - and has decided the time has come to settle some old scores.

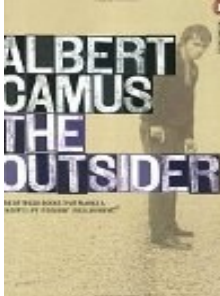


BULGAKOV, Mikhail

The Master and Margarita

3

The devil, disguised as a magician, descends upon Moscow in the 1930s with his riotous band and together they succeed in comically befuddling a population which denies the devil's existence.

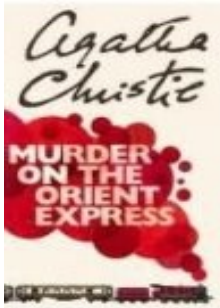


CAMUS, Albert

The Outsider

3

Meursault leads an apparently unremarkable bachelor life in Algiers until he commits a random act of violence. His lack of emotion and failure to show remorse only serve to increase his guilt in the eyes of the law, and challenges the fundamental values of society – a set of rules so binding that any person breaking them is condemned as an outsider. For Meursault, this is an insult to his reason and a betrayal of his hopes; for Camus it encapsulates the absurdity of life.

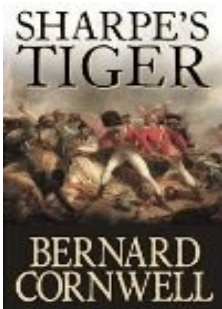


CHRISTIE, Agatha

Murder on the Orient Express

1

Just after midnight, a snowdrift stops the Orient Express in its tracks. The luxurious train is surprisingly full for the time of the year, but by the morning it is one passenger fewer. An American tycoon lies dead in his compartment, stabbed a dozen times, his door locked from the inside. Isolated and with a killer in their midst, detective Hercule Poirot must identify the murderer -- in case he or she decides to strike again.

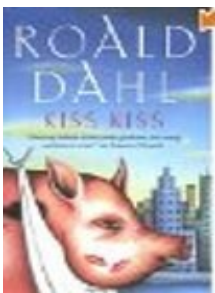


CORNWELL, Bernard

Sharpe's Tiger

1

The prequel to the series, describing Sharpe's experiences in India. Throughout the series, there are references to Sharpe's early soldiering life in India. This book relates the 1799 campaign against Seringapatam which made the British masters of southern India, a campaign that pitted brutalized soldiers against an ancient and splendid civilization. Sharpe, the rest of his battalion and rising star of the general staff Arthur Wellesley, are about to embark upon the siege of the island citadel of the Tippoo of Mysore, Seringapatam.



DAHL, Roald

Kiss Kiss

3

The stories are: The landlady, William and Mary, The Way up to Heaven, Parson's Pleasures, Mrs Bixby and the Colonel's Coat, Royal Jelly, Gregory Progy, Genesis and Catastrophe, Edwards the Conqueror, Pig, The Champion of the World.

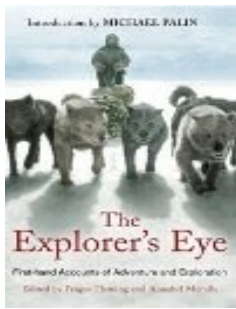


FALLADA, Hans

Alone in Berlin

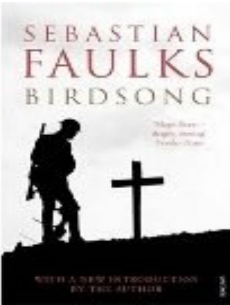
4

Berlin, 1940: the city is filled with fear— the occupants try to live under Nazi rule in their different ways: the bullying Hitler loyalists (Persickes), the retired judge Fromm and the unassuming couple Otto and Anna Quangel. Then the Quangels receive news that their beloved son has been killed fighting in France. Shocked out of their quiet existence, they begin a silent campaign of defiance, and a deadly game of cat and mouse develops between the Quangels and the Gestapo inspector Escherich. When petty criminals Kluge and Borkhausen also become involved, deception, betrayal and murder ensue, tightening the noose around the Quangels' necks.



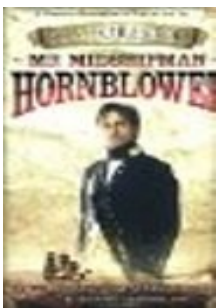
FLEMING, Fergus The Explorer's Eye 1

In the 18th century, exploration entered a new dimension - explorers were motivated by scientific inquiry rather than greed. They were expected to make a full record of everything they encountered; and for the first time in history, to include pictures as well as words. Combining gripping first-hand accounts with original images, THE EXPLORER'S EYE gives an insight into who these people were and what they saw. They were a mixed bunch but, whatever their training or background, they provided a vivid portrait of the unknown. In the early days they drew their own pictures, later they were equipped with draughtsmen, later still they carried cameras, and ultimately they were accompanied by film crews.



FAULKS, Sebastian Birdsong 3

The book's hero, a 20-year-old Englishman named Stephen Wraysford, finds his true love on a trip to Amiens in 1910. Unfortunately, she's already married, the wife of a wealthy textile baron. Wraysford convinces her to leave a life of passionless comfort to be at his side, but things do not turn out according to plan. Wraysford is haunted by this doomed affair and carries it with him into the trenches of the war. Birdsong derives most of its power from its descriptions of mud and blood, and Wraysford's attempt to retain a scrap of humanity while surrounded by it.



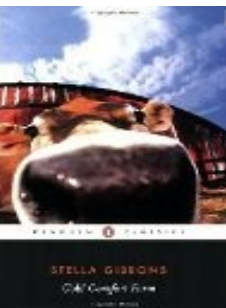
FORESTER, C S Mr Midshipman Hornblower 1

1793, the eve of the Napoleonic Wars, and Midshipman Horatio Hornblower receives his first command ship. As a seventeen-year-old with a touch of sea sickness, young Horatio Hornblower hardly cuts a dash in His Majesty's navy. Yet from the moment he is ordered to board a French merchant ship in the Bay of Biscay and take command of crew and cargo, he proves his seafaring mettle on the waves. With a character-forming duel, several chases and some strange tavern encounters, the young Hornblower is soon forged into a formidable man of the sea.



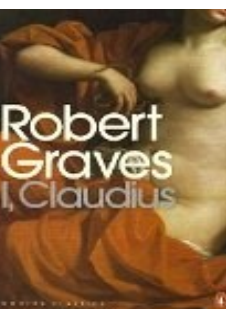
FRASER, George MacDonald Flashman 2

The first instalment of the Flashman Papers sees the fag-roasting rotter from Tom Brown's Schooldays commence his military career as a reluctant secret agent in Afghanistan. Expelled from Rugby for drunkenness, and none too welcome at home, the young Flashman embarks on a military career with Lord Cardigan's Hussars. En route to Afghanistan, our hero hones his skills as a soldier, duellist, imposter, coward and amorist, before being pressed into reluctant service as a secret agent. His Afghan adventures culminate in a starring role in that great historic disaster, the Retreat from Kabul.



GIBBONS, Stella Cold Comfort Farm 2

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



GRAVES, Robert I, Claudius 3

Despised for his weakness and regarded by his family as little more than a stammering fool, the nobleman Claudius quietly survives the intrigues, bloody purges and mounting cruelty of the imperial Roman dynasties. In I, Claudius he watches from the sidelines to record the reigns of its emperors: from the wise Augustus and his villainous wife Livia to the sadistic Tiberius and the insane excesses of Caligula. Written in the form of Claudius' autobiography, this is the first part of Robert Graves's brilliant account of the madness and debauchery of ancient Rome.



GREENE, Graham

Our Man in Havana

2

Wormold is a vacuum cleaner salesman in a city of power cuts. His adolescent daughter spends his money with a skill that amazes him so when a mysterious Englishman offers him an extra income he's tempted. In return all he has to do is file a few reports. But when his fake reports start coming true things suddenly get more complicated and Havana becomes a threatening place.

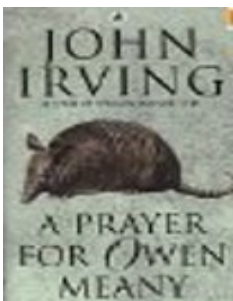


HINTON, S E

The Outsiders

1

Greasers, Rockers, different place, different name - but wherever they are, they're outsiders; the rough, long-haired boys from the other side of town, with little hope of Mustangs, madras shirts and the good things of American life in the Sixties. Their story is told by Ponyboy, a greaser with good reason to fear the lucky boys in Mustangs, and witnesses a savage baiting that leads his best friend to manslaughter. More than a story of hatred and violence, also a story of loyalty and friendship as teenagers of the urban slums search for personal dignity and a place in the world.



IRVING, John

A Prayer for Owen Meany

3

Owen Meany is a dwarfish boy with a strange voice who accidentally kills his best friend's mum with a baseball and believes that he is an instrument of God, to be redeemed by martyrdom. A New England prep-school-town setting - symbolic amputations of man and beast, the Garp-like unknown father of the narrator (Owen's best friend), the rough comedy. The scene of Dr Dolder, Owen's shrink, drunkenly driving his VW down the school's marble steps is a marvellous set piece. So are the Christmas pageants Owen stars in. When Owen plays baby Jesus in the pageants, and glimpses a tombstone with his death date while enacting *A Christmas Carol*, the slapstick doesn't change the fact that he was born to be martyred.

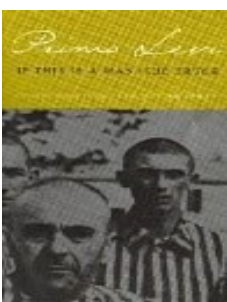


LE CARRE, John

The Spy who came in from the cold

2

It is 1962: the height of the Cold War and only months after the building of the Berlin Wall. Alec Leamas is a hard-working, hard-drinking British intelligence officer whose East Berlin network is in tatters. His agents are either on the run or dead, victims of the ruthlessly efficient East German counter-intelligence officer Hans-Dieter Mundt. Leamas is recalled to London - where, to his surprise, instead of being washed up and consigned to a desk he's offered a chance to have his revenge by becoming a pawn in a brilliantly-conceived plot to destroy Mundt. But in order to do so he has to stay out in the cold a little longer...

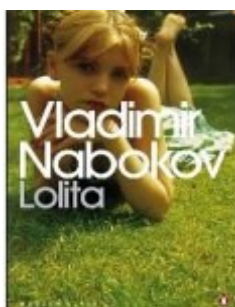


LEVI, Primo

If This is a Man

3

This book is the most profoundly affecting of all those written by survivors of the Holocaust. Sober and passionate, it depicts an experience of the ultimate nightmare related by a man both sensitive and resilient, who speaks for all those made dumb forever.

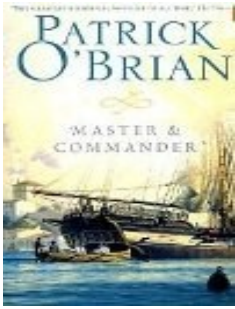


NABOKOV, Vladimir

Lolita

3

Humbert is a European intellectual adrift in America, haunted by memories of a lost adolescent love. When he meets his ideal nymphet in the shape of 12-year-old Dolores Haze, he constructs an elaborate plot to seduce her, but first he must get rid of her mother. In spite of his diabolical wit, reality proves to be more slippery than Humbert's feverish fantasies and Lolita refuses to conform to his image of the perfect lover.

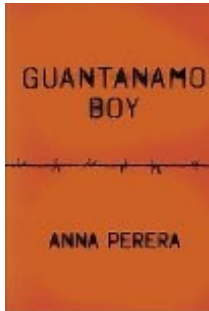


O'BRIAN, Patrick

Master and Commander

2

The opening salvo of the Aubrey-Maturin epic, in which the surgeon introduces himself to the captain by driving an elbow into his ribs during a chamber music recital. Fortunately for millions of readers, the two quickly make up. Then they commence one of the great literary voyages of our century, set against an immaculately detailed backdrop of the Napoleonic wars.

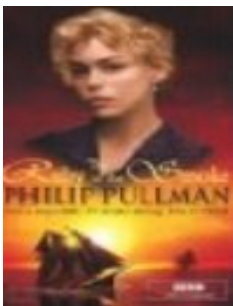


PERERA, Anna

Guantanamo Boy

2

Khalid, a fifteen-year-old Muslim boy from Rochdale, is abducted from Pakistan while on holiday with his family. He is taken to Guantanamo Bay and held without charge, where his hopes and dreams are crushed under the cruellest of circumstances. An innocent denied his freedom at a time when Western boys are finding theirs, Khalid tries and fails to understand what's happening to him and cannot fail to be a changed young man.

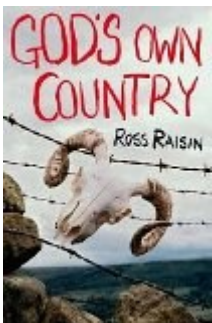


PULLMAN, Philip

The Ruby in the Smoke

1

Soon after Sally Lockhart's father drowns at sea, she receives a strange anonymous letter. The dire warning it contains makes a man die of fear at her feet. Determined to discover the truth about her father's death, Sally is plunged into a terrifying mystery in the dark heart of Victorian London, at the centre of which lies a deadly blood-soaked jewel.

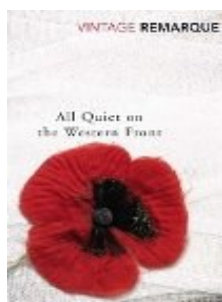


RAISIN, Ross

God's Own Country

2

This is the story of a solitary young farmer, Sam Marsdyke, and his extraordinary battle with the world. Expelled from school and cut off from the town, mistrusted by his parents and avoided by city incomers, Marsdyke is a loner until he meets rebellious new neighbour Josephine. But what begins as a friendship and leads to thoughts of escape across the moors turns to something much, much darker with every step.



REMARQUE, Erich Maria

All Quiet on the Western Front

1

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 the moving story of a young 'unknown soldier' experiencing the horror and disillusionment of life in the trenches.

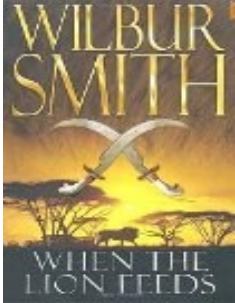


SMITH, Tim Robb

Child 44

3

Child 44 is a thriller set in the terror of 1950s Stalinist Russia, a brutal regime that executed anyone who disagreed with its dogma. It proclaimed to be a perfect society. So, when a series of brutal murders take place, no one is permitted to say that these are the work of a serial killer. In a perfect society there can be no crime. One man, Leo Demidov, who has spent his entire career arresting innocent men and women, decides to redeem himself by catching this killer. To do so, he must buck the system, risking his life and the life of everyone he loves.

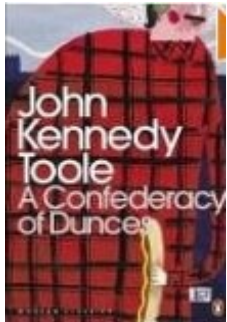


SMITH, Wilbur

When the Lion Feeds

1

It is the 1870s and twin brothers Sean and Garrick Courtney are born into the wilds of Natal. They could not be more different, and fate, war and the jealous schemes of a woman are to drive them even further apart. But as history unfolds, a continent is awakening. And on the horizon is the promise of fortune, adventure, destiny and love . . .



TOOLE, John Kennedy

Confederacy of Dunces

3

The ordinary folk of New Orleans seem to think he is unhinged as well. Ignatius ignores them as he heaves his vast bulk through the city's fleshpots in a noble crusade against vice, modernity and ignorance. But his momma has a nasty surprise in store for him. Ignatius must get a job. Undaunted, he uses his new-found employment to further his mission and now he has a pirate costume and a hot-dog cart to do it.