



CAMDEN COUNCIL LIBRARY SERVICE

BOOK CLUB KITS

BOOK PLOT SUMMARIES

Use this list to pick your Book Club's next book. Descriptions provided below.

Australian Fiction

Wake in Fright by Kenneth Cook*

They're a Weird Mob by Nino Culotta*

Sons of the Rumour by David Foster

Jasper Jones by Craig Silvey

The Slap by Christos Tsiolkas*

Voss by Patrick White

Cloud Street by Tim Winton*

Carpentaria by Alexis Wright

The Book Thief by Mark Zusak*

Fiction

Zero Day by David Baldacci

The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas by John Boyne*

The Hunger Games by Suzanne Collins*

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To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee*

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Life of Pi by Yann Martel*

A Conspiracy of Friends by Alexander McCall Smith

Blood Meridian by Cormac McCarthy

The Guns of Navarone by Alistair Maclean

HMS Ulysses by Alistair Maclean

Watchmen by Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons*

Night Circus by Erin Morgenstern

Serena by Ron Nash

The Storyteller by Jodi Picoult

Vanity Fair by William Makepeace-Thackeray

Biography and Non-Fiction

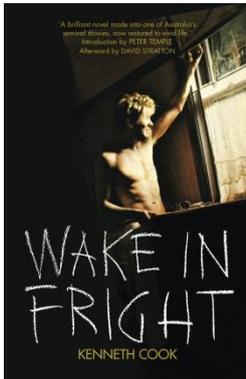
In Cold Blood by Truman Capote

Alan Turning: The Enigma by Andrew Hodges

Twelve Years a Slave by Solomon Northup*

*Kits contain a copy of the film adaptation.

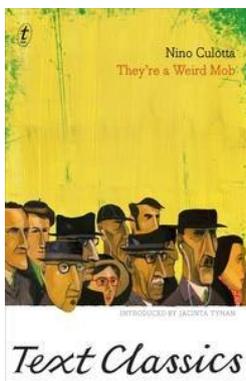
Australian Fiction



Wake in Fright by Kenneth Cook

"A true dark classic of Australian Literature." -J.M. Coetzee

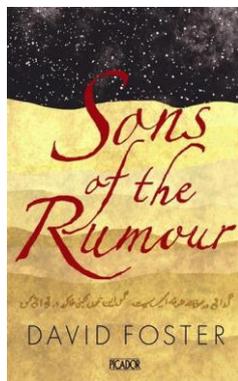
Recently graduated from university with a large debt, John Grant takes a job at tiny school in Tiboonda, a town deep in the arid Australian Outback. Disgruntled by having to work in this 'prison' Grant looks forward to visiting his girlfriend in Sydney during the Christmas school holidays. Along his journey Grant finds himself in Bundanyabba where he begins his journey into an alcoholic, sexual and spiritual nightmare. It is the original and the greatest outback horror story. Bundanyabba and its citizens will forever haunt its readers.



They're a Weird Mob by Nina Culotta

Just off the boat from Italy—the north—Nino Culotta arrives in Sydney. He thought he spoke English but he's never heard anything like the language these Australians are speaking.

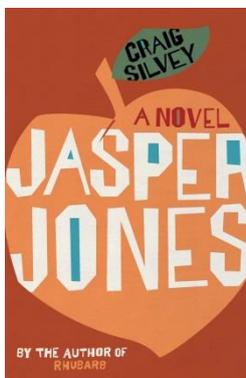
They're a Weird Mob is an hilarious snapshot of the immigrant experience in Menzies-era Australia, by a writer with a brilliant ear for the Australian way with words.



Sons of the Rumour by David Foster

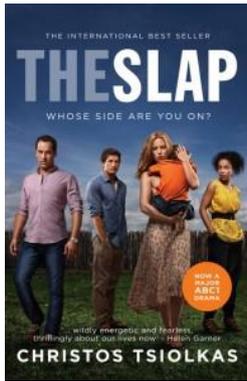
Foster retells the tale of the legendary eighth-century King Shahrban of Persia who, furious at his wife's infidelity, has decided to marry and then behead a fresh virgin every day. But the beautiful Scheherazade manages to entertain him for 1001 nights, staving off death for both herself and her countrywomen.

Intersecting this historical tale is the story of Al Morrissey, a middle-aged, Anglo-Irish everyman, on the run from a failed marriage.



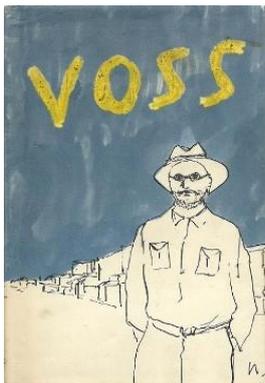
Jasper Jones by Craig Silvey

Late on a hot summer night in 1965, Charlie Bucktin, a bookish boy of thirteen, is startled by an urgent knock on the window of his sleep-out. His visitor is Jasper Jones, an outcast in the regional mining town of Corrigan. When Jasper begs for his help, Charlie eagerly steals into the night by his side, terribly afraid but desperate to impress. Jasper takes him to his secret glade in the bush, and it's here that Charlie bears witness to Jasper's horrible discovery.



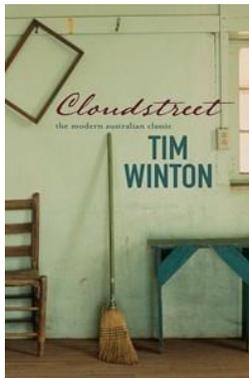
The Slap by Christos Tsiolkas

To smack or not to smack is the question that reverberates through the interconnected lives dissected in Christos Tsiolkas' 2009 Commonwealth Writers' Prize winning novel. At a suburban barbecue, a man slaps a child who is not his own. It is a single act, but the slap reverberates through the lives of everyone who witnesses it. Told through the eyes of eight of those present at the barbecue, this acclaimed bestseller is an unflinching interrogation of the life of the modern family. Poignant and provocative, THE SLAP makes us question the nature of commitment and happiness, compromise and truth. Whose side are you on?



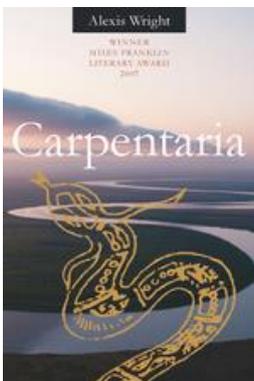
Voss by Patrick White

The novel that put Australian literature on the map. Set in nineteenth-century Australia, Voss is the story of the secret passion between an explorer and a naïve young woman. Although they have met only a few times, Voss and Laura are joined by overwhelming, obsessive feelings for each other. Voss sets out to cross the continent. As hardships, mutiny and betrayal whittle away his power to endure and to lead, his attachment to Laura gradually increases. Laura, waiting in Sydney, moves through the months of separation as if they were a dream and Voss the only reality. From the careful delineation of Victorian society to the sensitive rendering of hidden love to the stark narrative of adventure in the Australian desert, Patrick White's novel is a work of extraordinary power and virtuosity.



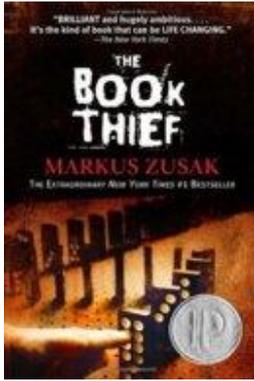
Cloudstreet by Tim Winton

Winner of the Miles Franklin in 1992, *Cloudstreet* chronicles the lives of two families who flee their rural livings to share a house in the Perth suburb of West Leederville. Though initially resistant to each other, their search and journey for meaning in life brings the families closer together.



Carpentaria by Alexis Wright

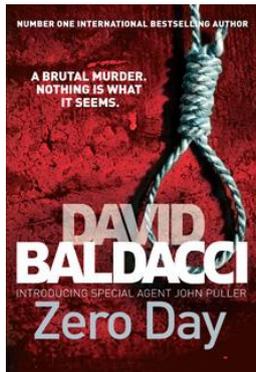
Winner of the 2007 Miles Franklin Literary Award. *Carpentaria* is a soaring epic set in the Gulf country of north-western Queensland. *Carpentaria's* portrait of life in the precariously settled coastal town of Desperance centres on the powerful Phantom family, whose members are the leaders of the Pricklebush people, and their battles with old Joseph Midnight's tearaway Eastend mob on the one hand, and the white officials of Uptown and the neighbouring Gurfurrit mine on the other.



The Book Thief by Markus Zusak

It is 1939, Nazi Germany. Liesel Meminger, scratches out a meagre existence by stealing books wherever there are books to be found. When Liesel's foster family hides a Jewish fist-fighter in their basement, Leisel's world is both opened up, and closed down.

Fiction



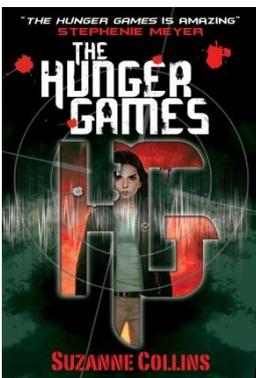
Zero Day by David Baldacci

When a family with military connections is brutally murdered in a remote area of West Virginia, war hero and CID investigator John Puller is called in, teaming up with local homicide detective Samantha Cole. As the body count rises, it quickly becomes apparent that there's much more to this case than they had first thought.



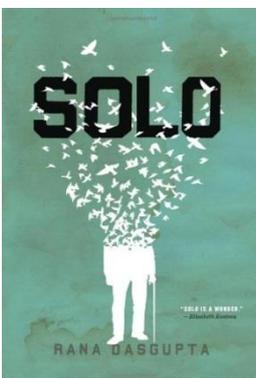
The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas by John Boyne

Nine-year-old Bruno has a lot of things on his mind. Who is the 'Fury'? Why did he make them leave their nice home in Berlin to go to 'Out-With'? And who are all the sad people in striped pyjamas on the other side of the fence? The grown-ups won't explain so Bruno decides there is only one thing for it - he will have to explore this place alone. What he discovers is a boy in striped pyjamas. But why can't they ever play together?



The Hunger Games by Suzanne Collins

Sixteen-year-old Katniss Everdeen regards it as a death sentence when she steps forward to take her sister's place in the annual Hunger Games, a fight to the death on live TV. If she is to win, she will have to start making choices that will weigh survival against humanity and life against love.



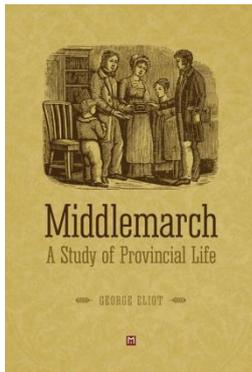
Solo by Rana Dasgupta

Ulrich, the son of a railroad engineer, has two great passions - the violin and chemistry. Denied the first by his father, he leaves for the Berlin of Einstein and Fritz Haber to study the latter. His studies are cut short when his father's fortune evaporates, and he must return to Sofia. He never leaves Bulgaria again – except in his daydreams. This novel won the Commonwealth Writers' Prize in 2010.



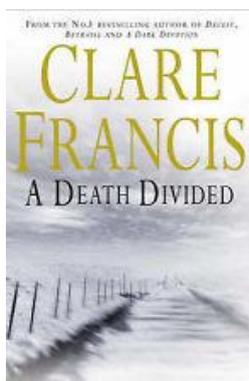
XPD by Len Deighton

In the late 1970s, a group of former SS officers aim to seize power in West Germany and plan to publish explosive wartime documents about a secret meeting between Winston Churchill and Adolf Hitler in June 1940. British intelligence agent Boyd Stuart races against the clock to prevent the documents becoming public.



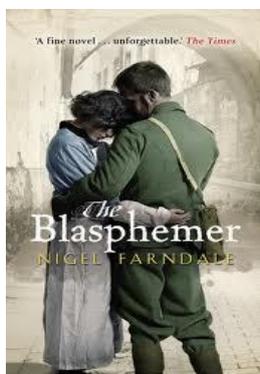
Four Novels by George Eliot

Adam Bede tells a story of seduction, and is also a pioneering record of a long lost rural world. *Middlemarch* is a complex tale of idealism, disillusion, loyalty and frustrated love. *The Mill on the Floss* is a masterpiece of ambiguity in which moral choice is subjected to the hypocrisy of the Victorian age. *Silas Marner* tells the tender and moving story of an unjustly exiled linen weaver in the agricultural heartland of England.



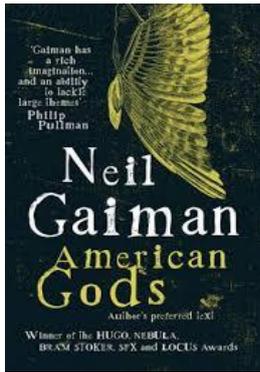
A Death Divided by Clare Francis

Joe, struggling to survive in a high-powered law firm, is faced with the challenge of finding his childhood friend Jenna, who has been missing for four years. But has she disappeared through choice? Or is she under the powerful influence of her husband, the restless troubled Chetwood? Helped by his prickly girlfriend Sarah, Joe manages to find the beautiful, faded Jenna, only to realise too late that he has set some terrible events in motion.



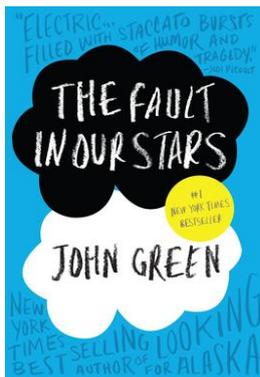
Blasphemer by Nigel Farndale

A light aircraft ditches into the sea. As the water floods through the cabin, Daniel Kennedy faces an impossible choice – should he save himself, or Nancy, the woman he loves? In a parallel narrative, it is 1917 and Daniel's great-grandfather Andrew is preparing to go over the top at Passchendaele. He, too, will have his courage tested, and must live with the moral consequences of his actions.



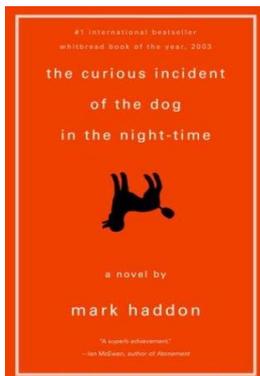
American Gods by Neil Gaiman

Days before his release from prison, Shadow's wife, Laura, dies in a mysterious car crash. On the plane home, he encounters the enigmatic Mr Wednesday, who claims to be a refugee from a distant war, a former god and the king of America. Together they embark on a profoundly strange journey across the heart of the USA, whilst all around them a storm of epic proportions threatens to break.



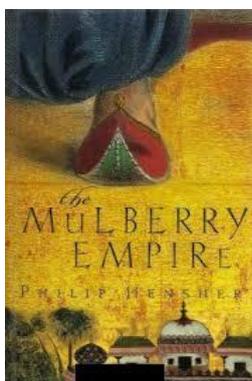
The Fault in Our Stars by John Green

Despite the tumour-shrinking medical miracle that has bought her a few years, Hazel has never been anything but terminal, her final chapter inscribed upon diagnosis. But when a gorgeous plot twist named Augustus Waters suddenly appears at Cancer Kid Support Group, Hazel's story is about to be completely rewritten.



The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time by Mark Haddon

Christopher knows all the countries of the world and their capitals and every prime number up to 7,057. He relates well to animals but has no understanding of human emotions. Although gifted with a superbly logical brain, Christopher is autistic. Christopher's carefully constructed world falls apart when he finds his neighbour's dog, Wellington, impaled on a garden fork, and he is initially blamed for the killing. Christopher decides that he will track down the real killer and turns to his favourite fictional character, Sherlock Holmes, for inspiration.



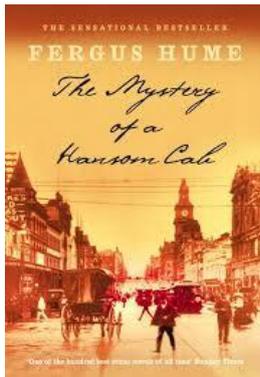
The Mulberry Empire by Philip Hensher

This epic historical novel relates England's tragic adventure in Afghanistan, which began with the triumphant arrival of the Army of the Indus in 1839 and ended three years later in rout and massacre. Alexander Burnes, a Scots explorer, travels to the kingdom of Afghanistan and first befriends and then reluctantly betrays its wise and impeccably courteous Amir.



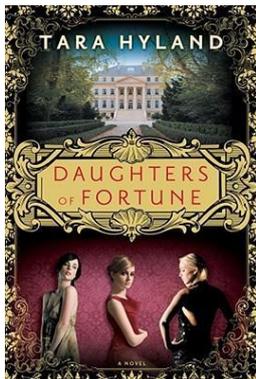
May We Be Forgiven by A.M. Homes

Harold Silver has spent a lifetime watching his younger brother, George, acquire a covetable wife, two kids, and a beautiful home. But when George loses control the result is an act of violence so shocking that both brothers are hurled into entirely new lives. Harry finds himself suddenly playing parent to his brother's two adolescent children. *May We Be Forgiven* is a tale of how one deeply fractured family might begin to put itself back together.



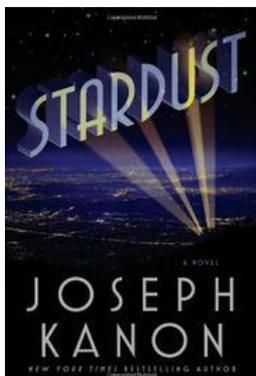
The Mystery of a Hansom Cab by Fergus Hume

First published in 1886 and set in Melbourne, *The Mystery of a Hansom Cab* follows Detective Gorby as he investigates a homicide where the deceased was discovered in the evening inside of a hansom cab, implicating the influential and secretive Frettlby family. Recently made into a TV series for the ABC.



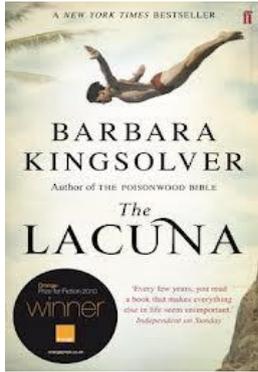
Daughters of Fortune by Tara Hyland

Fifteen year old Caitlin is forced to live with the father she has never met after her mother dies. Her half-sisters react to her with hostility. Unable to fit into this world, Caitlin is sent away to boarding school. It is here that something happens which is so awful it will change Caitlin forever. Over the next fifteen years the sisters' lives will take them in very different directions, their paths will continue to cross in ways that shatter and surprise them.



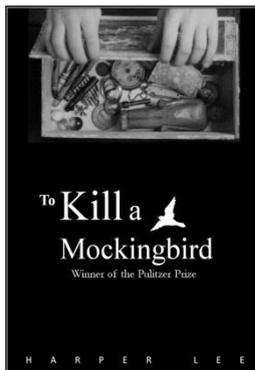
Stardust by Joseph Kanon

Hollywood, 1945. Ben Collier has just arrived from war torn Europe to find that his brother, Daniel, has died in mysterious circumstances. Why would a man with a beautiful wife, a successful career in the movies, and a heroic past choose to kill himself? Determined to uncover the truth, Ben enters the maze of the studio system and the uneasy world beneath the glossy shine of the movie business.



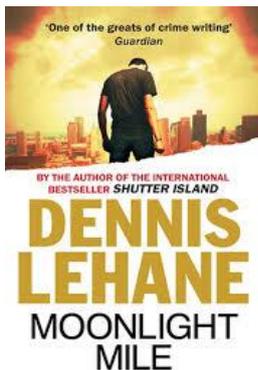
The Lacuna by Barbara Kingsolver

As a young man, Harrison Shepherd befriends the Mexican artists Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo. While living with and working for them, Shepherd becomes a novelist and also begins working as a secretary for Leon Trotsky, who has been exiled by Stalin. But later in life his youthful pursuits haunt him and, now living in the US, Shepherd is investigated by the House Un-American Activities Committee.



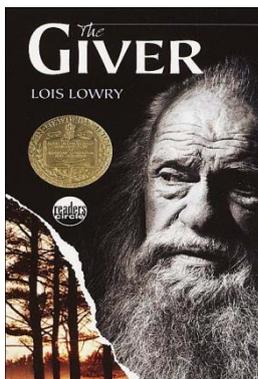
To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee

Scout, her brother Jem, and their lawyer father Atticus are plunged into a conflict that indelibly marks their lives—and gives Scout some basis for thinking she knows just about as much about the world as she needs to.



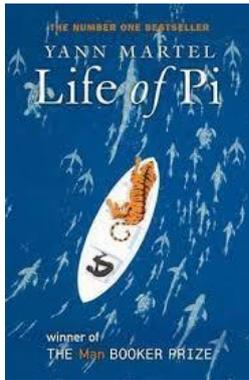
Moonlight Mile by Dennis Lehane

Amanda McCready was four years old when she first vanished from a Boston neighbourhood twelve years ago. Now Amanda is sixteen and gone again. In their desperate fight to confront the past and find Amanda again, investigators Kenzie and Gennaro face an evil that goes beyond broken families.



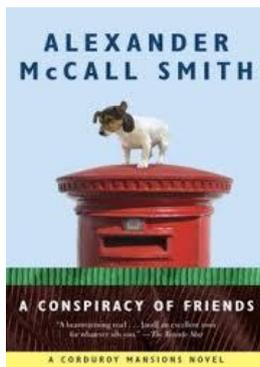
The Giver by Lois Lowry

In the “Community”, a perfectly ordered society in which pain and strife have been eliminated, children turning twelve are assigned the tasks they will perform in their adult lives. Jonas inherits the position of “Receiver of Memory” and becomes the repository of all past memories from the time before the current society, the period referred to “Sameness”, was established. His newly acquired knowledge confronts him the banal horror of the Sameness and he must make the choice of living a safe, if shallow, life in society or to run away and experience the love and danger of knowledge.



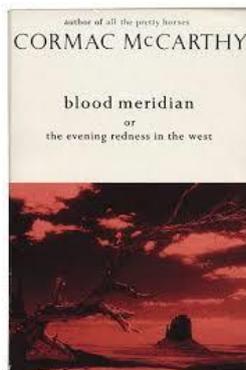
Life of Pi by Yann Martel

This fantasy adventure follows Piscine Molitor "Pi" Patel, a Tamil boy from Pondicherry, who survives 227 days after a shipwreck while stranded on a boat in the Pacific Ocean with a Bengal tiger named Richard Parker. Recently made into a film, this novel was winner of the 2002 Man Booker Prize for Fiction.



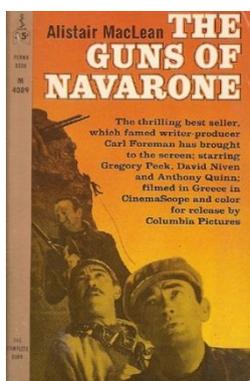
A Conspiracy of Friends by Alexander McCall Smith

The third novel in the *Corduroy Mansions* series features a cast of charming eccentrics, including perhaps the world's most clever terrier, make their home in a handsome, though slightly dilapidated, apartment block.



Blood Meridian by Cormac McCarthy

Before *No Country for Old Men* and *The Road* McCarthy created this Anti-Western based on historical events that took place on the Texas-Mexico border in the 1850s. It traces the fortunes of the Kid, a fourteen-year-old Tennessean who stumbles into a nightmarish world where Indians are being murdered and the market for their scalps is thriving. Following the increasingly depraved and violent acts of the gang we begin to see their demise until only the kid and the otherworldly Judge Holden remain to settle their differences. *Blood Meridian* is an epic novel of the violence and depravity that attended America's westward expansion, brilliantly subverting the conventions of the Western novel and the mythology of the Wild West.



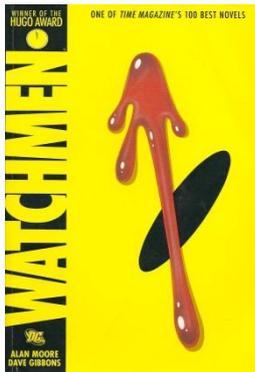
The Guns of Navarone by Alistair Maclean

New Zealand mountaineer-turned-commando Keith Mallory leads an Allied commando team as they seek to destroy a German fortress that threatens Allied naval ships in the Aegean Sea. At risk is the lives of over 2,000 British soldiers. The story is based on the real events surrounding the Battle of Leros in World War II.



HMS Ulysses by Alistair Maclean

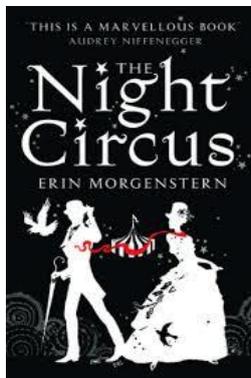
The story of men who rose to heroism, "H.M.S. Ulysses" takes its place alongside "The Caine Mutiny" and "The Cruel Sea" as one of the classic novels of the navy, its men and its ships, at war. It is vintage MacLean.



Watchmen by Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons

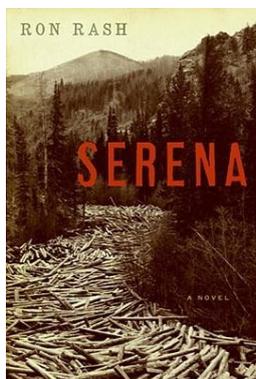
In an alternate world where the mere presence of American superheroes changed history, the US won the Vietnam War, Nixon is still president, and the cold war is in full effect. Watchmen begins as a murder-mystery, but soon unfolds into a planet-altering conspiracy. As the resolution comes to a head, the unlikely group of reunited heroes--Rorschach, Nite Owl, Silk Spectre, Dr. Manhattan and Ozymandias--have to test the limits of their convictions and ask themselves where the true line is between good and evil.

In the mid-eighties, Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons created Watchmen, changing the course of comics' history and essentially remaking how popular culture perceived the genre. Popularly cited as the point where comics came of age, WATCHMEN's sophisticated take on superheroes has been universally acclaimed for its psychological depth and realism.



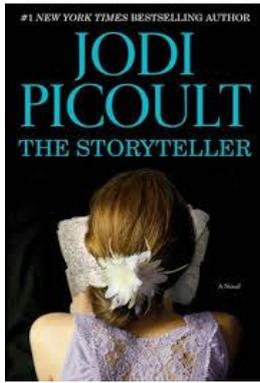
Night Circus by Erin Morgenstern

A duel between two young magicians, Celia and Marco, is a game in which only one can be left standing, and the circus is but the stage for a remarkable battle of imagination and will.



Serena by Ron Nash

The year is 1929, and newlyweds George and Serena Pemberton arrive from Boston in the North Carolina mountains to build a timber empire. Serena is new to the mountains-but she soon proves herself the equal of any worker, overseeing crews, hunting rattlesnakes, even saving her husband's life in the wilderness. She soon learns that she will never bear a child. Serena's discovery will set in motion a course of events that will change the lives of everyone in this remote and unforgiving landscape. As the Pembertons' intense, passionate marriage starts to unravel, this riveting story of love, passion and revenge moves towards its shocking reckoning.



The Storyteller by Jodi Picoult

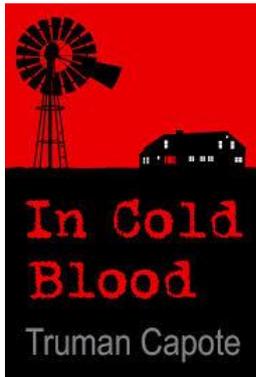
When Josef Weber, an elderly man in Sage Singer's grief support group, begins stopping by her bakery, they strike up an unlikely friendship. Everything changes on the day that Josef confesses a long-buried and shameful secret and asks Sage for an extraordinary favour.



Vanity Fair by William Makepeace-Thackeray

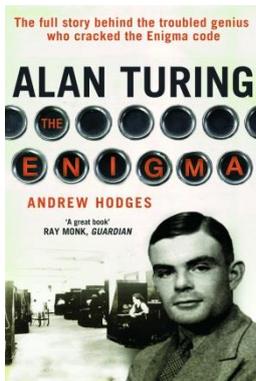
In this epic tale of love and social adventure, no one is better equipped in the struggle for wealth and worldly success than the alluring and ruthless Becky Sharp, who defies her impoverished background to clamber up the social ladder. Her companion Amelia, however, longs for caddish soldier George. As the two heroines make their way through the tawdry glamour of English society in the early 1800s, battles are fought, and fortunes are made and lost.

Biography and Non-Fiction



In Cold Blood by Truman Capote

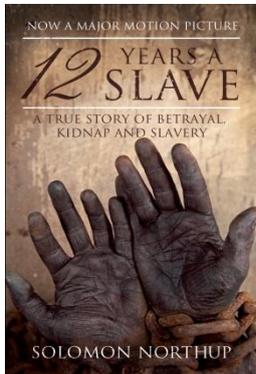
Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood* is both a masterpiece of journalism and a powerful crime thriller. Inspired by a 300-word article in *The New York Times*, Capote spent six years exploring and writing the story of Kansas farmer Herb Clutter, his family and the two young killers who brutally murdered them. *In Cold Blood* created a genre of novelistic non-fiction and made Capote's name with its unflinching portrayal of a comprehensible and thoroughly human evil.



Alan Turing: The Enigma by Andrew Hodges

National hero or depraved corruptor? Alan Turing, a pure mathematician, was recruited into the British cryptography unit during World War Two and not only aided the war effort but saved countless Allied soldiers lives by breaking the Enigma code. Not only that, he almost singlehandedly paved the way of the computer age.

He was also homosexual, and Cold War Britain, despite his efforts during WW2, did not allow for such deviation in the social norm, with devastating results for Turing. Andrew Hodges not only reveals the personal turmoil, but places that within the context of Turing's mathematical and cryptographic work to create a rich, compelling story.



Twelve Years a Slave by Solomon Northup

'For sheer drama, few accounts of slavery match Solomon Northup's tale of abduction from freedom and forcible enslavement.' Ira Berlin

Perhaps the best written of all the slave narratives, *Twelve Years a Slave* is a harrowing memoir about one of the darkest periods in American history. It recounts how Solomon Northup, born a free man in New York, was lured to Washington, D.C., in 1841 with the promise of fast money, then drugged and beaten and sold into slavery. He spent the next twelve years of his life in captivity on a Louisiana cotton plantation.

After his rescue, Northup published this exceptionally vivid and detailed account of slave life. It became an immediate bestseller and today is recognized for its unusual insight and eloquence as one of the very few portraits of American slavery produced by someone as educated as Solomon Northup, or by someone with the dual perspective of having been both a free man and a slave.