

The *(incomplete)* **Lit in Colour book list**

100 texts by writers of colour

Secondary edition for Key Stages 3, 4 & 5



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Why is our list (incomplete)?

We're calling our book list incomplete, because we know it will never manage to be exhaustive or definitive. There are so many fantastic books by writers of colour and those from minority ethnic backgrounds that deserve to be read, studied and celebrated. We wanted to make a book list that could bring together a small sample of 100 incredible texts published both by Penguin and other publishers.

Our aim is to update and add to this list annually, to capture new writing and to highlight well-loved classics.

This booklist is designed primarily to support Secondary Teachers who want to bring exciting texts into their classrooms. We have listed suitable titles categorised by Key Stage and year group, and have done our best to have a variety of books to support different reading abilities. By drawing together a range of books on different genres and subject matters, we hope to show some of the scope of what is currently available.

Feel free to click on book titles and cover images as they are hyperlinked to more information about each book. There is also an index at the end of the list categorised by popular themes and topics.

Don't see a text you think we should include next time?

Please send your suggestions to Litincolour@penguinrandomhouse.co.uk

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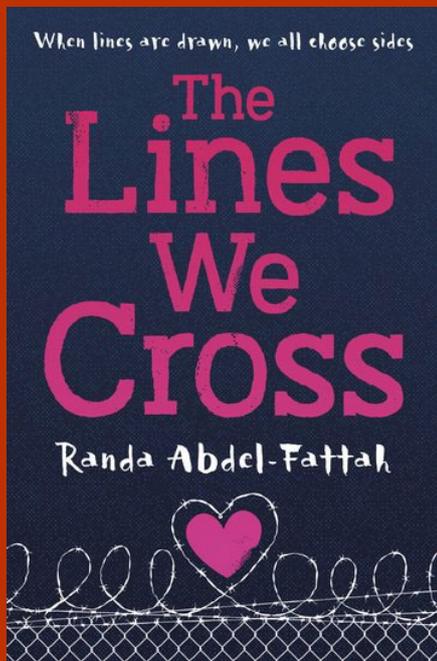
Index by theme

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Publisher: Scholastic
Year: 2017

The Lines We Cross

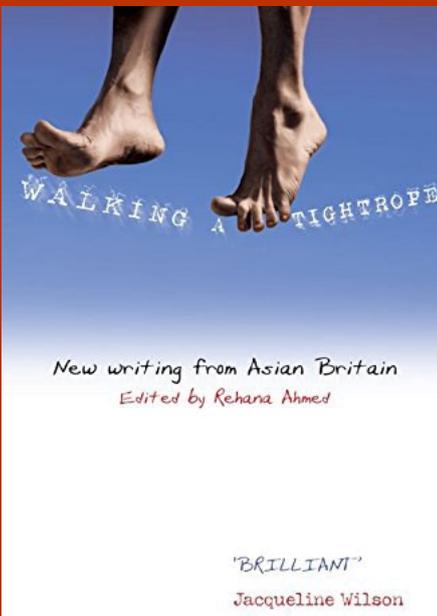
Randa Abdel-Fattah

Themes/topics: War, Immigration, Refugees, Politics, Racism

Michael likes to hang out with his friends and play with the latest graphic design software. Michael's parents like to take him to anti-immigrant rallies, where they rail against refugees coming into the country.

It all makes sense to Michael until he meets Mina, a Muslim refugee from Afghanistan who shows up at his school and is funny, smart and beautiful.

While Michael begins to question his parents' politics, Mina is getting used to life in a new school after a dangerous journey fleeing her home country. As tensions rise, Michael has to decide what he believes, and Mina has to protect herself and her family.



Publisher: Macmillan
Children's Books
Year: 2004

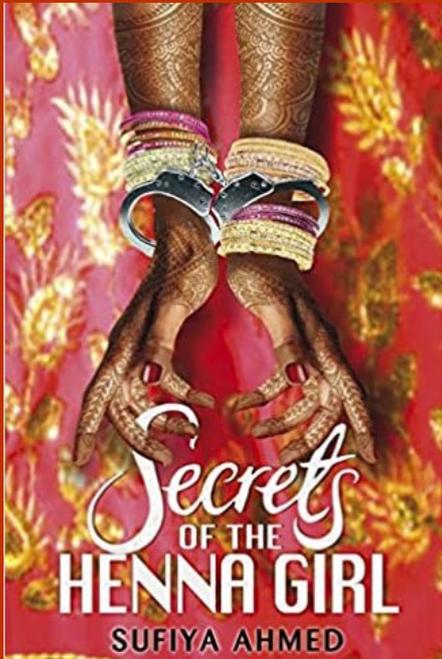
Walking a Tightrope

Rehana Ahmed

Themes/topics: British Asian experience, Short stories

This collection of stories brings together Asian writers, who cover everything from the night man first set foot on the moon to the World Cup in 2002, from a tiny town miles from Mumbai to the multicultural heart of modern Leicester.

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Publisher: Penguin
Year: 2012

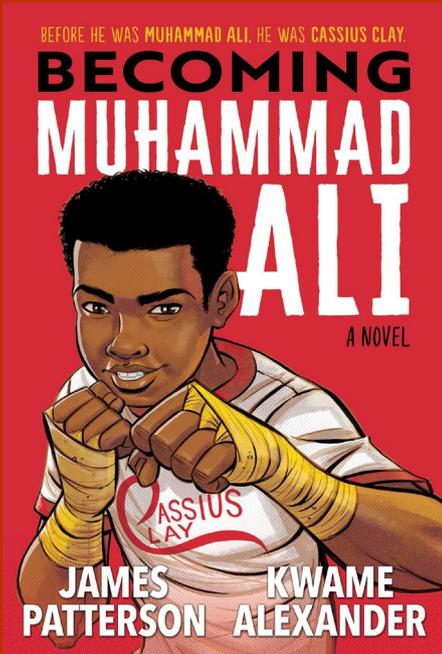
Secrets of the Henna Girl

Sufiya Ahmed

Themes/topics: Forced marriage, Death, Family

Ahmed's debut YA novel is about Zeba, a 16-year-old girl living like any other teenager. But instead of spending the summer waiting for exam results and dreaming about boys, her parents tell her she is to go to Pakistan for the break. There, her world is shattered when her future is threatened by an unthinkable and forced duty to protect her father's honour.

As well as writing fiction, Ahmed contributed an essay to the anthology *It's Not About the Burqa*, edited by Mariam Khan.



Publisher: Jacaranda
Year: 2020

Becoming Muhammad Ali

Kwame Alexander and James Patterson, Dawud Anyabwile (illustrator)

Themes/topics: Biography, Coming-of-age

This biographical novel of cultural icon Muhammad Ali is written by prize-winning writers Alexander and Patterson.

The pair have told the story of the boxer, who was born Cassius Clay, up to the age of 17 in a mix of poetry and prose. Readers will learn about his family and struggles at school, and how, after a thief stole his bike, Cassius began training as an amateur boxer aged 12. *Becoming Muhammad Ali* is authorised by and written in cooperation with the late sportsman's estate.

Kirkus Reviews said of the book: "A stellar collaboration that introduces an important and intriguing individual to today's readers."



The Deep Blue Between

Ayesha Harruna Attah

Themes/topics: Family, Death, Adventure, Siblings

Publisher: Pushkin Children's Books

Year: 2020

Twins Hassana and Husseinah's home has been left in ruins after a brutal raid, leading them to take a journey to unfamiliar cities and cultures to forge new families.

As the twins pursue separate paths – one in Brazil and the other on the Gold Coast of West Africa – they remain connected through shared dreams of water.

The Deep Blue Between is a sweeping adventure tale about bonds that can endure even through the most dramatic changes.

The Deep Blue Between is Attah's first YA novel, but she has also written a number of books for adults. These include *Harmattan Rain*, which was nominated for the 2010 Commonwealth Writers' Prize, and *The Hundred Wells of Salaga*, a story exploring female friendship set in pre-colonial Ghana.

A Jigsaw of Fire and Stars

Yaba Badoe, Leo Nickolls (illustrator)

Themes/topics: Adoption, Family, Grief, Death

Publisher: Zephyr

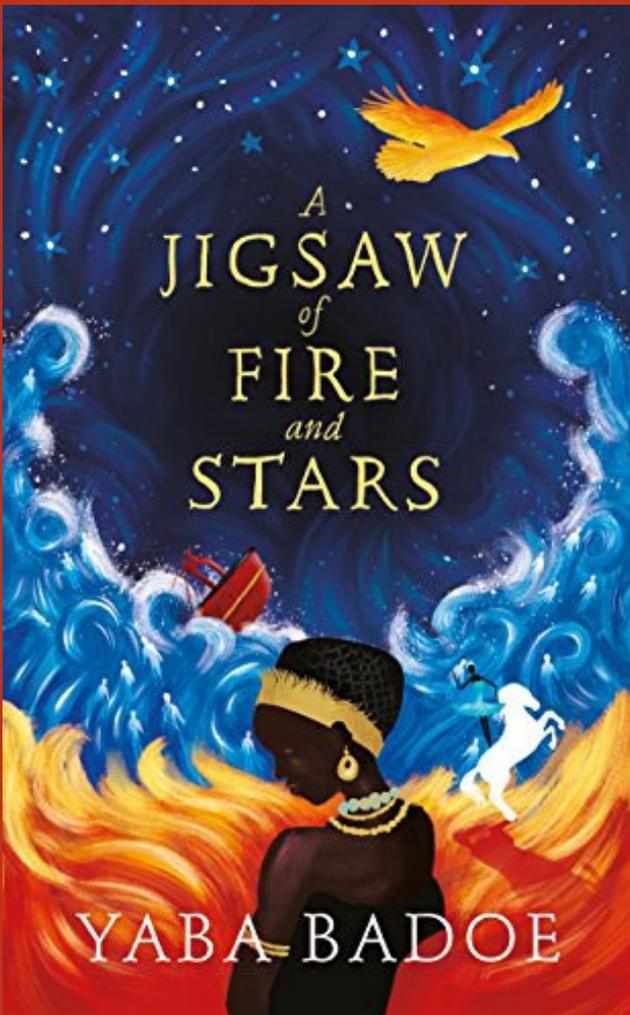
Year: 2017

Badoe's novel is about the horrors of people-trafficking, told via a story that is steeped with African folklore.

The book is about Sante, who was washed ashore as a baby in a chest laden with treasure, the sole survivor of a ship carrying migrants and refugees. Now 14, she is a member of Mama Rose's unique and dazzling circus, but from their watery graves, the unquiet are calling for Sante to avenge them.

Author M. G. Leonard said of the book: "When I was reading this book, I fell in love with Sante. She is a great protagonist. And in fact I loved all the females in this book and the relationships between them. This book has strong, interesting and complex characters a plenty and they're mostly women."

A Jigsaw of Fire and Stars was shortlisted for the Branford Boase Award and nominated for the Carnegie Medal, both in 2018.



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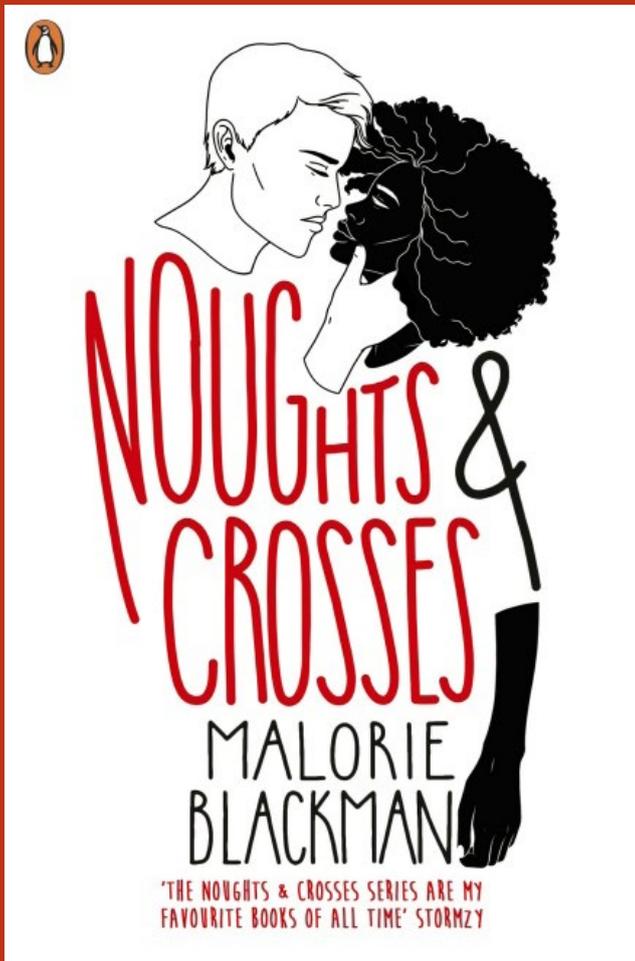
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Noughts & Crosses

Malorie Blackman

Themes/topics: Race, Racism, Politics

Publisher: Penguin

Year: 2001

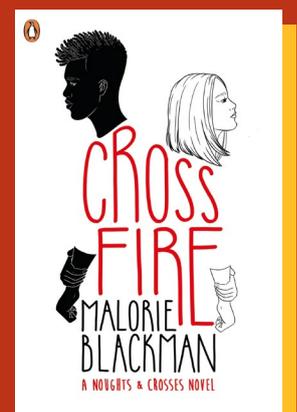
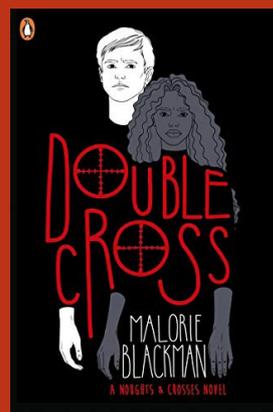
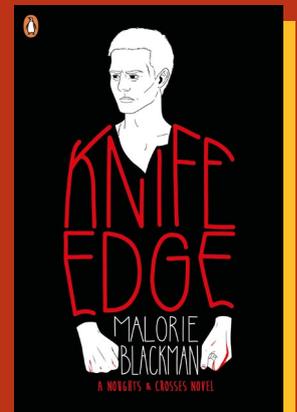
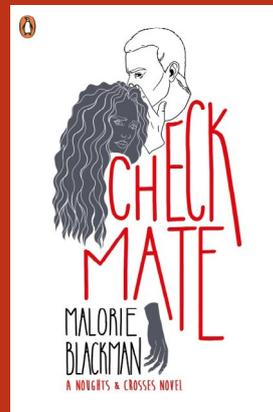
First published in 2001, the inspiration for Blackman's now legendary YA novel was the brutal murder of Stephen Lawrence in 1993, and the institutional racism exposed at the Metropolitan Police by the investigation into the crime.

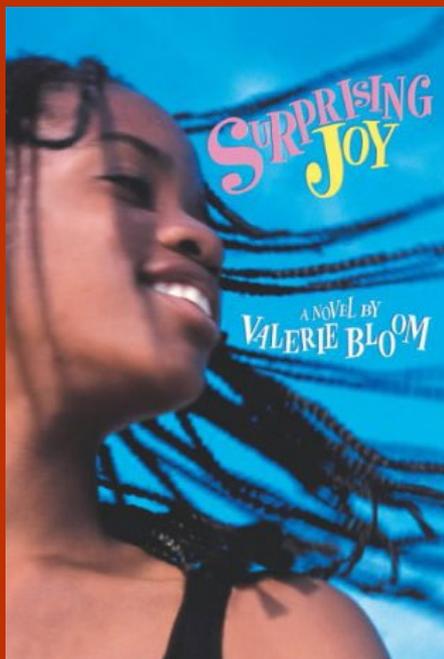
Blackman's book presents a world split into two: Black people are known as Crosses, and are the majority and the elite, holding all positions of power and the greatest wealth, while the white noughts are second-class citizens.

Through a friendship, and a budding relationship, between Cross Sephy and Nought Callum, Blackman explores racism, prejudice and more.

BookTrust said of *Noughts & Crosses*: "As well as being a compelling tale of love and friendship, this is an outstanding and thought-provoking exploration of the futility of prejudice. A contemporary classic."

Noughts & Crosses is the first in a series; Blackman has since written four more books in the series (*Knife Edge*, *Checkmate*, *Double Cross*, and *Crossfire*) with a fifth and final, *Endgame*, due out in Autumn 2021.





Publisher: Macmillan
Children's Books
Year: 2003

Surprising Joy

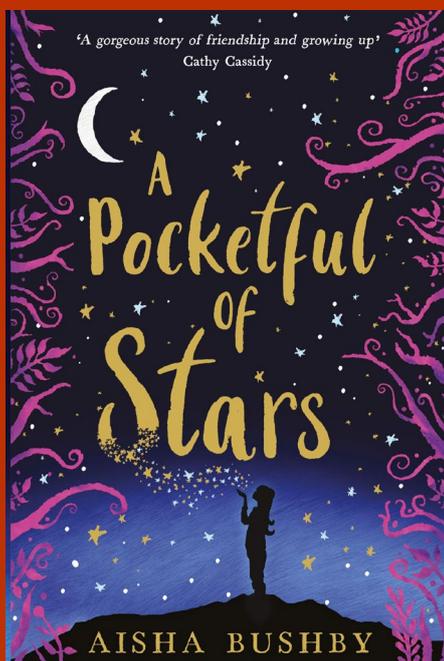
Valerie Bloom

Themes/topics: Migration, Coming-of-age, Racism

The title character, Joy, has spent her life living with her grandmother in Jamaica, dreaming of joining her mother in England.

When Joy's mother writes to say she's ready for Joy to come to London, Joy is excited. But London in December is cold and dark and unfriendly, and her mother has been keeping a secret that shocks Joy even more.

Surprising Joy is the first novel from poet Bloom, who worked as a teacher, a steel pan instructor and an arts officer before becoming a full-time writer.



Publisher: Egmont
Year: 2019

A Pocketful of Stars

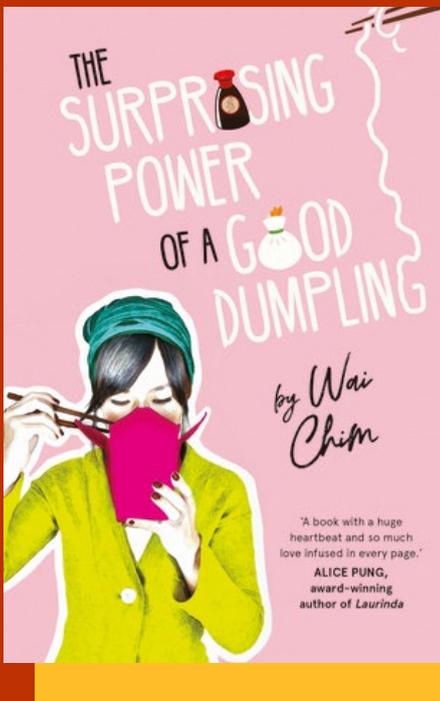
Aisha Bushby

Themes/topics: Grief, Illness, Gaming

Bushby's debut novel is about Safiya, who loves gaming, and her mother, who doesn't understand her passion. Perhaps, thinks Safiya, her mum would prefer she were more like her confident best friend Elle.

When her mum falls into a coma, Safiya waits by her bedside, and finds herself in a strange and magical world that looks a bit like one of her games. And in that world, there's a rebellious and familiar-looking teenage girl with a secret.

Bushby was one of four previously unpublished authors chosen to have a story published in the anthology *A Change is Gonna Come*. The book, which featured original stories by writers including Malorie Blackman, Tanya Byrne and Nikesh Shukla, was awarded a YA Book Prize Special Achievement Award.



The Surprising Power of a Good Dumpling

Wai Chim

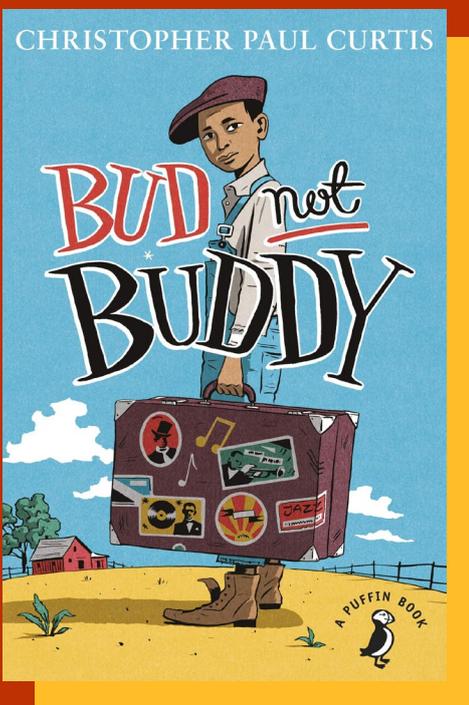
Themes/topics: Mental health, Family, Romance

Anna Chiu spends her days looking after her brother and sister and helping out at her dad's restaurant, while her mum stays in bed. So her dad's new delivery boy Rory is a welcome distraction, making her feel like a "normal" teenager even when she knows things aren't right at home.

When Anna's mum finally gets out of bed, her condition worsens, leaving Anna and her family questioning everything they know about each other.

Kirkus Reviews said of *The Surprising Power of a Good Dumpling*: "Gritty details lend depth to this viscerally powerful tale of a teen struggling to help her troubled family."

Publisher: Allen & Unwin Children's Books
Year: 2019



Bud, Not Buddy

Christopher Paul Curtis

Themes/topics: Poverty, Racism, Race, Civil Rights

Bud is without a mother and on the run, determined to track down a father he hasn't met. The only clue he has is from his late mum, who left him a bunch of flyers about Herman E Calloway and his famous jazz band, the Dusky Devastators of the Depression.

Bud, Not Buddy won the Newbery Medal and Coretta Scott King Award, and Curtis' 1995 novel *The Watsons Go to Birmingham - 1963* was adapted into a TV film of the same name.

Publisher: Corgi Children's
Year: 2012

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

OUTCASTS BY BLOOD. WARRIORS BY CHOICE.



The Gilded Ones

Namina Forna

Themes/topics: Magic, Fantasy, Women's rights

Publisher: Usborne

Year: 2021

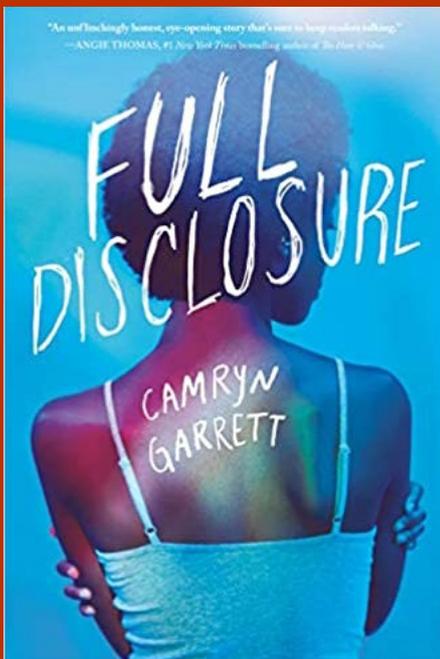
Forna's debut novel follows 16-year-old Dekka, who lives in a deeply patriarchal ancient kingdom called Otera. There, a woman's worth is tied to her purity, and she must bleed to prove it.

When Dekka bleeds gold, a colour signifying impurity, she faces a consequence worse than death. Rescued by a mysterious woman, Dekka finds out that she is an Alaki, a near-immortal with exceptional gifts. The woman offers Dekka a choice: fight for the Emperor, with others just like her, or be destroyed.

Refinery 29 said Forna could be the "Toni Morrison of YA fantasy" while Dhonielle Clayton, the author of *The Belles*, said: "A dark feminist tale spun with blood and gold, *The Gilded Ones* lifts the veil of violent patriarchy and burns the idea of purity to the ground. Must read!"

Forna is originally from Sierra Leone, West Africa, and moved to the US when she was nine. As well as writing books, she works as a screenwriter in LA.

● The *Gilded Ones* is perfect for fans of Tomi Adeyemi's *Children of Blood and Bone*.



Publisher: Penguin
Year: 2019

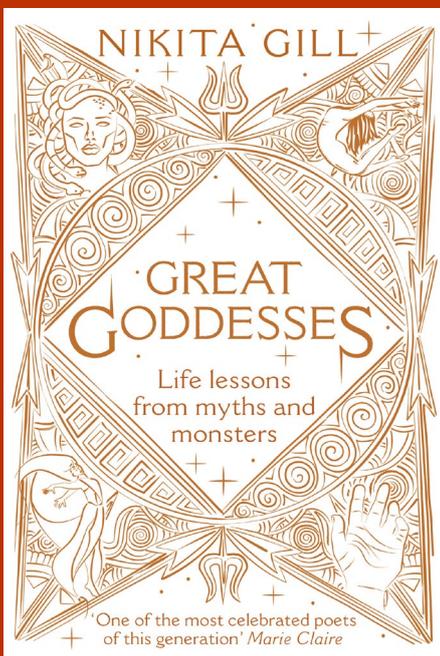
Full Disclosure

Camryn Garrett

Themes/topics: Health, Mental Health, Bullying, Sexuality

Full Disclosure follows Simone, who won't let her HIV-positive status define her. She knows that staying celibate is the best way to stay safe, but when intelligent, funny and sexy Miles Austin enters her life, she finds it difficult to resist. Miles and her classmates don't know Simone is HIV-positive, and now someone is threatening to reveal her secret.

Garrett's debut novel was published when she was just 20 years old. When she was 13, she was selected as a *TIME* for Kids reporter, where she interviewed celebrities including Warren Buffett and Kristen Bell, and in 2015 she was named as one of MTV's 8 Inspiring Teens Using Social Media to Change the World. Becky Albertalli, author of *Simon Vs the Homosapiens Agenda*, called *Full Disclosure* "romantic, funny, hopeful, and unflinchingly real".



Publisher: Ebury Press
Year: 2019

Great Goddesses

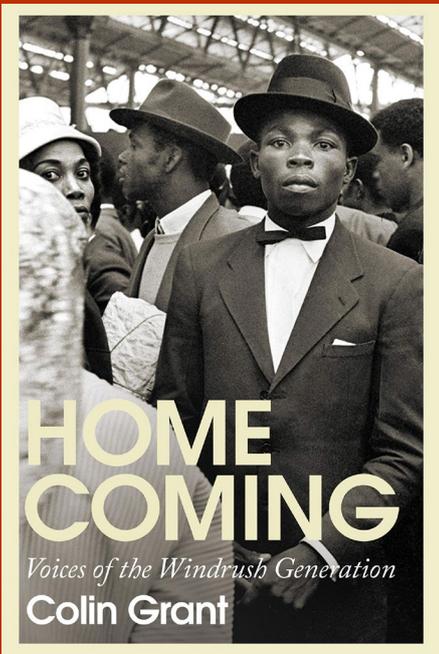
Nikita Gill

Themes/topics: Women's rights, Feminism, Domestic Violence, Death, Grief

Poet Gill tackles the Greek myths in this collection, which looks not just at female heroes, but also the women deemed monsters by the Ancient Greeks.

From Medusa and her venomous hair to Circe and her sorcery and Athena rising up over Olympus, Gill gives a voice and a story to the women who were often a side note in some of the most famous stories in all history.

Gill's reimagining of the stories brings them right up to date, and the collection addresses the Me Too movement, coercive control, and women at work, among other topics.



Homecoming: Voices of the Windrush Generation

Colin Grant

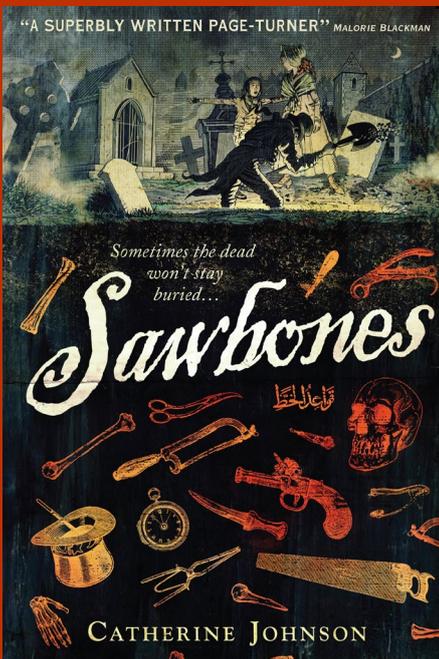
Themes/topics: British history, Migration, Racism

Drawing on more than 100 first-hand interviews, archival recordings and memoirs by the women and men who came to Britain from the West Indies between the late 1940s and the early 1960s, *Homecoming* paints a rounded portrait of the Windrush generation.

Readers will hear from nurses in Manchester, bus drivers in Bristol, seamstresses in Birmingham, inter-racial lovers in High Wycombe, and Carnival Queens in Leeds.

Homecoming was a BBC Radio 4 Book of the Week and named as one of *The Daily Telegraph's* books of the year.

Publisher: Jonathan Cape
Year: 2019



Sawbones

Catherine Johnson

Themes/topics: Death, British history, Mystery

Johnson's novel is a murder mystery set in Victorian London, centring on surgeon's apprentice Ezra McAdam. His knowledge of human anatomy and skill at the dissection table mean Ezra has a trade for life, but when a failed break-in at his master's house results in murder, Ezra's path changes.

He teams up with Loveday Finch, the daughter of the late Mr Charles Finch, to investigate the death of Loveday's father. Along the way, the pair discover similarities between Mr Finch's corpse and others'.

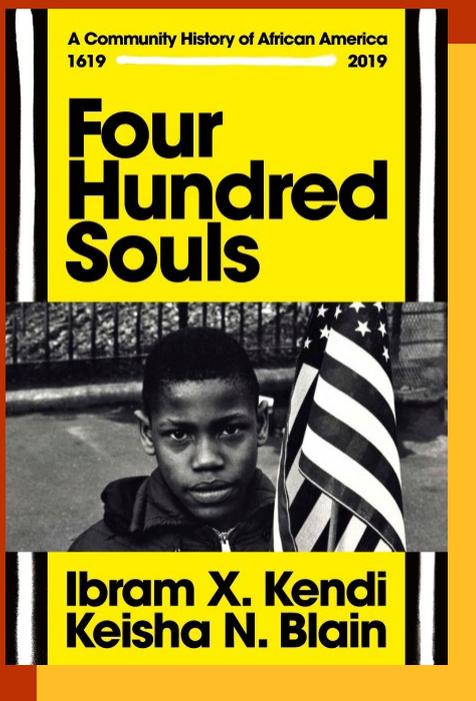
Publisher: Walker Books
Year: 2013

From the Operating Theatre at St Bart's to the desolate wasteland of Coldbath Fields and the streets of Clerkenwell, Ezra and Loveday must pursue a dangerous path to the truth. *Sawbones* won the Young Quills Award for best historical fiction for 12+.

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Publisher: Bodley Head
Year: 2021

Four Hundred Souls: A Community History of African America 1619-2019

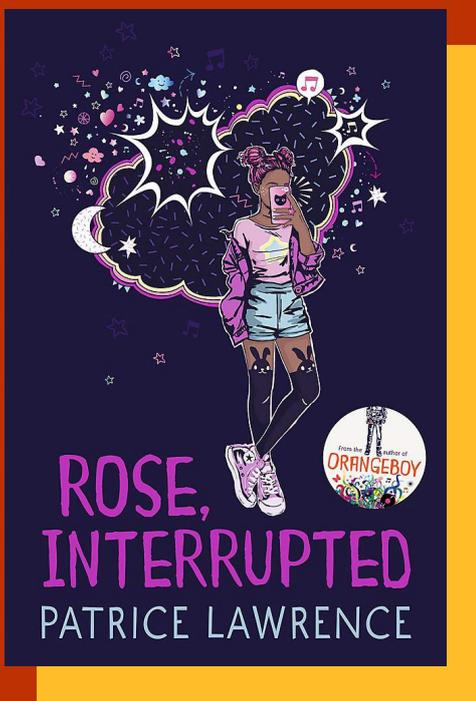
Ibram X. Kendi and Keisha N. Blain

Themes/topics: American history, Race, Racism

Bringing together 90 leading Black voices, *Four Hundred Souls* is a history of African America, compiled by Kendi, author of *How To Be an Antiracist*, and Blain, author of *Set the World on Fire*.

The story begins with the arrival of 20 Ndongo people on the shores of the first British colony in mainland America in 1619, and over 80 chronological chapters charts the 400-year journey of African Americans to the present day.

Contributors include leading writers, historians, poets, activists and more, creating a history told through various perspectives.



Publisher: Hodder Children's
Books
Year: 2019

Rose, Interrupted

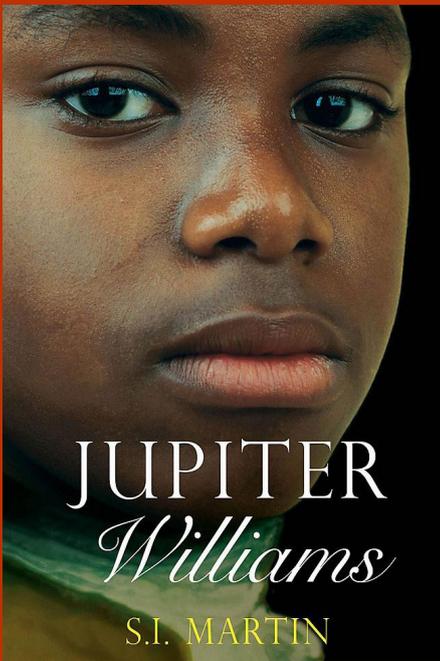
Patrice Lawrence

Themes/topics: Revenge porn, Coming-of-age, Siblings

Rose, Interrupted is Lawrence's third novel, and follows a family who have escaped from a strict religious sect.

In their new life, 13-year-old Rudder is embracing everything from Harry Potter to Simon and Garfunkel, while Rose has swapped her ankle skirts and uncut hair for Japanese-cute fairy dresses and her new boyfriend Kye.

But Rose and Rudder aren't equipped to handle everything this strange world is throwing at them, and when Rudder accidentally sets a devastating chain of events into action, Rose must decide whether to sacrifice everything and go back to the life she hates, in order to save the people she loves.



Publisher: Hodder Children's Books
Year: 2007

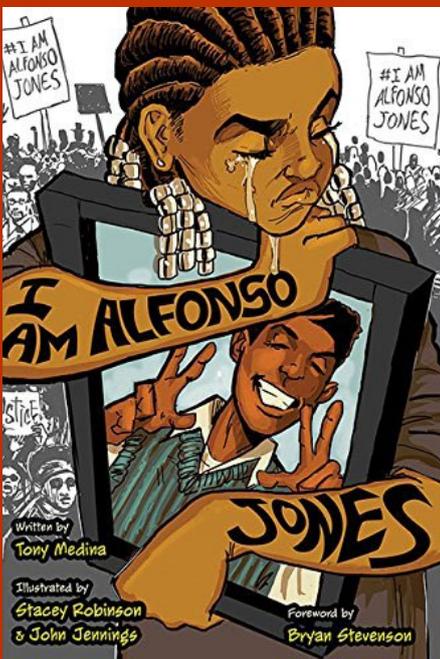
Jupiter Williams

S I Martin

Themes/topics: Wealth inequality, Race, Racism

Set in London in the 1800s, *Jupiter Williams* follows the young boy of the title, who is living at the African Academy in Clapham with other wealthy Sierra Leonean boys. Jupiter's life is a mix of privilege and dispossession as he copes with the cruelty of his teachers, the rivalries and tensions among his schoolmates, a sense of duty towards his younger brother Robert and guilt over the death of another brother in Africa.

When Robert vanishes, Jupiter has to go out into London, where he discovers poor Black communities struggling for survival along the squalid reaches of the Thames. There, his education and background mean nothing, and his skin colour is the only thing determining his fate. Martin is a writer and historian, and the founder of a series of narrative London walks entitled 500 Years of Black London.



Publisher: Tu Books
Year: 2017

I Am Alfonso Jones

Tony Medina, Stacey Robinson and John Jennings
(illustrators)

Themes/topics: Death, Grief, Race, Racism, Police violence

Described as *The Hate U Give* meets *The Lovely Bones*, Medina's novel is about Alfonso Jones, who is looking forward to playing Hamlet in his school's hip-hop rendition of the Shakespeare play. But when Alfonso is out buying a suit, an off-duty police officer mistakes his clothes hanger for a gun, and fatally shoots the teenager.

Alfonso wakes up in the afterlife, on a ghost train guided by victims of police shootings, who teach him what he needs to know about the subterranean spirit world. Meanwhile, Alfonso's family and friends are trying to come to terms with their grief, and seek justice for Alfonso in the streets.

This graphic novel has a foreword by Bryan Stevenson, executive director of the Equal Justice Initiative, and the author of *Just Mercy*, which was made into a film starring Michael B. Jordan.

DAVID OLUSOGA

Black AND British

A short, essential history

Macmillan Children's Books will donate 50p for every copy sold to THE BLACK CURRICULUM Reg Social Enterprise No. 12022713

Black and British: A Short, Essential History

David Olusoga

Themes/topics: British history, Non-fiction

Publisher: Macmillan Children's Books

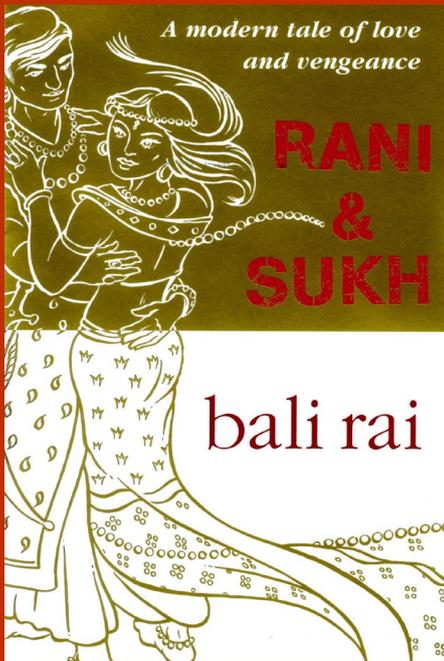
Year: 2020

Historian Olusoga's bestselling book *Black and British*, which won the 2017 PEN Hessel-Tiltman Prize, accompanied a BBC TV series, and is available in an edition specially created for readers aged 12 and over.

Covering topics including when Africans first come to Britain, who the well-dressed Black children in Georgian paintings are and more, *Black and British* is an introduction to 1800 years of Black British history to the present day.

Illustrated with maps, photos and portraits, *Black and British: A Short, Essential History* was shortlisted for the Waterstones Book of the Year Award in 2020.

Reviewing the original book for *The Guardian*, Colin Grant said: "For all the fanfare heralding the book and the series as a revolutionary landmark – as a means of seeing our history differently – it is Olusoga's personal story that is most arresting. At the beginning and end, he mournfully captures that feeling of being unwelcome in Britain, and the desire for flight, to escape the brutal and bruising atmosphere that I, as a child of Jamaican immigrants, felt in the 1970s."



Publisher: Corgi Children's
Year: 2004

Rani and Sukh

Bali Rai

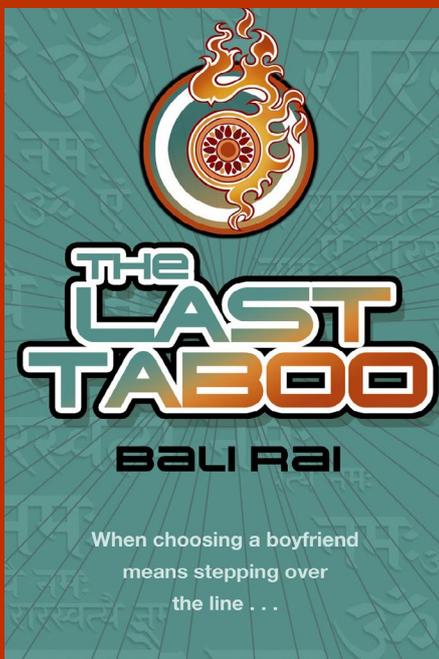
Themes/topics: Death, Grief, Family

Set between modern-day Britain and Punjab in the 1950s and 1960s, Rai's novel is about tragedy and conflict, and love.

In 1950s Punjab, a secret affair goes wrong, and the bride dies by suicide after her lover is attacked by her family. The two families involved are separated by the violence forever.

In 2004 in Leicester, Rani and Sukh fall in love, completely unaware of the conflict between their families, and the tragic past that still affects their lives. Rani and Sukh must try and avert tragedy and escape the cycle of violence that threatens their future.

Rai's debut novel *(Un)arranged Marriage* was critically acclaimed, and was shortlisted for the Branford Boase award.



Publisher: Corgi Children's
Year: 2006

The Last Taboo

Bali Rai

Themes/topics: Race, Romance, Family

When Simran spots Tyrone, she falls for him immediately. But Simran is unsure how her family will react to Tyrone being Black, even though her parents had a love marriage and got together against the wishes of their families. Simran doesn't think they will approve, and she knows her nightmare aunts and uncles definitely won't.

But Simran likes Tyrone too much, and she's not willing to walk away. When their relationship becomes harder than they predicted, and eventually the hatred they encounter escalates into violence, Simran and Tyrone have to question whether they are strong enough to fight for what they believe in.

Shortlisted for the Costa Biography Award
Winner of the Mind Book of the Year Award

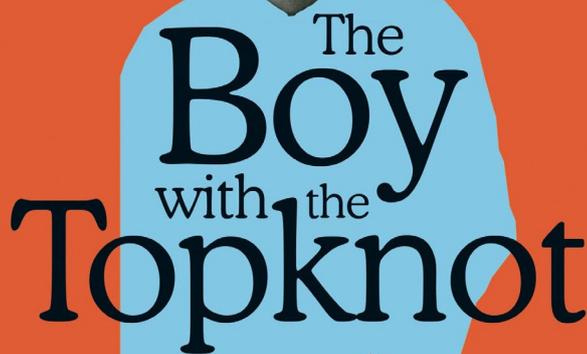


'One of my favourite
ever memoirs.
I loved it'
J.K. Rowling

'Told with enormous
compassion and the
most unexpected wit'
Jonathan Coe

'A fine book'
Aravind Adiga

'Heartbreaking
and wonderful'
Maggie O'Farrell



The Boy with the Topknot

SATHNAM SANGHERA

The Boy with the Topknot

Sathnam Sanghera

Themes/topics: Family, Mental health, Love, Memoir

Publisher: Viking

Year: 2008

Journalist Sanghera's first book is about trying to reconcile the past he remembers from growing up in Wolverhampton with a discovery that his family has been keeping a huge secret: when he was 24, Sanghera found out his father and sister were both suffering from a severe mental illness he didn't know about.

The revelation prompted Sanghera to embark on a journey into the past to try and find out more about how the secret came to be.

The Boy with the Topknot is a portrait of a family dealing with mental ill health, and is filled with love and humour.

BookTrust said of *The Boy with the Topknot*: "The book moves along quickly, never boring, always painting an interesting picture of a family dealing with mental illness and a family dealing with the cultural differences of old and new, East and West."

Sanghera's memoir was adapted for a BBC series in 2017, starring Sacha Dhawan in the lead role.



Publisher: Penguin USA
Year: 2010

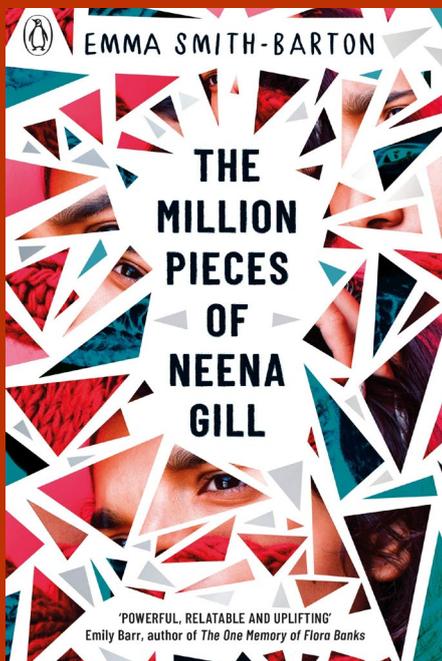
Flygirl

Sherri L. Smith

Themes/topics: Race, Racism

Ida Mae Jones wants to follow in the footsteps of her late father, who was a pilot, and take to the skies. But as a young Black woman in 1940s Louisiana, she knows that her dream is unlikely to come true. That is, until America enters the Second World War, and the Women Airforce Service Pilots are formed.

But to fulfil her dreams, Ida has to use her light skin to pass as a white girl. Ida wants to fly more than anything, but she soon learns that denying who she is, and by extension denying her family, is a heavy burden to bear.



Publisher: Penguin
Year: 2019

The Million Pieces of Neena Gill

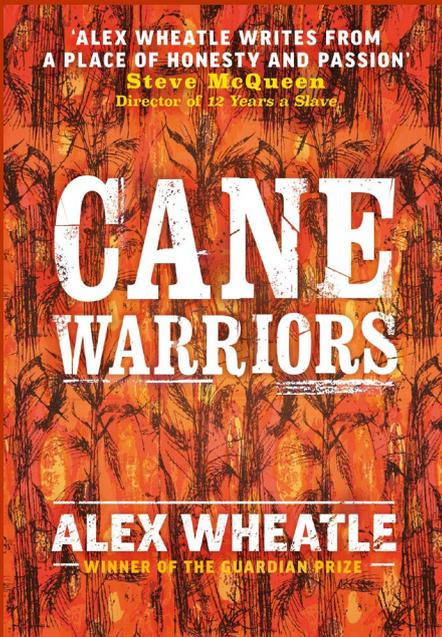
Emma Smith-Barton

Themes/topics: Mental health, Family

The title character of Smith-Barton's book has always got great grades, her friends are all parent-approved, and she's never had a boyfriend. But since her brother Akash left, Neena has been falling apart, discovering a version of herself who is both freer and more dangerous.

As Neena's wild behaviour spirals out of control, her sanity begins to weaken. And when her parents announce two life-changing bombshells, she reaches breaking point. The only thing that can piece Neena together now is love.

Smith-Barton's debut novel was shortlisted for the Waterstones Children's Book Prize, the Branford Boase Award, and the Romantic Novelists' Association Debut Romantic Novel Award, all in 2020.



Publisher: Andersen Press
Year: 2020

Cane Warriors

Alex Wheatle

Themes/topics: Race, Racism, Colonialism, Slavery

Cane Warriors is based on the true story of Tacky's War in Jamaica in 1760, led by a Fanti royal and warlord called Tacky, which was one of the most significant slave uprisings of the 18th century.

Wheatle's fictionalisation follows the character of Moa, a 14-year-old who has only ever known a life toiling on the Frontier surge cane plantation. When he learns of an uprising, Moa is determined to join and become a cane warrior, fighting for the freedom of all the enslaved people in the nearby plantations.

But before he can escape, Moa and his friend Keverton have to kill their overseer, Misser Donaldson, a task that won't be easy.



Publisher: Corgi Children's
Year: 2015

Everything, Everything

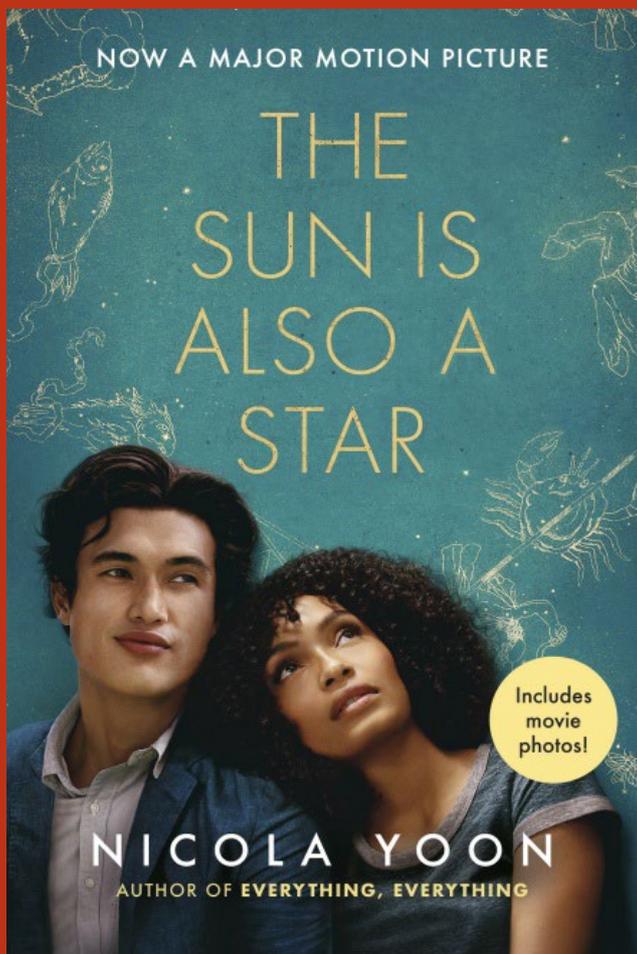
Nicola Yoon

Themes/topics: Health, Mental health, Family, Romance

A number one *New York Times* bestseller, *Everything, Everything* is the story of Maddy, who is allergic to everything. She is strictly confined to the sterile sanctuary of her home, watching the world go by outside her window.

And then Olly moves in next door, and Maddy realises that being alive is not the same as living. As Olly and Maddy begin to fall in love, Maddy begins to question her life and her relationship with her mother.

Everything, Everything was made into a film starring Amandla Stenberg as Maddy and Nick Robinson as Olly.



The Sun is Also a Star

Nicola Yoon

Themes/topics: Love, Immigration, Coming-of-age

Publisher: Corgi Children's

Year: 2016

Yoon's second novel is told from the perspectives of two characters. On one side is the practical Natasha, who doesn't have a moment to waste: she and her family are being deported back to Jamaica at 10pm. Meanwhile, dreamer Daniel is on his way to a life-changing interview, having become the focus for his Korean parents since his older brother dropped out of Harvard.

When Natasha and Daniel's lives collide, it results in love, tragedy and hope for both of them.

Yoon's book goes back and forth between the two characters, and the majority takes place during the course of one day.

The Sun is Also a Star was a National Book Award Finalist, a 2017 Michael L. Printz Honor Book, and a *New York Times* Notable Book of 2016.

Kirkus Reviews said of the book: "With appeal to cynics and romantics alike, this profound exploration of life and love tempers harsh realities with the beauty of hope in a way that is both deeply moving and satisfying."

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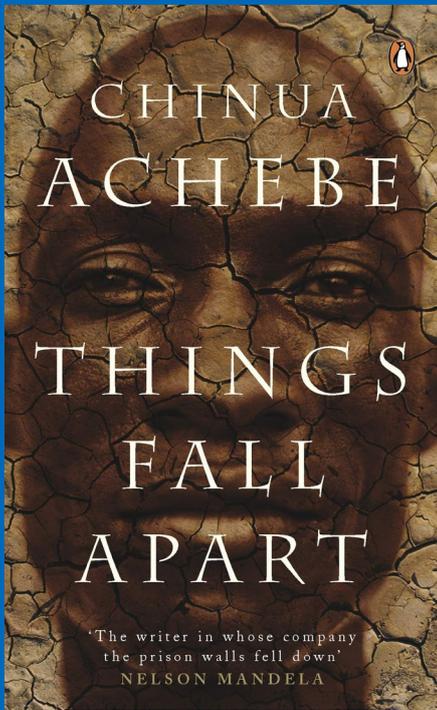
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Publisher: Penguin Classics
Year: 1958

Things Fall Apart

Chinua Achebe

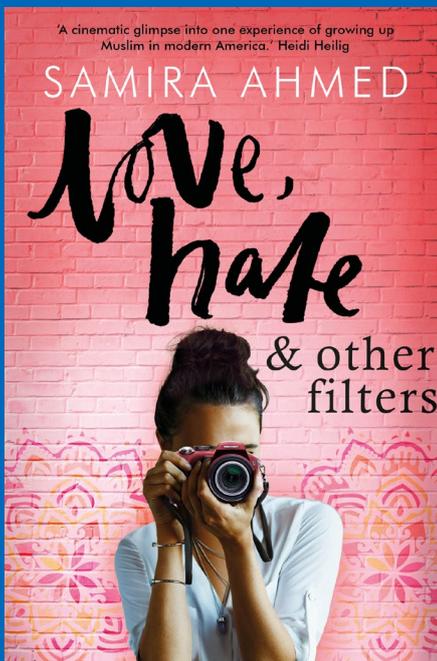
Themes/topics: Colonialism, African history

Things Fall Apart is the first of Achebe's African Trilogy, and is one of the BBC's 100 Novels That Shaped Our World.

It's the story of Okonkwo, the greatest wrestler and warrior alive, whose fame has spread through West Africa. But when Okonkwo accidentally kills a clansman, things – as per the title – begin to fall apart. When Okonkwo returns from exile, it's to see that missionaries and colonial governors have arrived in his village, and his world has been radically thrown off balance.

Things Fall Apart was first published in 1958, and has sold over 10 million copies in 45 languages.

The trilogy continues in *Arrow of God* and *No Longer at Ease*.



Publisher: Hot Key Books
Year: 2018

Love, Hate & Other Filters

Samira Ahmed

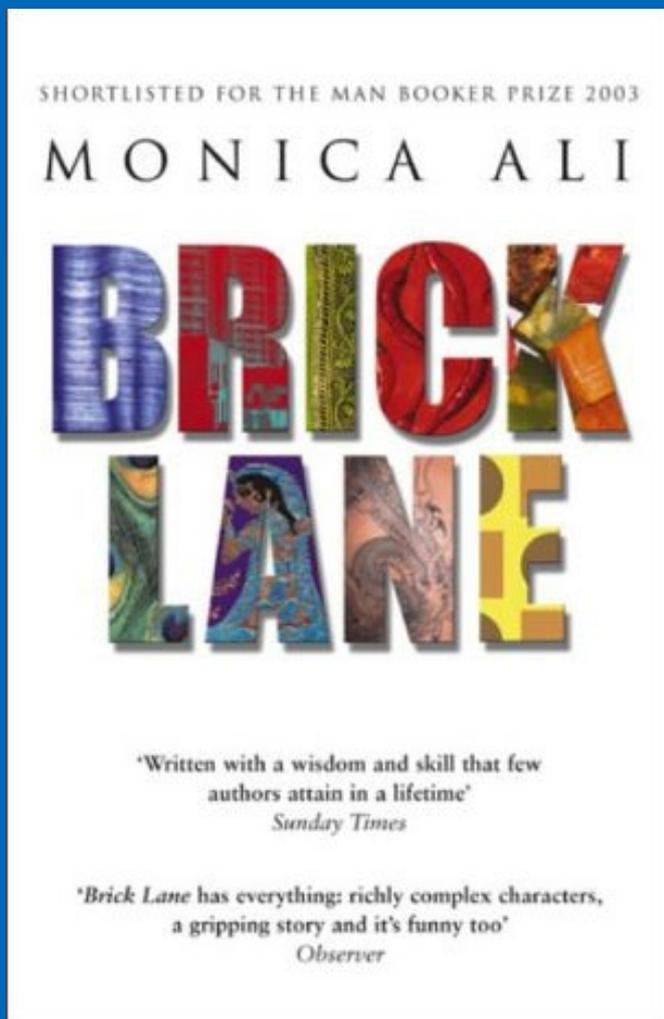
Themes/topics: Extremism, Family, Violence

American YA writer Ahmed's *New York Times* bestselling novel, which was also nominated for the Carnegie Medal in 2019, is the story of a teenage girl dealing with crushes, school and a rising tide of Islamophobia.

Torn between the guy she should like and the guy she does, Maya is also trying to pursue her desire to be a filmmaker, while her parents want her to become a doctor.

In amongst Maya's story, a suicide bomber who shares her last name strikes in a city hundreds of miles away and everything changes.

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Brick Lane

Monica Ali

Themes/topics: Arranged marriage, Feminism, Love

Publisher: Transworld

Year: 2003

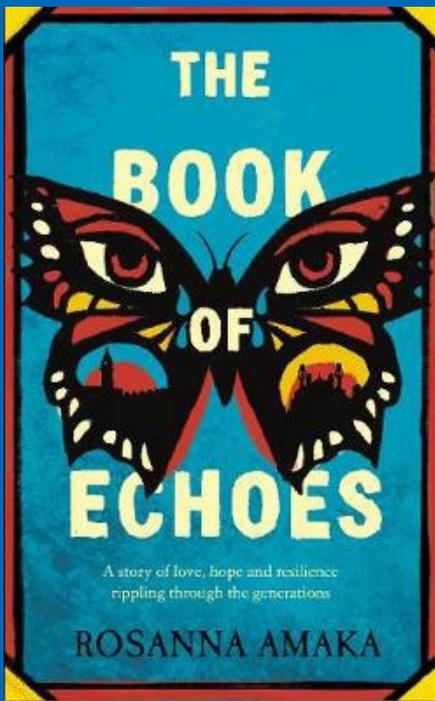
Shortlisted for the Booker Prize, Ali's 2003 novel is about Nazneen, who finds herself in an arranged marriage with a disappointed older man when she is just a teenager. Now in England, in a cramped flat in London's East End, Nazneen doesn't know a word of English.

Furiously sewing for a living, Nazneen's world is expanded suddenly when she meets the radical Karim. Against a background of racial conflict and tension, the pair embark on a love affair that forces Nazneen to take control of her life.

Ali was named one of Granta's Best of Young British Novelists on the basis of the manuscript of this novel.

The Observer review of **Brick Lane** said: "**Brick Lane** has everything: richly complex characters, a gripping story and an exploration of a community that is so quintessentially British that it has given us our national dish, but of which most of us are entirely ignorant. Plus it's a meditation on fate and free will. Oh and it's funny too. And painful."

Ali has written three more books: *Alentejo Blue*, *In the Kitchen* and *Untold Story*.



The Book of Echoes

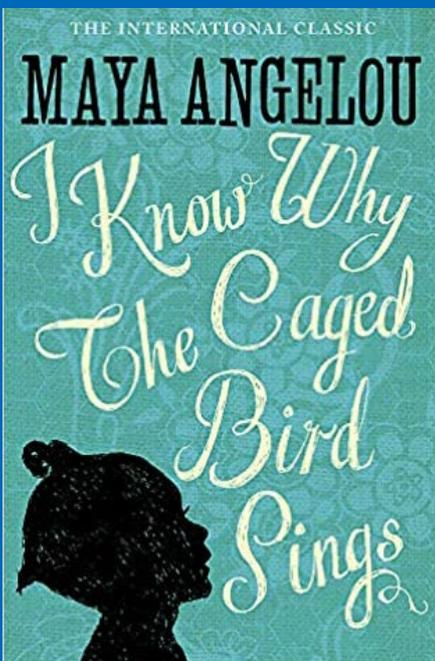
Rosanna Amaka

Themes/topics: Immigration, Family, Slavery

Narrated by the spirit of an African woman who lost her life on a slave ship two centuries earlier, *The Book of Echoes* is about Michael – a 16-year-old in Brixton in 1981, already on the wrong side of the law – and Ngozi, an immigrant from the Nigerian village of Obowi. When the pair meet and fall for each other, the reader discovers through the narrator that their struggle for happiness began many lifetimes ago.

Amaka’s book was shortlisted for the HWA Crown Debut Award.

Publisher: Doubleday
Year: 2020



I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings

Maya Angelou

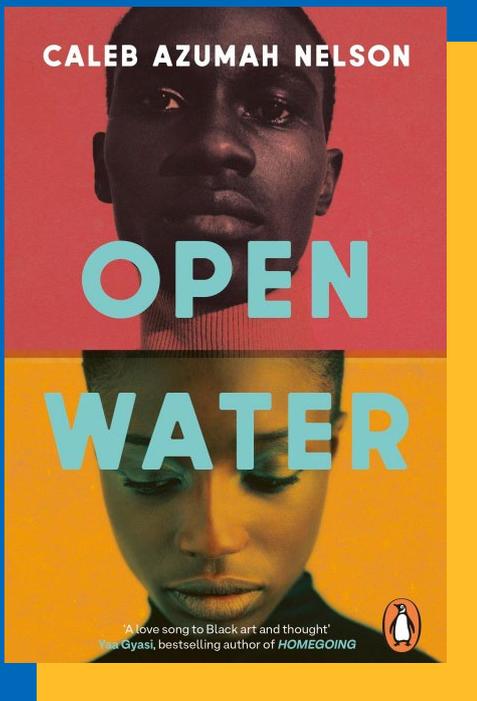
Themes/topics: Sexual abuse, Race, Racism, Arts and culture

I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings is the first volume, and the most famous, of Angelou’s autobiographies.

Beginning when Angelou was three and she and her brother were abandoned by their parents, the book recounts the prejudice and racism Angelou’s family endured at the hands of their white neighbours in a small Arkansas town.

One day, Angelou’s father returned and took the children to live in Missouri. There, aged eight, Angelou was abused by her mother’s boyfriend, an experience which haunted her for a lifetime. Filled with guilt and shame, Angelou refused to speak with anyone except her brother, until she met Mrs Bertha Flowers, a woman who encouraged Angelou’s love of books, helping her to find her voice and regain her own strong spirit.

Publisher: Virago
Year: 1969



Publisher: Viking
Year: 2021

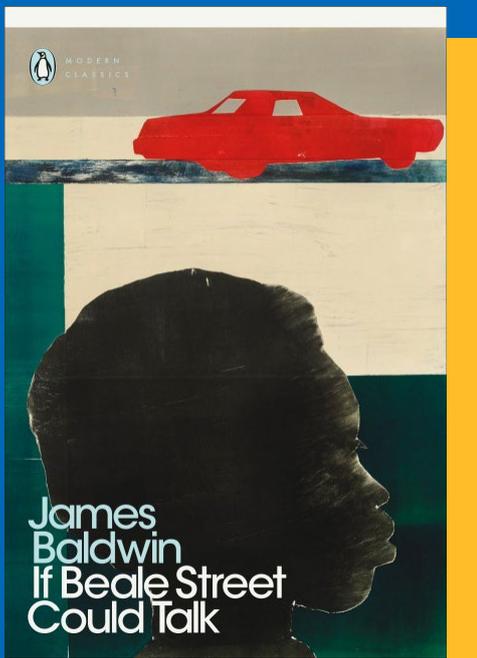
Open Water

Caleb Azumah Nelson

Themes/topics: Arts and culture, Love, Racism, Grief

Azumah Nelson's debut novel is about two unnamed protagonists who meet at a pub in South East London and form an instant connection. She's a dancer, he's a photographer, and both are trying to make their way in their chosen passions. As they do, they slowly fall in love, but their relationship is challenged by outside forces, and is at risk of being torn apart by fear and violence.

As well as being a tender love story, *Open Water* takes a look at the role of art and artists in people's lives, and examines Black masculinity and what it means to be seen as just a Black body by society.



Publisher: Penguin Modern Classics
Year: 1974

If Beale Street Could Talk

James Baldwin

Themes/topics: Justice, Racism, Love

Baldwin was one of the most important writers of the Harlem Renaissance, and his fiction and non-fiction are still popular today.

If Beale Street Could Talk, made into a film directed by Barry Jenkins, is the story of Tish and Fonny. Tish is 19 and pregnant, while her lover Fonny is in jail accused of rape.

The book weaves flashbacks from their love story into the present-day narrative of the two families' struggle to win justice for Fonny.

"Brilliant, endlessly rich . . . pairs well with 1984 or *The Handmaid's Tale*." — JOHN GREEN, *New York Times*

Parable of the Sower

With a new foreword from
award-winning author

N. K. JEMISIN

OCTAVIA E.
BUTLER

WINNER OF A MACARTHUR "GENIUS" GRANT

Parable of the Sower

Octavia E. Butler

Themes/topics: Science fiction, Climate change, Environment, Poverty, Race, Racism

Publisher: Headline

Year: 1993

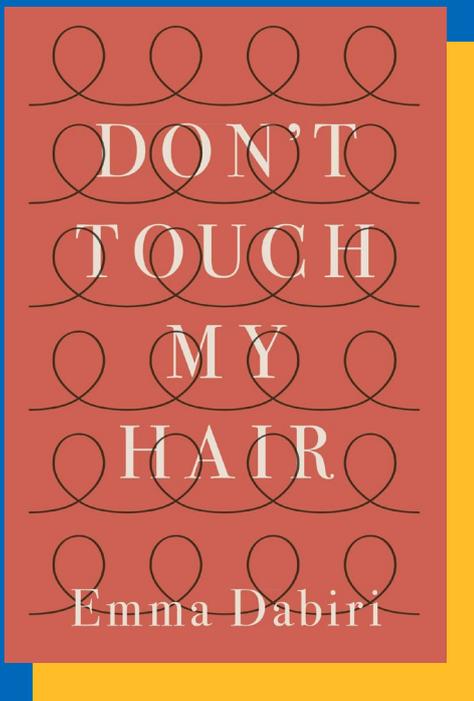
Butler is one of the most famous science fiction writers ever, and her groundbreaking works have proved eerily prescient.

Parable of the Sower was published in 1993 and is set in the 2020s, when society has largely collapsed because of climate change and growing wealth inequality. Its protagonist is Lauren, who has the ability to feel pain and other sensations she witnesses, and develops a new belief system called Earthseed. Outside the gated community Lauren lives in, there is chaos due to resource scarcity and poverty, and mixed-race relationships are stigmatised amid attacks against religious and ethnic minorities.

Lauren believes that humankind's destiny is to travel beyond Earth and live on other planets, and that Earthseed is preparation for this destiny, so she journeys north to found the first Earthseed community.

Lauren's story continued in *Parable of the Talents*, but the third book in the trilogy, *Parable of the Trickster*, remained uncompleted at the time of Butler's death in 2006.

Writing about *Parable of the Sower* in *The New Yorker* in 2017, Abby Aguirre said: "By writing black female protagonists into science fiction, and bringing her acute appraisal of real-world power structures to bear on the imaginary worlds she created, Butler became an early pillar of the subgenre and aesthetic known as Afrofuturism."



Publisher: Penguin
Year: 2019

Don't Touch My Hair

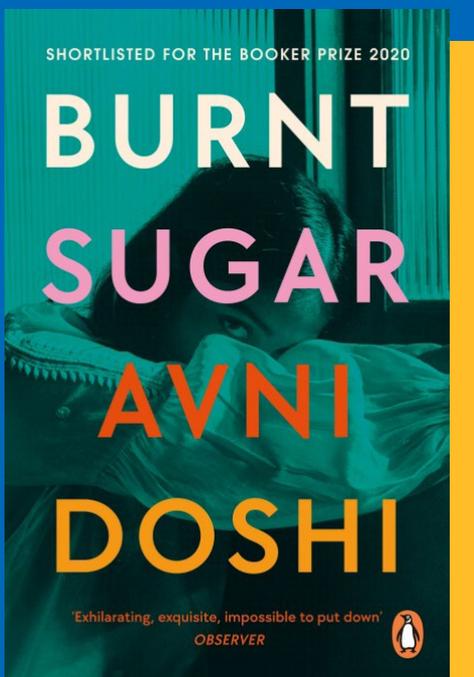
Emma Dabiri

Themes/topics: Black history, Racism, Identity

Dabiri's book takes Black hair and examines how the stigma around it, as well as the way it is policed and appropriated, and how it can be an allegory for Black oppression and, ultimately, liberation.

In a series of essays, Dabiri looks at pre-colonial Africa, the Harlem Renaissance, Black Power and the natural hair movement that is taking place today. She tells the stories of Madam C.J. Walker, the first female self-made millionaire in America, and the rise of Shea Moisture.

But *Don't Touch My Hair* isn't just a history of Black hair, it also takes a look at all it symbolises and enables, from women's solidarity and friendship to the way hairstyles served as secret intelligence networks leading enslaved Africans to freedom.



Publisher: Hamish Hamilton
Year: 2020

Burnt Sugar

Avni Doshi

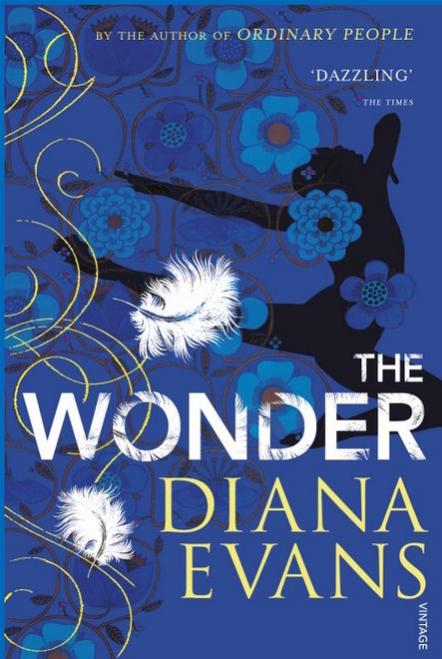
Themes/topics: Motherhood, Family, Love, Health, Illness

Doshi's debut novel is about Antara and her mother Tara, whose relationship has been fractious and tense since Antara was a child. As Tara begins to show the early signs of dementia, Antara is forced to care for her mother in a way that Tara never cared for her.

Burnt Sugar was shortlisted for the Booker Prize in 2020 and won the Sushila Devi Award 2021, and was originally published in India under the title *Girl in White Cotton*.

The Booker Prize judges said the book was "beautifully written, emotionally wrenching and poignant in equal measure".

👉 Click [here](#) to access our *Burnt Sugar* key stage 4: GCSE English Language resource pack.



Publisher: Chatto & Windus
Year: 2009

The Wonder

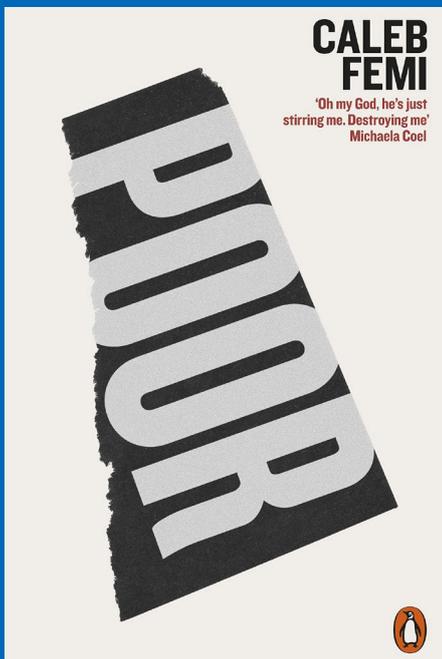
Diana Evans

Themes/topics: Death, Grief, Belonging, Love

The Wonder is the story of three generations of one family, and a mystery that haunts them.

Growing up, Lucas thought all children who lost their parents lived on the water. Now an adult, he's a restless young man still living with his sister Denise on their West London narrowboat, determined to find out more about the unexplained disappearance of his father, the charismatic Jamaican dancer, Antoney Matheus.

Taking in Kingston in the 1950s and Notting Hill in the 1960s, the story explores a host of characters who were part of Antoney's theatrical world, including Lucas' mother Carla. This is a haunting family saga about creativity, love, absence and what we inherit.



Publisher: Penguin
Year: 2020

Poor

Caleb Femi

Themes/topics: Coming-of-age, Masculinity

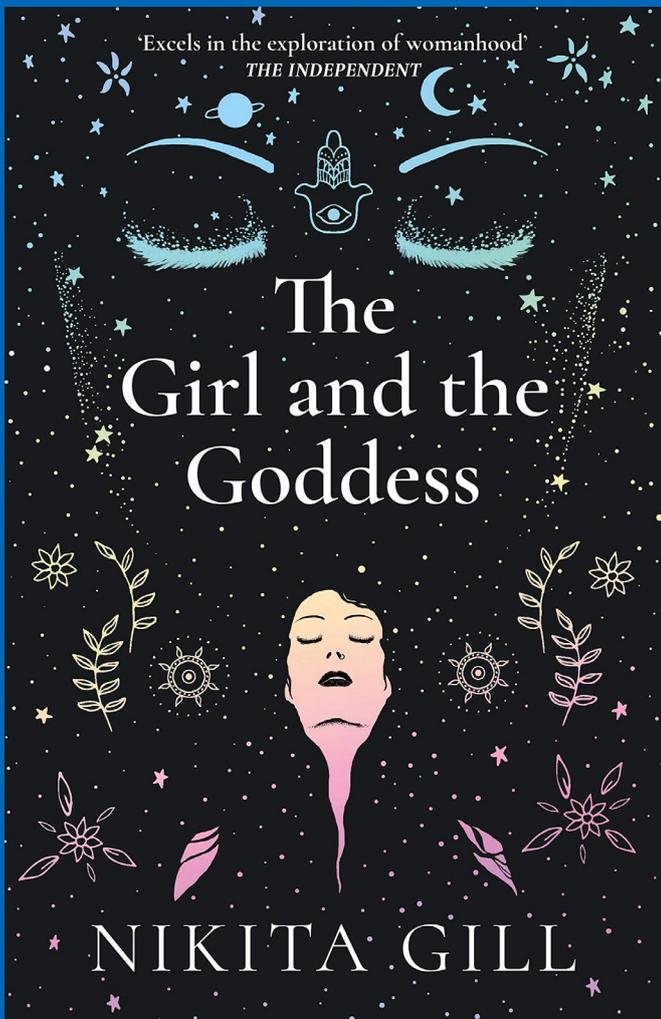
Poet Femi's debut book combines poetry and original photography to explore the trials, tribulations, dreams and joys of young Black boys in 21st century Peckham.

Femi looks at experiences including being stopped and searched at 13, walking through estates of almost 1,500 homes without touching the ground, and how a built environment of concrete and gentrification writes a history of South London youth.

Poor is also the story of Femi's own youth, a tribute to the rappers and artists he loves, and to the world that shaped him.

Actor and writer Michaela Coel said of Femi: "Oh my God, he's just stirring me. Destroying me."

Poor was shortlisted for the Rathbones Folio Prize and chosen as a book of 2020 by *The New Statesman*, *The Times*, *The Guardian* and more.



The Girl and the Goddess

Nikita Gill

Themes/topics: Mythology, Religion

Publisher: Ebury Press

Year: 2020

British poet Nikita Gill first found fame on Instagram as one of a new generation of poets (that also includes Rupi Kaur) capturing the experiences of a generation of young women growing up in the world today. Since then she's published a number of collections, including a retelling of the Greek myths focusing on women.

For *The Girl and the Goddess*, Gill takes her inspiration from her Indian heritage and the Trimurti – the triple deity of supreme divinity in Hinduism – among other things, to tell the story of Paro, a girl with a strong will, a full heart and much to learn.

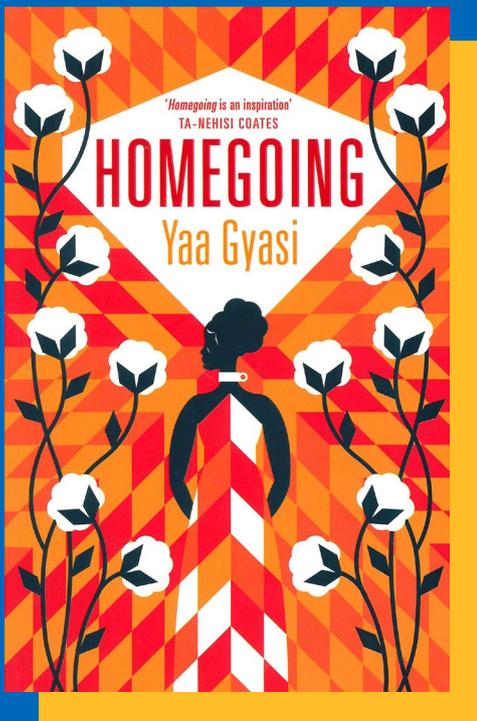
Born into a family reeling from the ruptures of Partition, she has to cross the precarious lines between childhood, teenage discovery and realising her adult self.

Like much of her poetry, *The Girl and the Goddess* contains illustrations by Gill.

Brown Girl Magazine's review of *The Girl and the Goddess* said: "Peppered with beautiful illustrations, Gill's novel brings to life the rich history and mysticism of Hindu mythology alongside themes of family and loyalty. She paints a picture of Paro's colourful childhood in India, with sweet-smelling jasmine, a majestic lychee tree and Nani's house (her favourite spot)."



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Publisher: Penguin
Year: 2017

Homegoing

Yaa Gyasi

Themes/topics: Slavery, Immigration, Family, Love

Homegoing begins with half-sisters Effia and Esi, who don't know they're related. While one is sold into slavery, the other becomes the wife of a slave trader.

Gyasi's debut novel takes readers from the Gold Coast of Africa and the cotton-picking plantations of Mississippi to the missionary schools of Ghana and the dive bars of Harlem, as it follows Effia and Esi's descendants and the very different paths they take to the present day.

Homegoing won prizes including the PEN/Hemingway Award, which honours a distinguished first book of fiction, and the Audie Award for Literary Fiction & Classics.



Publisher: Penguin Modern Classics
Year: 1965

The Autobiography of Malcolm X

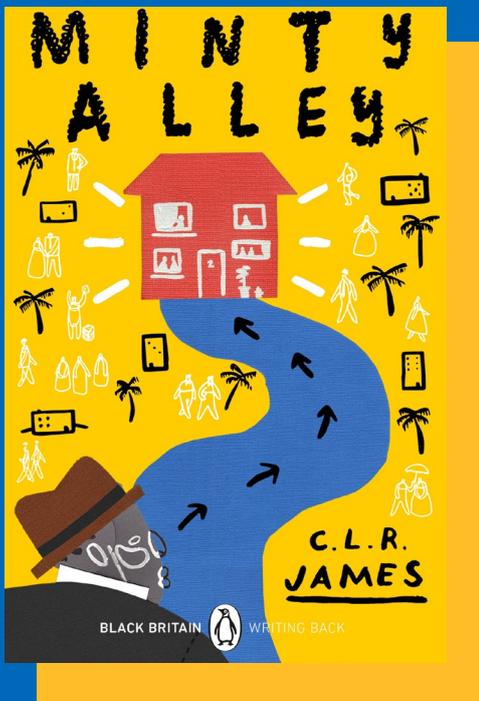
Alex Haley and Malcolm X

Themes/topics: Civil rights, Race, Racism, Religion, Politics, Biography

Written in collaboration with Haley, the author of *Roots*, Malcolm X's autobiography is the definitive book for anyone wanting to know the story of one of the most famous voices in the Civil Rights movement.

Malcolm X, who was also known as El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz, lost his parents at a young age and left school early. He became part of Harlem's underworld, and in 1946 was sentenced to 10 years in prison, where he converted to Islam. Released on parole in 1952, he became an outspoken defender of Muslim doctrines and formed the Organization of Afro-American Unity in 1963. He was assassinated in 1965.

This book shows Malcolm X's quick wit, integrity and the idealism that led him to reject both liberal hypocrisies and Black racialism.



Publisher: Penguin
Year: 1936

Minty Alley

C.L.R. James

Themes/topics: Grief, Death, Socioeconomic issues, Wealth inequality

Minty Alley was republished in 2021 as part of the **Black Britain: Writing Back** series, curated by Booker Prize winner Bernardine Evaristo to shine a light on lost and hard-to-find books by Black authors.

James' novel is set in the 1920s in the capital of Trinidad, where Haynes' mother has passed away and his world has been upended. Unable to afford his former life, he moves into Minty Alley, a place teeming with a spectacular cast of characters.

Minty Alley is a portrayal of class and community, and the ways in which we are all connected.

👉 Click [here](#) to access our *Minty Alley* key stage 4: GCSE English Language resource pack.



Publisher: Penguin Classics
Year: 2006

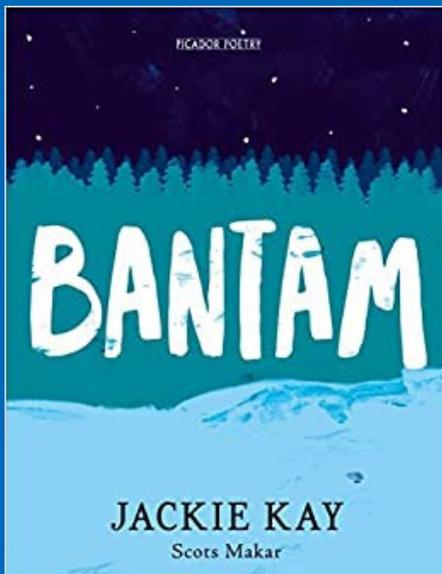
Selected Poems

Linton Kwesi Johnson

Themes/topics: Identity, Racism, British history

Johnson, who was born in Jamaica and came to the UK in 1963, is known as the world's first dub poet. His first poems were published in the 1970s, and were inspired by politics and the Black movement. He is only the second living poet to have been published by Penguin Classics.

This selection of his poetry covers three decades of his work. Poems included cover protests against police brutality, eulogies for departed friends and playful celebrations of urban life.



Publisher: Picador
Year: 2017

Bantam

Jackie Kay

Themes/topics: Family, Grief, Love

Poet Kay has been Scots Makar – the national poet laureate of Scotland – since 2016, and *Bantam* is the first collection she published after taking on that role.

Bantam is about the fighting spirit and brings three generations into sharp focus: Kay's own, her father's, and his own father's.

Kay's collection examines how old injuries can emerge years later, how we bear and absorb the loss of friends, how we celebrate and welcome new life, and how we embody our times.



Publisher: Merky Books
Year: 2019

Taking Up Space

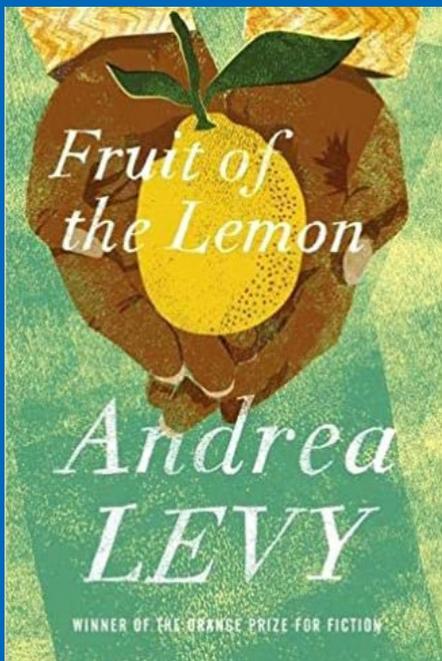
Chelsea Kwakye and Ore Ogunbiyi

Themes/topics: Education, Racism, Mental health

Kwakye and Ogunbiyi are both Cambridge University graduates, and were inspired to write *Taking Up Space* as a response to their experiences of being minorities in a predominantly white institution.

The book is a guide aimed at Black girls and women, discussing everything from the barriers of entry into university, activism, mental health, relationships and diversifying curriculums.

It's also a manifesto for change, aimed at readers of all backgrounds to help them understand how to be a better parent, friend, teacher and more to Black girls who have had similar experiences to the authors.



Publisher: Tinder Press
Year: 1999

Fruit of the Lemon

Andrea Levy

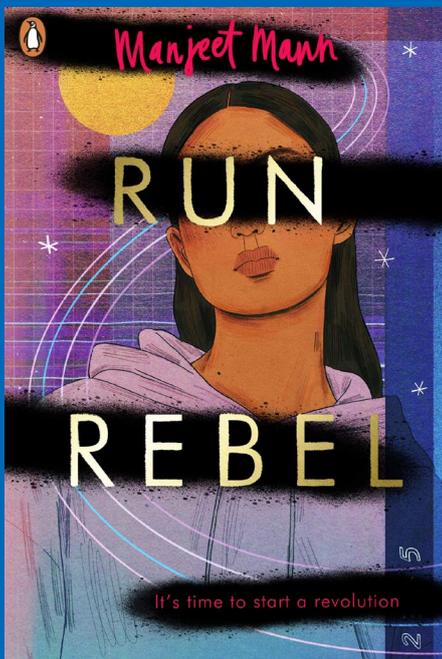
Themes/topics: Home, Family

Faith Jackson seems to have the perfect flatshare and a great job in television, but those, plus her relationship with her loving yet overbearing family are far from it.

When her parents announce that they're going to retire back home in Jamaica, Faith makes her own journey there and is welcomed by her Aunt Coral.

Through her aunt's stories, a cast of characters unfolds, stretching back to Cuba and Panama, Harlem and Scotland, in a story that passes through London and sweeps through continents.

Levy was an English author best known for the novels *Small Island* and *The Long Song*.



Publisher: Penguin
Year: 2020

Run, Rebel

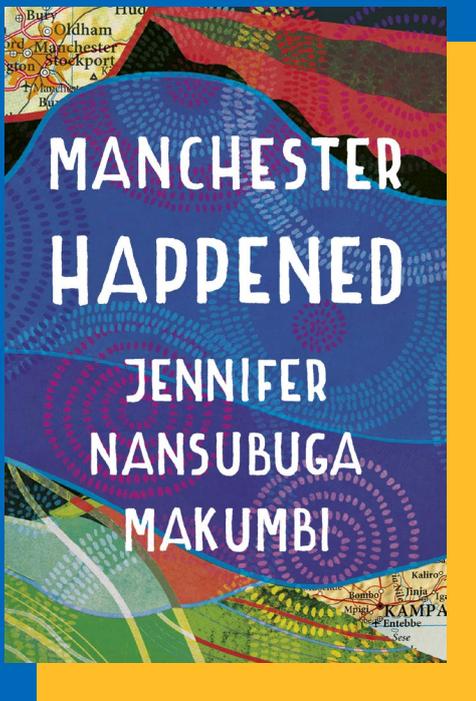
Manjeet Mann

Themes/topics: Feminism, Domestic violence, Family

Told in verse, *Run, Rebel* is about Amber, a teenager who is trapped by her father's rules and expectations and her own fears. All she really wants to do is run, and to figure out how to fight for her mother, her sister and herself.

Mann's debut novel was shortlisted for the Carnegie Medal and the Sheffield Children's Book Award, and longlisted for the Branford Boase Award and the UKLA Book Awards, all in 2021.

The Guardian called it a "tightly crafted series of punchy, often heartbreaking narrative poems... Mann's brilliant, coruscating verse novel lays out the anatomy of Amber's revolution, and the tentative first flowerings of hope and change."



Publisher: Oneworld
Year: 2019

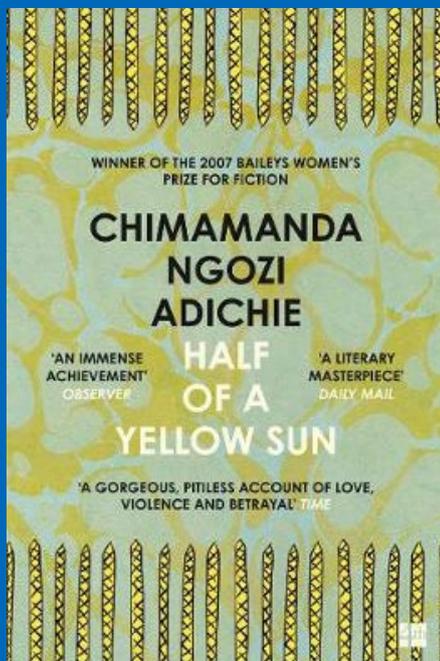
Manchester Happened

Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi

Themes/topics: Belonging, Immigration

Shortlisted for magazine publisher Hearst's Big Book Awards, *Manchester Happened* is a collection of short stories about the Ugandans who choose to make England their home. Weaving between Manchester and Kampala, the collection reimagines the journeys of its characters, and examines the nature of belonging.

Nansubuga Makumbi is also the author of *Kintu*, a reimagining of the history of Uganda through the cursed bloodline of the Kintu clan.



Publisher: Fourth Estate
Year: 2006

Half of a Yellow Sun

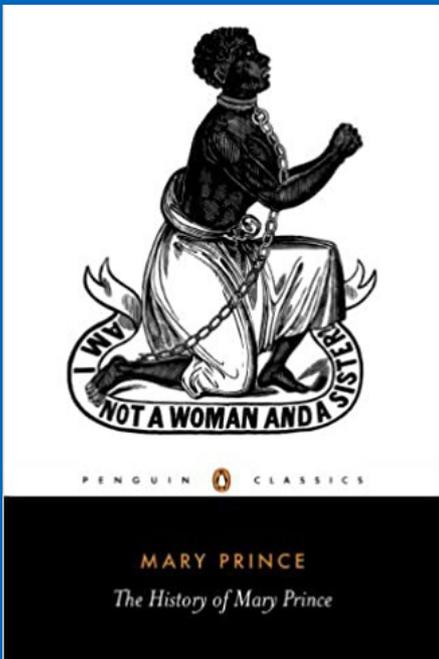
Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

Themes/topics: African history, War, Love

Half of a Yellow Sun tells the story of a number of people in Nigeria against the backdrop of the Biafran War in the late 1960s. Among them are Ugwu, a boy from a poor village, who works as a houseboy for a university professor; Olanna, a young woman who has abandoned her life of privilege in Lagos to live with her charismatic new lover, the professor; and shy English writer Richard, who is in thrall to Olanna's enigmatic twin sister Kainene.

Reviewing the book in *The New York Times*, Rob Nixon said: "At once historical and eerily current, *Half of a Yellow Sun* honors the memory of a war largely forgotten outside Nigeria, except as a synonym for famine. But although she uses history to gain leverage on the present, Adichie is a storyteller, not a crusader."

Not only did *Half of a Yellow Sun* win the Women's Prize in 2007, it was also named the Best of the Best of the second decade of the award's winners.



Publisher: Penguin Classics
Year: 1831

The History of Mary Prince

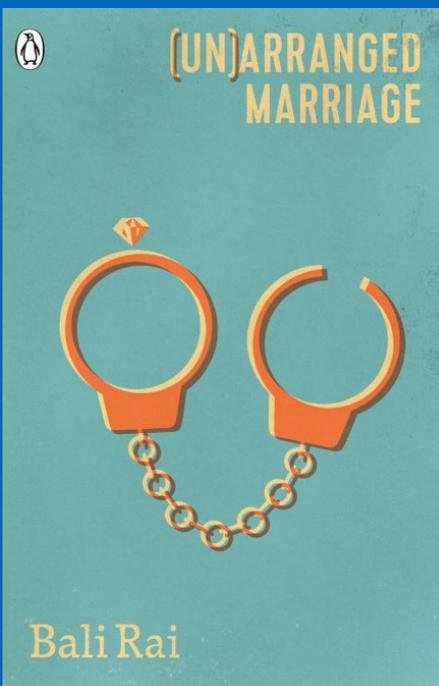
Mary Prince, Sara Salih (editor)

Themes/topics: Slavery, Race, Colonialism

This 1831 memoir was the first narrative of a Black woman to be published in Britain, and describes Prince's life as a slave and her eventual arrival in London with her brutal owner Mr Wood in 1828.

Prince escaped from Wood and sought assistance from the Anti-Slavery Society, where she dictated her story to Susanna Strickland (later Moodie). The book drew attention to the continuation of slavery in the Caribbean, even though an Act of Parliament had officially ended the trade two decades before. *The History of Mary Prince* inspired two libel actions and ran into three editions in the year of its publication.

A powerful rallying cry for emancipation, this is the story of a slave in her own words.



Publisher: Penguin
Year: 2001

(Un)arranged Marriage

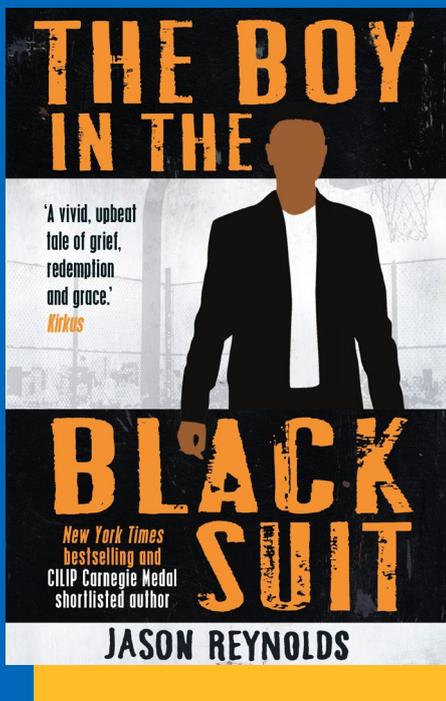
Bali Rai

Themes/topics: Arranged marriage, Coming-of-age, Family

Manny doesn't know what he wants to be: maybe he'll be a footballer, a pop star or a bestselling author. But he does know what he doesn't want, and that's to get married.

Set in both the UK and India, *(Un)arranged Marriage* is a look at one young man's fight to free himself from family expectations and pursue his own path.

Rai's first novel was widely praised, with *The Guardian* saying: "This is a highly readable debut from Bali Rai that teenagers of any culture will identify with."



Publisher: Faber & Faber
Year: 2015

The Boy in the Black Suit

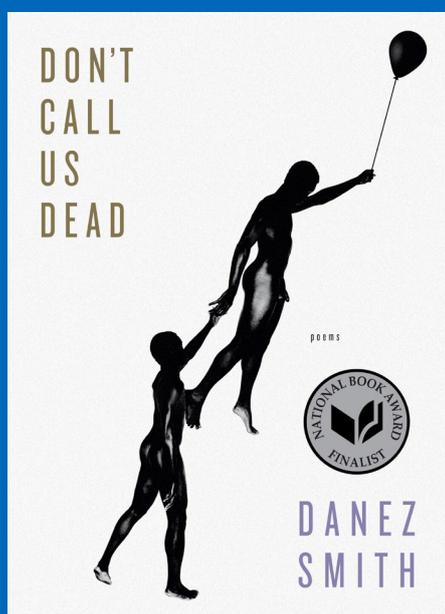
Jason Reynolds

Themes/topics: Death, Grief, Love, Loneliness

Seventeen-year-old Matt wears a black suit everyday, for his job at the local funeral home, and since his mother died, his father can't handle the bills on his own. As his father is drawn to alcohol, Matt meets Lovey and is drawn to her. Lovey is tough in a way Matt wishes he could be, and seems to understand his loneliness.

The Boy in the Black Suit is Reynolds' second young adult book, and was named a 2016 Coretta Scott King Author Honor Book.

Reynolds is a Newbery Award honouree, a two-time Walter Dean Myers Award winner, an NAACP Image Award Winner, and the recipient of multiple Coretta Scott King honors.



Publisher: Chatto & Windus
Year: 2018

Don't Call Us Dead

Danez Smith

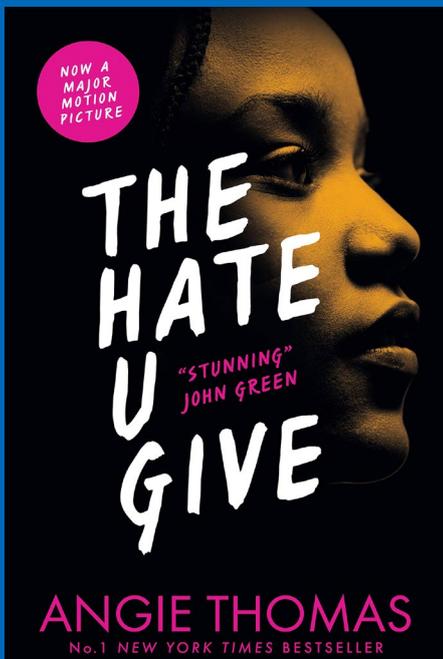
Themes/topics: Race, Grief, Police violence, Health

Smith's *Don't Call Us Dead* won the Forward Prize for Best Collection and was a finalist for the National Book Award for Poetry.

Don't Call Us Dead opens with a sequence that imagines an afterlife for Black men shot by police, a place where suspicion, violence, and grief are forgotten and replaced with the safety, love and longevity they deserved here on earth.

Smith's poems also touch on desire, mortality, and an HIV-positive diagnosis.





Publisher: Walker Books
Year: 2017

The Hate U Give

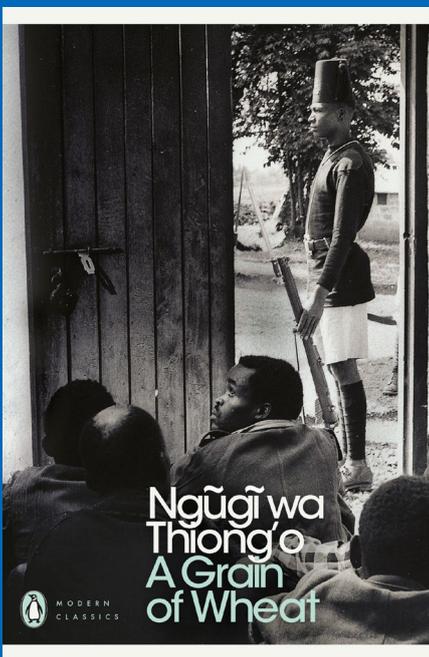
Angie Thomas

Themes/topics: Activism, Justice, Police violence, Code switching

Inspired by the Black Lives Matter movement, Thomas' debut YA novel is a story about justice and speaking up.

Sixteen-year-old Starr lives in two worlds: her privileged, majority-white school, and her poor neighbourhood. The balance between her worlds is shattered when Starr is the only witness to the fatal police shooting of her unarmed friend Khalil. Starr's testimony could destroy her community, and get her killed.

Thomas' novel, which won the Waterstones Children's Book Prize in 2018 and was adapted into a film starring Amandla Stenberg, asks readers to examine what happens when those who are supposed to protect are instead killing, and whether the justice system is fit for purpose.



Publisher: Penguin Modern Classics
Year: 1967

A Grain of Wheat

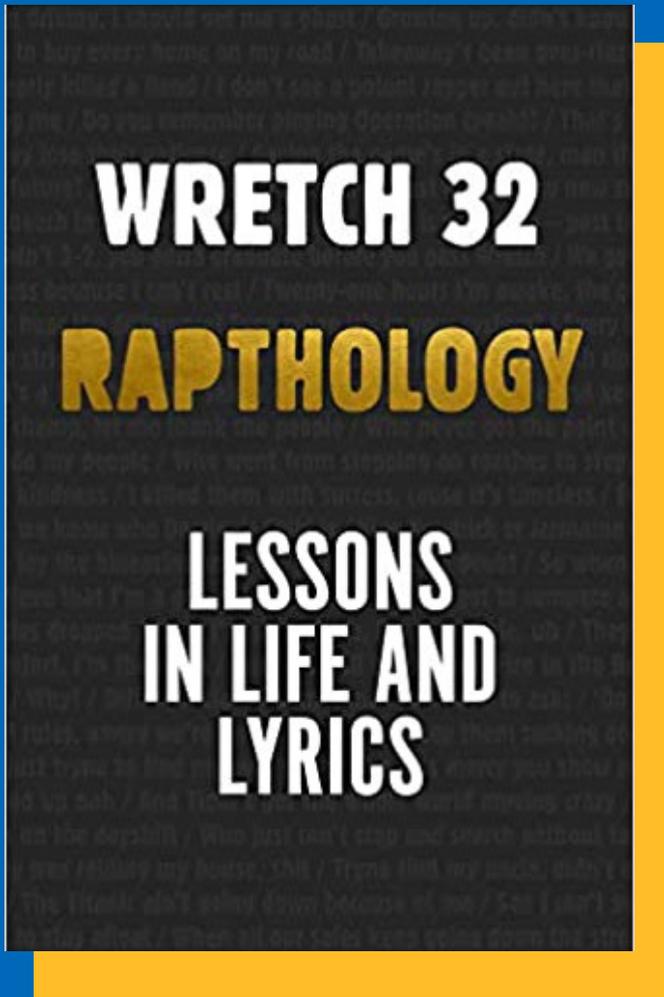
Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o

Themes/topics: Colonialism, African history, Death

Beginning in 1963, on the verge of Uhuru-Independence Day in Kenya, *A Grain of Wheat* is a story about coloniser and colonised reflecting on what each has gained and lost.

The British government has been toppled, and in one village the men and women have been transformed by the uprising. Among the characters are Kihika, a legendary rebel leader who was fatally betrayed to the whiteman; Gikonyo, whose marriage to the beautiful Mumbi was destroyed when he was imprisoned; and Mugo, brave survivor of the camps and now a village hero, who harbours a terrible secret.

Kenyan writer and academic wa Thiong'o has written novels, plays, short stories and essays, and is the author of *Decolonising the Mind: the Politics of Language in African Literature*, a collection of essays about language and its constructive role in national culture, history, and identity.



Raphthology

Wretch 32

Themes/topics: Arts and culture, Music

Publisher: William Heinemann

Year: 2019

Rapper Wretch 32's book is a guide to creativity, as well as a look at cultural history and an insight into his own story.

Taking the writing of lyrics at its centre, *Raphthology* takes readers through the creative process, from the first flashes of inspiration to finding a melody and a beat, to the final product and its performance.

In the book Wretch 32 talks about the songs that have shaped him, from gospel music to dancehall anthems, and breaks down what makes each song so powerful and meaningful.

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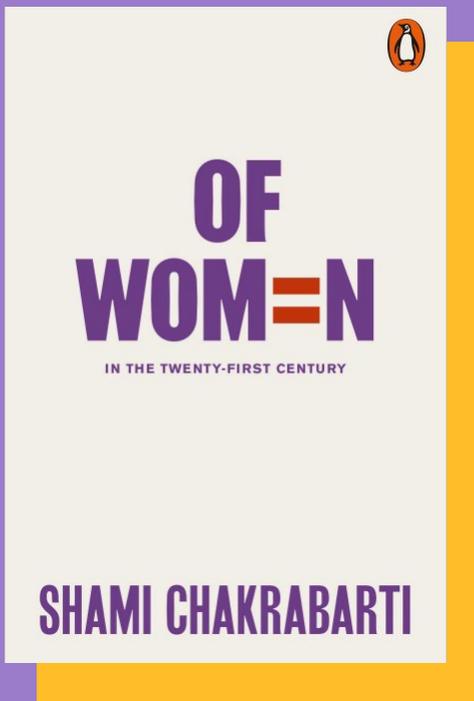
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Publisher: Allen Lane
Year: 2017

Of Women: In the 21st Century

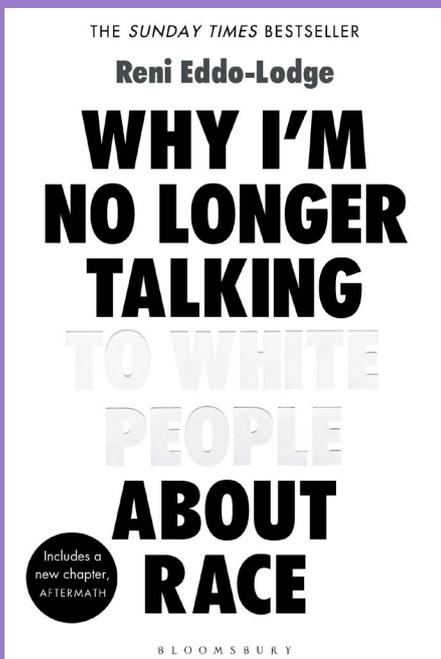
Shami Chakrabarti

Themes/topics: Gender equality, Environment

Leading human rights campaigner Chakrabarti's book starts from the position that gender injustice is the greatest human rights abuse on the planet.

She argues that it blights the world, and affects women of all economic backgrounds and situations. Gender injustice impacts health, wealth, education, representation, opportunity and security everywhere.

Only radical solutions, says Chakrabarti, will change the situation, but the benefits of doing so will lead to peace, prosperity, sustainability and general human happiness.



Publisher: Bloomsbury
Year: 2017

Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People About Race

Reni Eddo-Lodge

Themes/topics: Black history, Colonialism, Race, Class

Eddo-Lodge's book was inspired by a blog post of the same name that went viral.

In *Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People About Race*, which sparked a national conversation and a genre of similar books, Eddo-Lodge explores the link between class and race, the eradication of Black history and more.

The paperback of Eddo-Lodge's book saw her become the first Black British author ever to take the number one spot on in the UK's non-fiction paperback charts. Other books to read on similar topics include Afua Hirsch's *Brit(ish)* and Akala's *Natives*.

Woman at Point Zero

Nawal El Saadawi

Themes/topics: Violence against women, Feminism, Forced marriage

Publisher: Zed Books

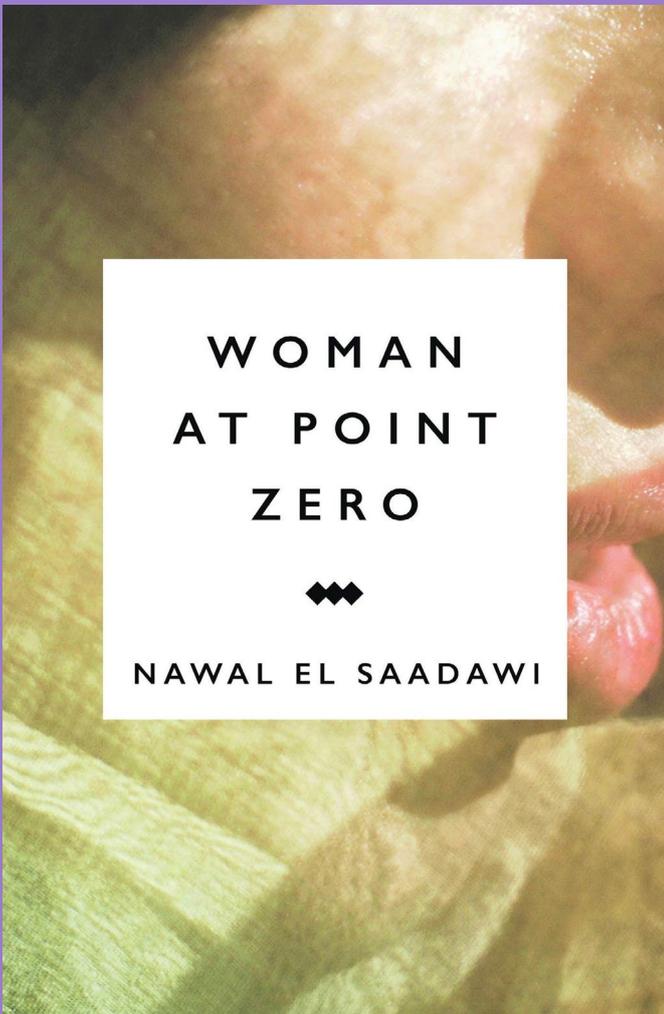
Year: 1975

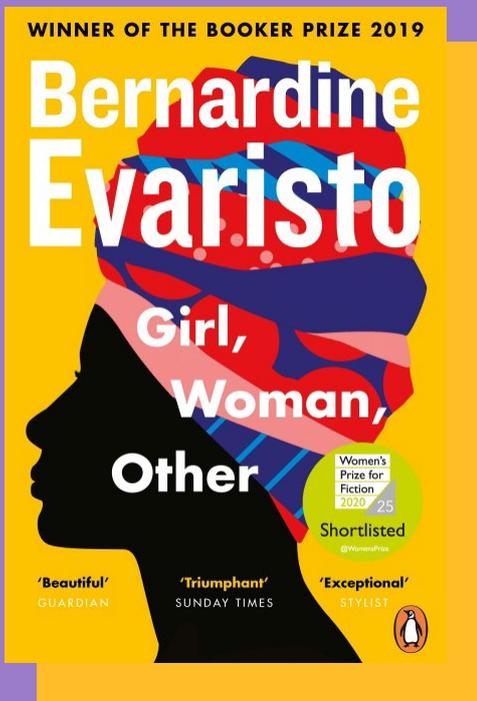
Egyptian writer El Saadawi founded the Arab Women's Solidarity Association and co-founded of the Arab Association for Human Rights, and was one of the most famous feminists the Western world hasn't heard of.

She authored more than 50 novels, short stories and non-fiction works, centring on the status of women, and was jailed for her activism in 1981, before being forced to flee Egypt in 1988. She eventually returned to Cairo in 1996, and lived there until her death in 2021.

Her seminal feminist novel *Woman at Point Zero* is the story of Firdaus, an Egyptian peasant girl who is currently in jail. Firdaus shares her memories of violence at the hands of men including her abusive father, her much older husband and her deceitful boyfriend-turned-pimp, violence that leads her to take radical action.

First published in 1975 in Arabic, the book is still as relevant and sharp today.





Publisher: Hamish Hamilton
Year: 2019

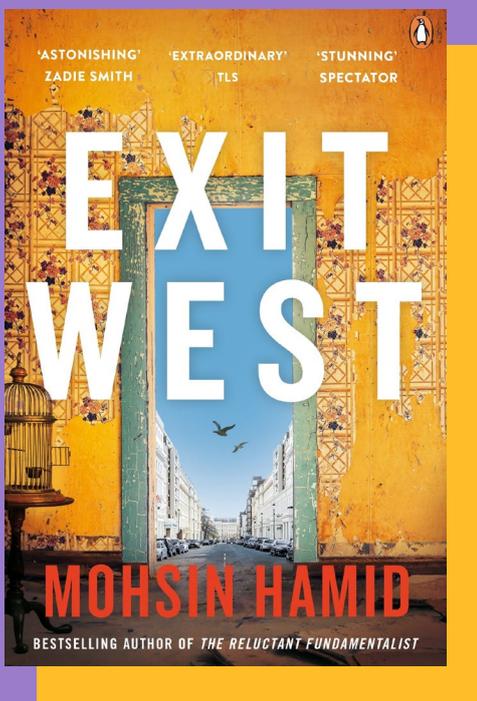
Girl, Woman, Other

Bernardine Evaristo

Themes/topics: Feminism, Racism, Class, Arts and culture

Evaristo's eighth novel follows 12 different people – mostly women and mostly Black. Sweeping between the past and the present, from England to the US, it's a portrait of Black womanhood told in a distinctive prose verse style.

Girl, Woman, Other won the Booker Prize in 2019, making Evaristo the first Black woman to ever win the prestigious award.



Publisher: Penguin
Year: 2017

Exit West

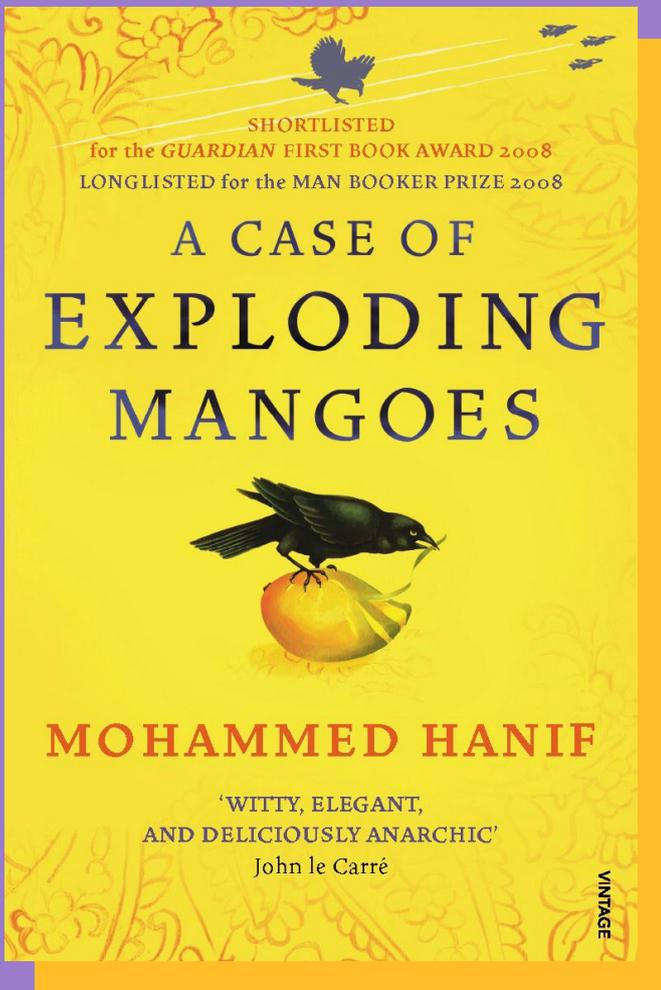
Mohsin Hamid

Themes/topics: Refugees, War, Immigration, Love

In Hamid's novel, Nadia and Saeed meet and fall rapidly in love, but their future is threatened by war. In the world they live in, doors are opening that lead to other cities and countries, and Nadia and Saeed make the decision to find a door and step through.

Exit West, which is Hamid's fourth novel after *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia*, and *Discontent and its Civilisations*, combines a love story with commentary on the refugee crisis, told via a novel that blurs genres.

Reviewing the book in *The New Yorker*, writer and critic Jia Tolentino said: "Hamid draws enchantment from abstraction, in the style of a fairy tale, and his narrative vantage point shifts through time and space with a godlike equanimity."



A Case of Exploding Mangoes

Mohammed Hanif

Themes/topics: Politics, Humour, Satire
Publisher: Vintage
Year: 2008

Hanif takes a real event in Pakistan’s history – a plane in 1988 carrying Pakistan’s military dictator General Zia ul Haq crashed, resulting in his death – and builds a fictional story around the mystery of what happened on that August day. Was the crash caused by mechanical failure, the CIA’s impatience, the mango season, or because of the book’s narrator, Ali Shigri?

Funny and sly, *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* won the Commonwealth Writers’ Prize for Best First Novel and was shortlisted for the Booker Prize.

The New York Times said of the satirical novel: “Far from coming to a conclusion about the cause of Zia’s death, Hanif gleefully thickens the stew of conspiracy theories, introducing at least six other possible suspects, including a blind woman under sentence of death, a Marxist-Maoist street cleaner, a snake, a crow, an army of tapeworms and a junior trainee officer in the Pakistani Air Force named Ali Shigri, who is also the novel’s main narrator.”

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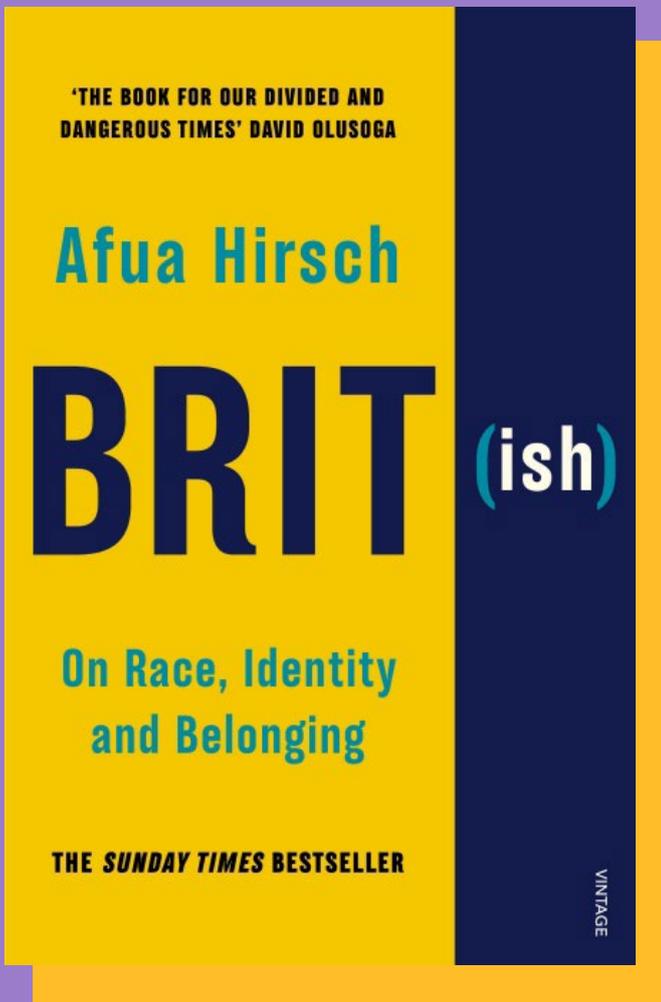
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Brit(ish)

Afua Hirsch

Themes/topics: Racism, Colonialism, British history, Belonging

Publisher: Vintage

Year: 2018

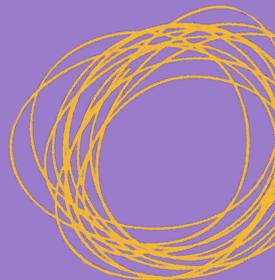
Journalist and TV presenter Hirsch examines what it means to be British, and what it takes to belong, in this memoir meets history.

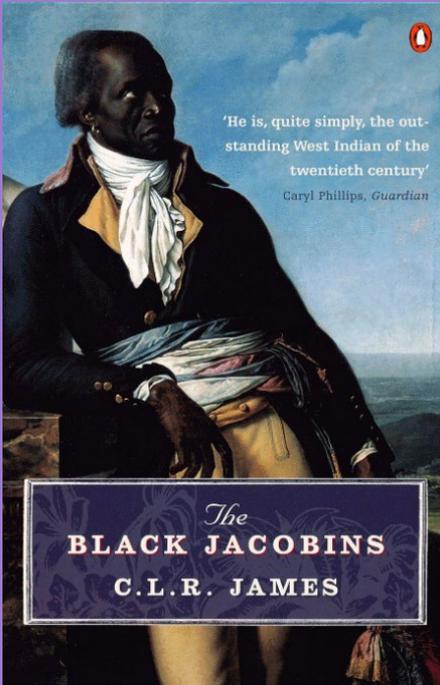
Hirsch meets with English Defence League leaders, people who poke at the hypocrisy of our society and more to explore how the UK's imperial past affects its present. This book is a crucial examination of the question "where are you from?", and shows how the personal is often political when it comes to race and belonging.

The Guardian review said of the book: "Hirsch's writing is a warm, informative and occasionally heart-wrenching blend of the personal and the political, and the messiness in between the two."

Brit(ish) won the Royal Society of Literature Jerwood Prize.

Hirsch is a writer, journalist and broadcaster. She is a regular contributor to the Sky News debate show *The Pledge*, and appears frequently on current affairs programmes. She has written for publications including *TIME*, and judged the 2019 Booker Prize.





Publisher: Penguin
Year: 1938

The Black Jacobins

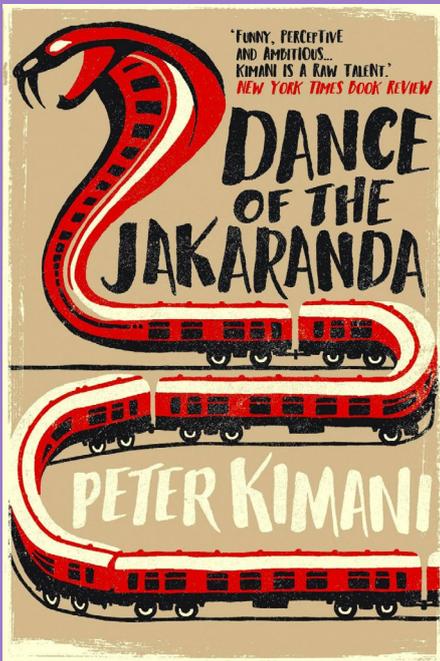
C.L.R. James

Themes/topics: History, Colonialism, Slavery

James' book is the true story of the only successful slave revolt in history, and a portrait of the revolt's leader Toussaint L'Ouverture.

The West Indian colony of San Domingo supplied two thirds of the overseas trade of France in 1789; just two years later in 1791 waves of unrest inspired by the French Revolution reached across the Atlantic dividing the loyalties of the white population of the island.

Taking advantage of the confusion, the brutally treated slaves of San Domingo rose up in rebellion against their masters.



Publisher: Telegram Books
Year: 2017

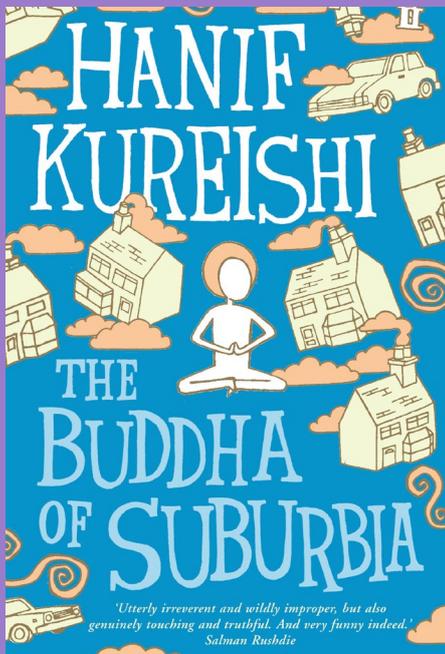
Dance of the Jakaranda

Peter Kimani

Themes/topics: Colonialism, African history

Set in Kenya in 1963, when the country is on the verge of independence from British colonial rule, people from all backgrounds come together at the previously white-only establishment, the Jakaranda Hotel. There, the resident pianist is Rajan Salim, who one evening is kissed by a mysterious woman in a shadowy corridor. Unable to forget her, he sets out on to find her, stumbling on the murky, shared history of three men: his grandfather, British preacher Richard Turnbull, and Ian McDonald, owner of the Jakaranda and former colonial administrator. What Rajan learns will open his eyes.

Kimani is a Kenyan journalist and author, and *Dance of the Jakaranda* was named a *New York Times* Notable Book of the Year.



Publisher: Faber & Faber
Year: 1990

The Buddha of Suburbia

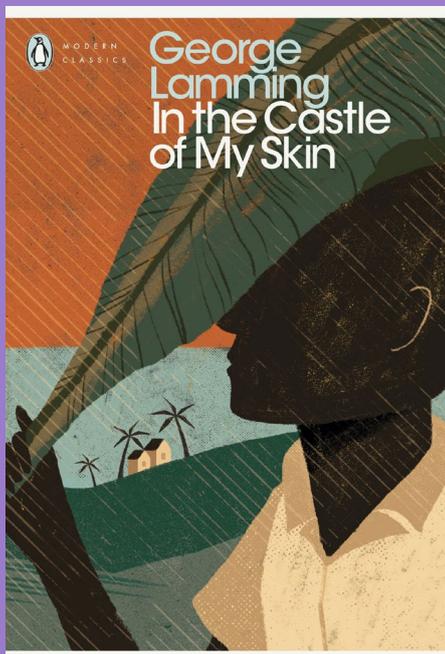
Hanif Kureishi

Themes/topics: Coming-of-age, Music

Kureishi's debut novel is about dreamy teenager Karim, desperate to escape suburbia and experience the forbidden fruits of the 1970s. When he gets an unlikely opportunity to work in theatre, he starts to get the attention he craves, although the results are unexpectedly rude and raucous.

The Buddha of Suburbia was made into a BBC television series with a soundtrack by David Bowie.

In an essay, novelist Zadie Smith described the book as a "lovely, funny, honest" novel. It won the Whitbread Award for best first novel (now the Costa First Novel Prize).



Publisher: Penguin Modern Classics
Year: 1953

In the Castle of My Skin

George Lamming

Themes/topics: Colonialism, Violence, Coming-of-age

Lamming's novel is partly an autobiographical coming-of-age story about the loss of innocence amid the collapse of colonialism. It follows G., a nine-year-old who lives in a sleepy Barbados fishing village that is overseen by an English landlord. Gradually, G. finds himself awakening to the violence and injustice in his world, and draws ever closer to a life-changing decision.

Lamming is a Barbados-born novelist, essayist, and poet. Lamming first won critical acclaim with *In the Castle of My Skin*, but went on to write *The Emigrants, Of Age and Innocence* and *Natives of My Person*.



Leslie
Marmon
Silko
Ceremony



Ceremony

Leslie Marmon Silko

Themes/topics: Colonialism, Violence, Coming-of-age

Publisher: Penguin Modern Classics

Year: 1977

Marmon Silko wrote short stories and a volume of poetry before her first novel *Ceremony* was published.

The book follows Tayo, a Second World War veteran of mixed ancestry, as he returns to the Laguna Pueblo Reservation. There, he finds himself scarred by his experiences as a prisoner of war and by the rejection he finds among his people. It's only by learning more about his ancestors that he starts to heal and find peace.

Marmon Silko is one of the key figures in the first wave of the Native American Renaissance, a term originally coined by critic Kenneth Lincoln to refer to the significant increase in writing by Native Americans from the late 1960s onwards.

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id. Nec feugiat in fermentum
posuere. A erat nam at
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Eget gravida cum sociis
natoque. At quis risus sed
vulputate odio ut enim
blandit. Dictumst quisque
sagittis purus sit. Sit amet
volutpat consequat mauris



BELOVED

SHE MY
DAUGHTER.
SHE MINE.
SEE.

TONI MORRISON

Beloved

Toni Morrison

Themes/topics: Slavery, Civil rights, Grief, Trauma, Death

Publisher: Vintage

Year: 1987

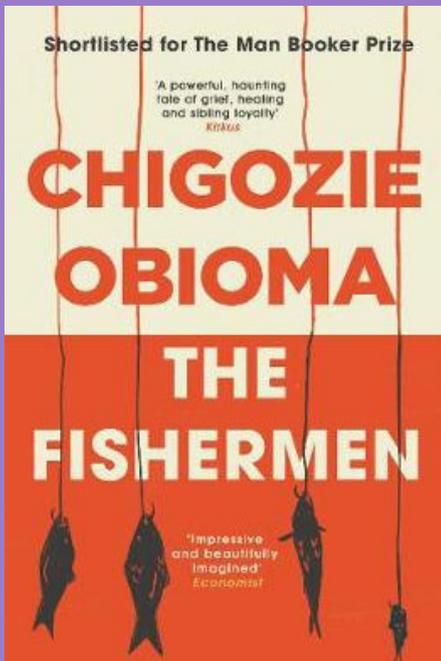
Beloved is arguably Morrison's most famous novel, and won her the Pulitzer Prize in 1988.

Set in the mid-1800s, it follows Sethe, who is haunted by the violent trauma wrought on her by slavery, and whose dead baby daughter – Beloved – has returned to haunt her and to elicit her love.

Beloved was inspired by true story of Margaret Garner, an enslaved woman who escaped to the free state of Ohio in 1856. When she and her daughter were captured, Garner killed her daughter rather than see her enslaved.

Morrison's other novels include *The Bluest Eye*, *Sula* and *Paradise*. She was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1993, and received the National Book Critics Circle Award and a Pulitzer Prize for her fiction. Morrison was also awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom, America's highest civilian honour, in 2012 by President Barack Obama.

Before becoming a full-time writer, Morrison worked as an editor at Random House – the first female African-American editor in the company's history – and published authors including Angela Davis, Muhammad Ali and Gayl Jones.



Publisher: Pushkin One
Year: 2015

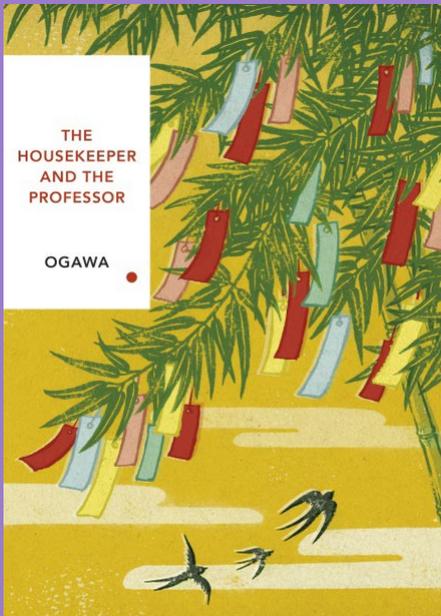
The Fishermen

Chigozie Obioma

Themes/topics: Mythology, Family

Shortlisted for the Booker Prize, *The Fishermen* is set in the 1990s and is about four young brothers in a small town in western Nigeria who go fishing at a forbidden local river. There, they meet a dangerous local madman who predicts the oldest of the siblings will be killed by one of his brothers, a prophecy that unleashes a tragic chain of events.

Obioma's follow-up novel, *An Orchestra of Minorities*, was also shortlisted for the Booker Prize.



Publisher: Vintage
Year: 2010

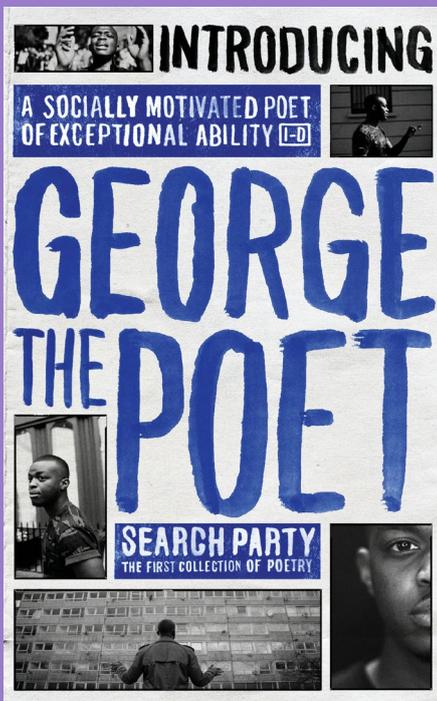
The Housekeeper and the Professor

Yoko Ogawa

Themes/topics: Love, Family

Japanese writer Ogawa has won every major literary award in her native country, and has written novellas and full length novels.

The Professor of this book's title has a fading memory, but still holds on to mathematical equations from the past and can devise clever maths riddles. The answers to these riddles reveal a sheltering and poetic world to the Housekeeper and her 10-year-old son. With each equation, the three forge an affection and a bond.



Publisher: Virgin Books
Year: 2015

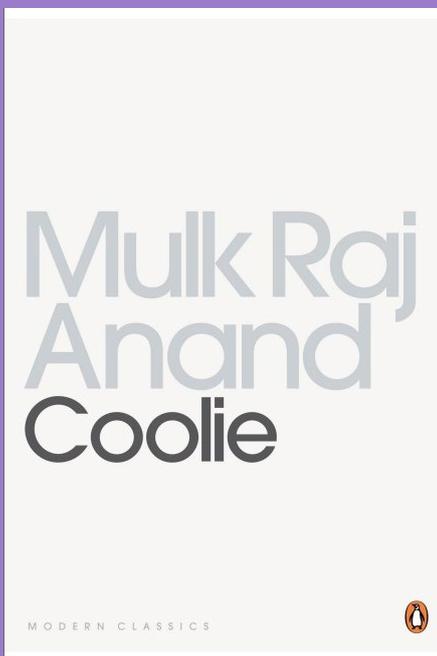
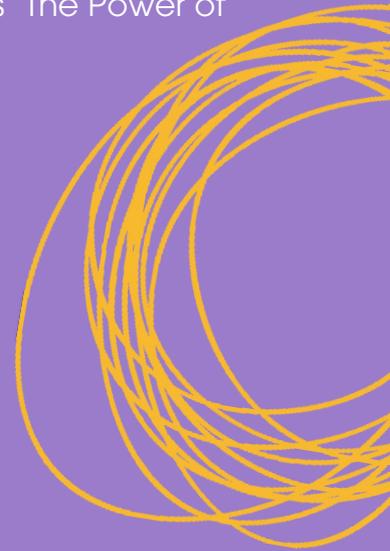
Search Party

George the Poet

Themes/topics: Politics, Poetry

Described as the voice of a generation, George the Poet is a spoken word artist, a rapper and a commentator on modern life. With an inner city upbringing and a Cambridge education, George the Poet has a social consciousness with a satirical.

His autobiographical collection *Search Party* features the political 'Go Home', the deeply personal 'Full-time' and the socially conscious 'The Power of Collaboration'.



Publisher: Penguin Modern Classics
Year: 1936

Coolie

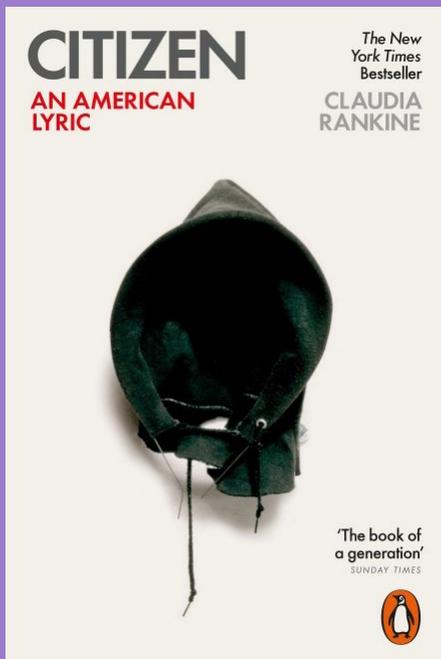
Mulk Raj Anand

Themes/topics: Poverty, Wealth inequality, Migration

Anand's *Coolie* is about the young Munoo, forced to leave his village in the hills of India to fend for himself and discover the world. His journey takes him from his remote home to big cities, where he works as a servant, a factory worker and a rickshaw driver.

Like his novel *Untouchable* – about the caste system – *Coolie* is about ordinary people seeking to escape poverty and survive in India.

George the Poet is a spoken word artist, a rapper and a commentator on modern life. With an inner city upbringing and a Cambridge education, George the Poet has a social consciousness with a satirical.



Publisher: Penguin
Year: 2015

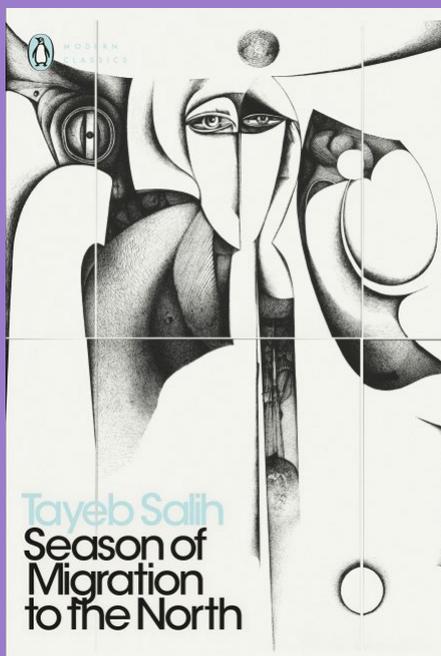
Citizen: An American Lyric

Claudia Rankine

Themes/topics: Racism, Race, Politics, Justice

A collection of prose poetry examining the experience of race and racism in the West, *Citizen* won Rankine a raft of awards, including the Forward Prize for Best Collection and the National Book Critics Circle Award for Poetry.

Citizen weaves together essays, poetry and media to form a picture of the effect of racism in a supposedly 'post-race' society.



Publisher: Penguin Modern Classics
Year: 1966

Season of Migration to the North

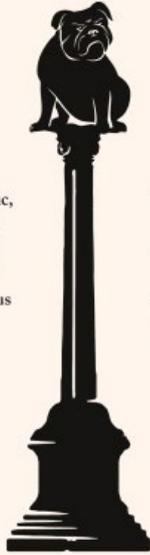
Tayeb Salih

Themes/topics: Colonialism, Racism, Migration

Widely acknowledged to be one of the most important Arab writers of the 20th century, Salih was born in Northern Sudan and spent his career working for the BBC Arabic Service, as Director-General of Information in Qatar in the Arabian Gulf, with Unesco in Paris and as Unesco's representative in the Arab Gulf States.

His novel *Season of Migration to the North* is the story of a young man who returns to his village in Sudan after studying in Europe, and befriends the enigmatic Mustafa Sa'eed. Mustafa tells the younger man the disturbing story of his own life in London after the First World War, where he was lionised by society and desired as an exotic novelty by women, leading him to take a brutal revenge that has now come to haunt his small village. *Season of Migration to the North* is translated by Denys Johnson-Davies.

Empireland



'Lucid but never simplistic, entertaining but never frivolous – *Empireland* takes a perfectly judged approach to its contentious but necessary subject'

Jonathan Coe

'This remarkable book shines the brightest of lights into some of the darkest and most misunderstood corners of our shared history'

James O'Brien

**How Imperialism Has
Shaped Modern Britain**

SATHNAM SANGHERA

Empireland

Sathnam Sanghera

Themes/topics: Colonialism, British history, Racism, Race, Migration

Publisher: Penguin

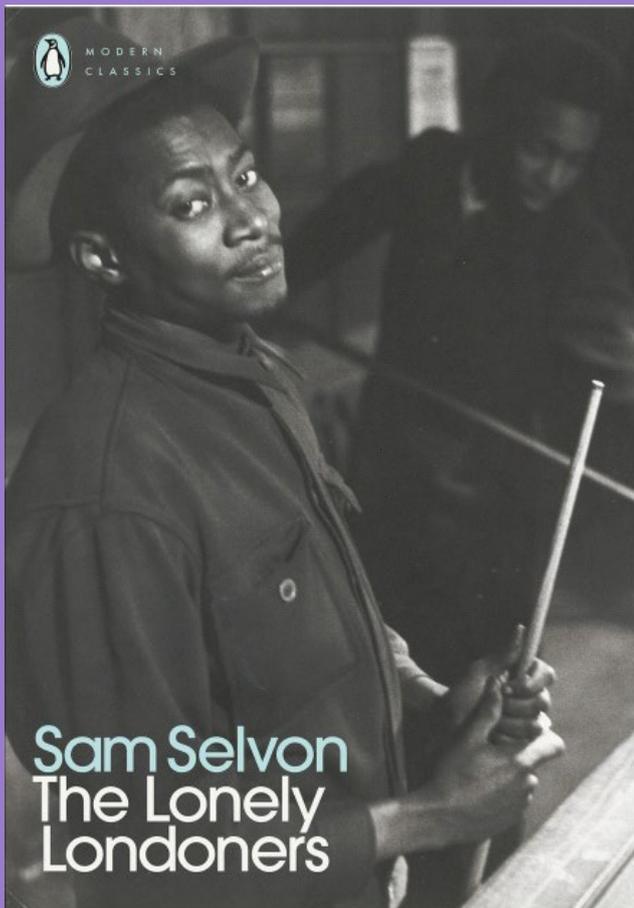
Year: 2021

Journalist Sanghera looks at the legacy of imperialism and the British Empire on UK society today in his first history book.

Combining memoir and history, *Empireland* is split into sections examining topics including politics, British exceptionalism, racism and more.

Through the book, Sanghera makes the argument that the UK needs to talk about its history – mainly via education – if it is to truly combat some of the worst aspects of present-day society.

Reviewing the book for *inews*, Anita Sethi said: "*Empireland* is, most refreshingly, forward-looking, too – considering the work that is being done by individuals and institutions to rectify ignorance about empire such as London Mayor Sadiq Khan's decision to put up murals to Stephen Lawrence, the Windrush generation and Sikh soldiers, and acts of restitution such as Manchester Museums which recently returned sacred and ceremonial objects to Indigenous Australians. He also evaluates the work that is still to be done (he mentions, for example, William Dalrymple's suggestion that Britain set up a 'museum of colonialism') and advises that institutions must integrate these themes into what they already do."



The Lonely Londoners

Sam Selvon

Themes/topics: Immigration, Migration, Belonging, Racism, Windrush

Publisher: Penguin Modern Classics

Year: 1956

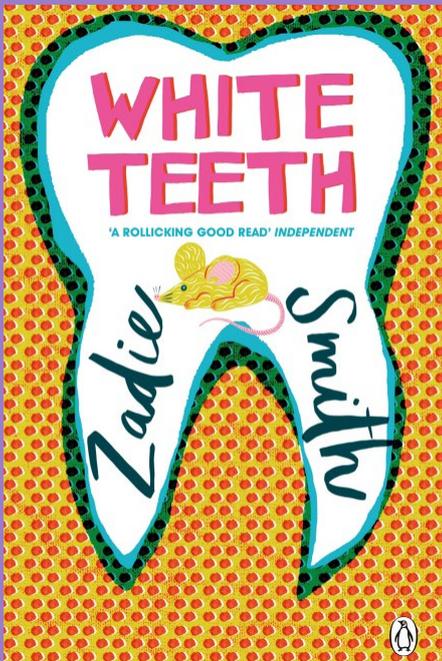
The Lonely Londoners, a fictional account of the immigrant experience in the UK capital, is widely thought to be one of the greatest novels of 20th Century London.

At Waterloo Station, Moses Aloetta meets Henry 'Sir Galahad' Oliver, a new arrival from the West Indies, to show him the ropes. In the city, Henry, plus other new lonely Londoners including Cap and Tolroy, must try and create a new life, and not just survive, but also thrive.

In an essay for the British Library, Susheila Nasta wrote: "As an iconic chronicle of post-war Caribbean migration to Britain, *The Lonely Londoners* encapsulates the romance and disenchantment of an imagined city that was both magnet and nightmare for its new colonial citizens, a promised land that despite its glittering lure turns out to be an illusion."

Selvon grew up in Trinidad and moved to the UK where he eventually established himself as a writer.





Publisher: Penguin
Year: 2000

White Teeth

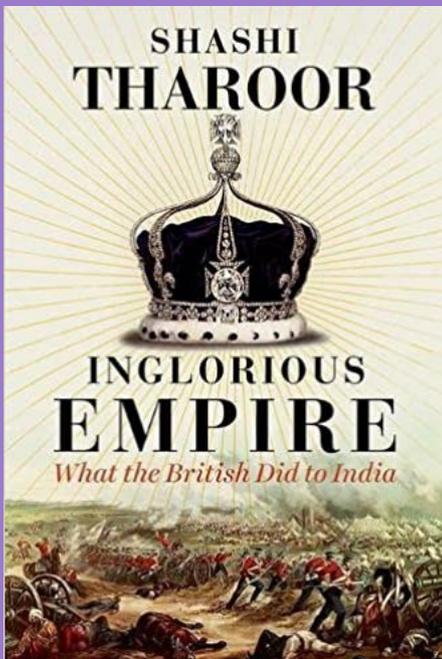
Zadie Smith

Themes/topics: British history, Colonialism

In Smith's first novel, written while she was still a student at the University of Cambridge, the focus is on two wartime friends, the Bangladeshi Samad Iqbal and the Englishman Archie Jones, and their two families.

Set in Willesden, where Smith grew up (and a setting that frequently appears in her work), the book examines friendship, love and Britain's relationship with people from nations it formerly colonised.

White Teeth won numerous awards, including the Guardian First Book Award and the Whitebread Book Award for best first novel (now the Costa First Novel Award).



Publisher: Penguin
Year: 2017

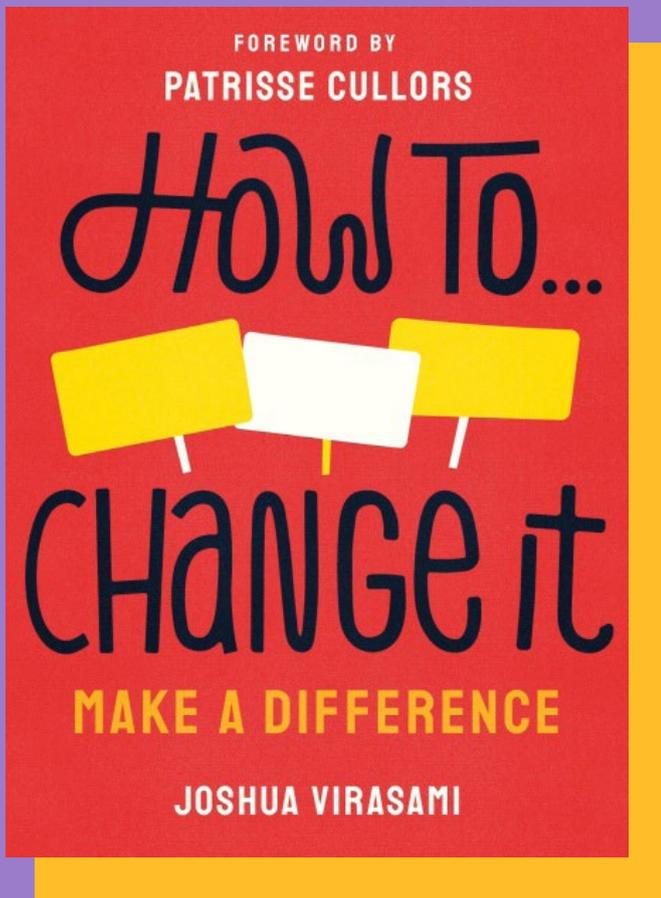
Inglorious Empire: What the British Did to India

Shashi Tharoor

Themes/topics: British history, Indian history, Colonialism

In the 18th Century India's share of the world economy was as large as Europe's. After two centuries of British rule, it had decreased six-fold. In *Inglorious Empire*, politician and writer Tharoor takes a look at the devastating impact of colonialism on India in this book.

Tharoor takes the argument that British imperialism enlightened those it governed, and takes it apart. He demonstrates how every "gift" of Empire, from the railways to the rule of law, was designed in the interests of the British, and not those of the Indian population.



How To... Series

Various

Themes/topics: Activism, Business, Finance

Publisher: #Merky Books

Year: 2020

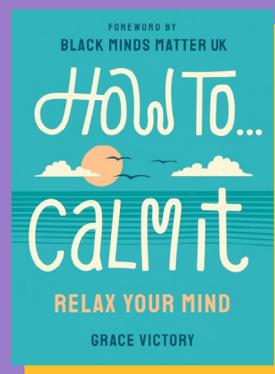
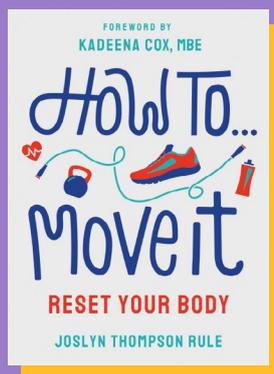
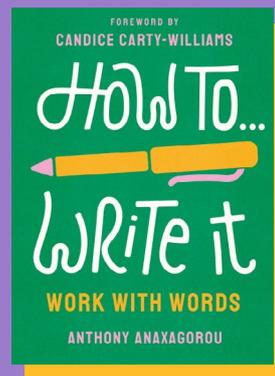
These pocket-sized guides are both part of the How To series from #Merky Books, an imprint curated by Stormzy.

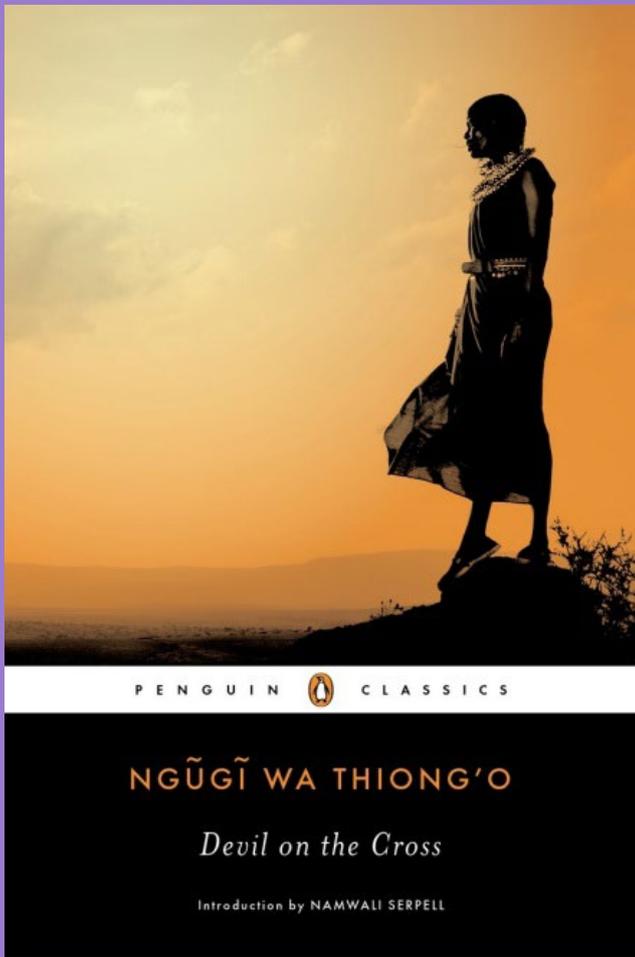
In *How to Change It*, artist and organiser Virasami sets out lessons for successful campaigning, drawing on the work of movements including Extinction Rebellion, Occupy and Black Lives Matter. The book is introduced by Patrisse Cullors, artist, organiser and freedom fighter from Los Angeles and co-founder of Black Lives Matter.

How to Build It is a book about growing your brand and giving it longevity, written by creative strategists Vinod and Timeyin. The book includes creative tasks and personal insight from the two authors.

Check out other books in the series:

- *How to Write it*
- *How to Save it*
- *How to Move it*
- *How to Calm it*





Devil on the Cross

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o

Themes/topics: Wealth inequality, Capitalism, Colonialism

Publisher: Penguin Classics

Year: 1980

A Kenyan writer and academic, wa Thiong'o was imprisoned for over a year by an authoritarian Kenyan regime in 1977 after he staged a play in his native tongue Gikuyu.

While in prison, he wrote *Devil on the Cross* on toilet paper also in Gikuyu. It was in part a call for African writers to work in their own languages.

The legendary novel tells the tragic story of Wariinga, a young woman who moves from a rural Kenyan town to Nairobi, only to be exploited by her boss and later a corrupt businessman. As she struggles to survive, she begins to realise her problems are symptoms of a larger societal malaise and Western, capitalist influences on her country.

Devil on the Cross is a satirical parable about Western culture and business practices, and a story of the post-colonial African experience.



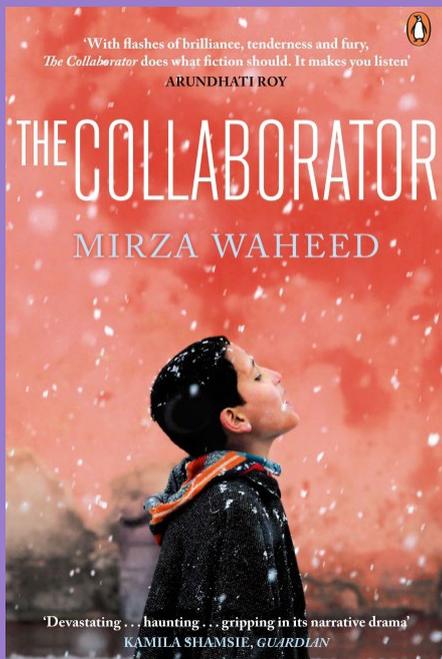
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Publisher: Penguin
Year: 2011

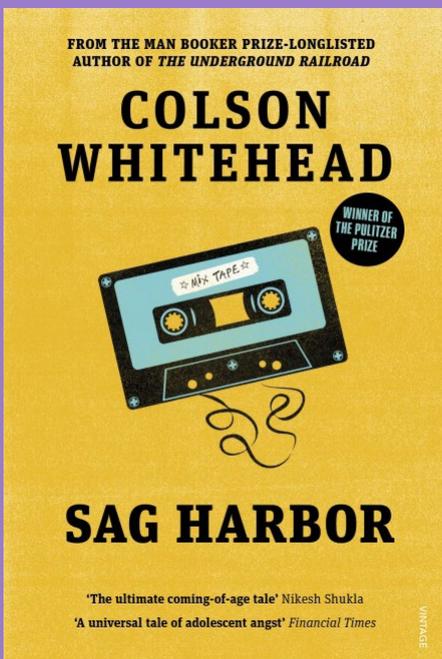
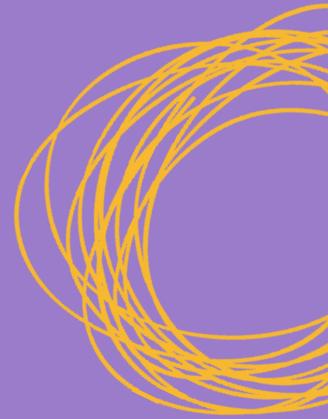
The Collaborator

Mirza Waheed

Themes/topics: War, Coming-of-age

Waheed's debut novel is set in Kashmir, where a group of teenage boys come to play cricket and talk about girls. Years later, the boys have become young men, and most have disappeared over the border to Pakistan to bear arms against the Indian army. The only person left is the unnamed son of the local headman, and put in an impossible position by an Indian army captain, he must cross into the shadowland between the opposing sides.

The Collaborator was a finalist for the Guardian First Book Award.



Publisher: Vintage
Year: 2009

Sag Harbor

Colson Whitehead

Themes/topics: Coming-of-age, Code switching, Race, Racism, Sport

Before he was long listed for the Booker Prize for his speculative novel *The Underground Railroad*, which imagined the underground railroad slaves used to escape from America's south to its north as a real railway, Whitehead wrote a number of books, including *Sag Harbor*.

The novel focuses on Benji, who spends most of the year as one of the only Black students at an elite Manhattan prep school, and his summers in the African-American community of Sag Harbor on Long Island. Both places confuse him, and he's unsure of where he fits. In the summer of 1985, Benji is determined to reinvent himself, but things don't quite go to plan.

'Identity is like fire.
It can create warmth
and comfort, or burn
badly and destroy'

Who Are We?

How Identity Politics
Took Over the World

Gary Younge 

Publisher: Penguin
Year: 2010

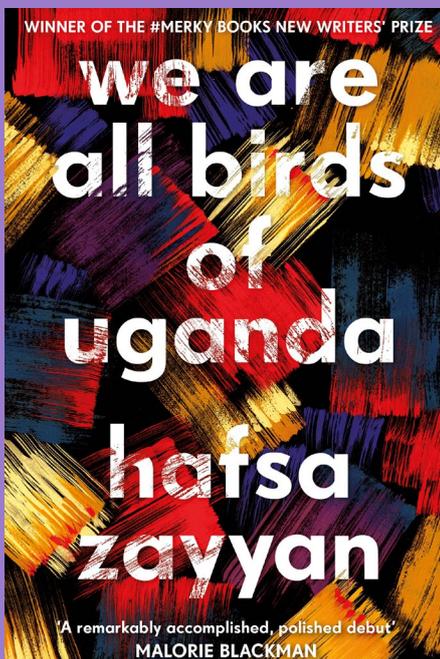
Who Are We? How Identity Politics Took Over the World

Gary Younge

Themes/topics: Politics, British history

Younge explores the issues that bring the powerful elite and the poor immigrant together, combining his personal story with a wider national, and international, look at politics.

From Stevenage to America, the borders of Europe to South Africa, *Who Are We?* asks readers to search for a common and higher ground. Younge's other books include *No Place Like Home: A Black Briton's Journey Through the American South*, which won the Guardian First Book Award.



Publisher: Merky Books
Year: 2021

We Are All Birds of Uganda

Hafsa Zayyan

Themes/topics: African history, Racism, Colourism, British history, Colonialism, Migration

This debut novel tells the story of the displacement of Asian people from Uganda in the 1970s, via the stories of two men decades apart.

In the present day timeline, Sameer is a successful lawyer about to embark on a job in Singapore when a tragedy calls him home to Leicester. There, he figures out that the key to his future lies in his family's past. In that past is Hasan, who writes letters to his late wife as the country he lives in, Uganda, decides that he and his family are no longer welcome.

Zayyan won the inaugural Merky Books New Writers' Prize with a partial draft of this novel.

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Chelsea Kwakye and Ore Ogunbiyi

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How to Build It

Niran Vinod and Damola Timeyin

60

How to Change It

Joshua Virasami

60

Colonialism

Books that explore countries conquering and ruling over others, and exploiting their resources and people.

Things Fall Apart

Chinua Achebe

24

Homegoing

Yaa Gyasi

32

Brit(ish)

Afua Hirsch

49

The Black Jacobins

C.L.R James

50

In the Castle of My Skin

George Lamming

51

The History of Mary Prince

Mary Prince, edited by Sara Salih

37

Empireland

Sathnam Sanghera

57

Selected Poems

Rabindranath Tagore

40

Inglorious Empire: What the British Did to India

Shashi Tharoor

59

A Grain of Wheat

Ngugi wa Thiong'o

41

Cane Warriors

Alex Wheatle

21

Coming of age

Fiction about young people finding themselves, and their way in the world.

<i>The Buddha of Suburbia</i> Hanif Kuriishi	51
<i>Fruit of the Lemon</i> Andrea Levy	35
<i>The Fishermen</i> Chigozie Obioma	54
<i>White Teeth</i> Zadie Smith	59
<i>Sag Harbour</i> Colson Whitehead	62
<i>Rose, Interrupted</i> Patrice Lawrence	15

Feminism and gender inequality

Fiction and non-fiction that looks at the way women have been treated throughout history to the present day.

<i>Of Women: In the 21st Century</i> Shami Chakrabarti	45
<i>Woman at Point Zero</i> Nawal El Saadawi	46
<i>Girl, Woman, Other</i> Bernardine Evaristo	47

Imperialism

Books about the political dominance and effects of creating empires.

<i>Homecoming: Voices of the Windrush Generation</i> Colin Grant	14
<i>Four Hundred Souls: A Community History of African America 1619-2019</i> Ibram X. Kendi and Keisha N. Blain	15

<i>Empireland</i> Sathnam Sanghera	57
<i>Inglorious Empire: What the British Did to India</i> Shashi Tharoor	59

Love, family and relationships

Stories about relationships, platonic, familial and romantic, that say something about the world.

<i>Open Water</i> Caleb Azumah Nelson	27
<i>Love, Hate & Other Filters</i> Samira Ahmed	24
<i>The Book of Echoes</i> Rosanna Amaka	26
<i>The Wonder</i> Diana Evans	30
<i>Exit West</i> Mohsin Hamid	47
<i>Half a Yellow Sun</i> Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie	36
<i>The Housekeeper and the Professor</i> Yoko Ogawa	54
<i>If Beale Street Could Talk</i> James Baldwin	27

Mental health

Books that explore mental health and wellbeing.

<i>Taking Up Space</i> Chelsea Kwakye and Ore Ogunbiyi	34
<i>The Million Pieces of Neena Gill</i> Emma Smith-Barton	20
<i>Everything, Everything</i> Nicola Yoon	21

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Poetry and verse

Great stories told in verse.

<i>I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings</i> Maya Angelou	26
<i>Surge</i> Jay Bernard	44
<i>Penguin Modern Poets 3</i> Malika Booker, Sharon Olds and Warsan Shire	44
<i>Poor</i> Caleb Femi	30
<i>Great Goddesses</i> Nikita Gill	13
<i>The Girl and the Goddess</i> Nikita Gill	31
<i>Selected Poems</i> Linton Kwesi Johnson	33
<i>Bantam</i> Jackie Kay	34
<i>Run, Rebel</i> Manjeet Mann	35
<i>Search Party</i> George the Poet	55
<i>Citizen</i> Claudia Rankine	56
<i>Don't Call Us Dead</i> Danez Smith	38

Real life stories

Memoirs and biographies of people with extraordinary stories.

<i>Becoming Muhammad Ali</i> Kwame Alexander and James Patterson, Dawud Anyabwile (illustrator)	5
<i>I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings</i> Maya Angelou	26

<i>The Autobiography of Malcolm X</i> Alex Haley and Malcolm X	32
<i>Brit(ish)</i> Afua Hirsch	49
<i>The History of Mary Prince</i> Mary Prince, edited by Sara Salih	37
<i>The Boy with the Topknot</i> Sathnam Sanghera	19

Racism

Fiction and non-fiction that discusses the realities of racism, and what can be done to dismantle power structures that enable it.

<i>Noughts & Crosses</i> Malorie Blackman	9
<i>Don't Touch My Hair</i> Emma Dabiri	29
<i>Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People About Race</i> Reni Eddo-Lodge	45
<i>Brit(ish)</i> Afua Hirsch	49
<i>Citizen</i> Claudia Rankine	56
<i>Empireland</i> Sathnam Sanghera	57
<i>The Good Immigrant</i> Ed by Nikesh Shukla	39
<i>The Hate U Give</i> Angie Thomas	41



Science fiction and fantasy

Books set in other worlds, alternate realities and more, that say something about our present-day situations.

Noughts and Crosses

Malorie Blackman

9

Parable of the Sower

Octavia Butler

28

The Gilded Ones

Namina Forna

12



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