

# **The (incomplete)** **Lit in Colour** **Book List**

**100 texts by writers of colour**

**Key stage 3,4 & 5 edition**  
**Volume II**



**Lit in colour**

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## Why do we have an (incomplete) list?

### The (incomplete) Lit in Colour book list Key stage 3, 4 & 5 edition, Volume II

The [Lit in Colour Research Report](#) published in June 2021 found that there is a lack of representation of books by authors of colour that are studied in English schools from Year 3 in primary, all the way up to Year 13 in secondary. It also found that the key barriers for teachers include a lack of resources, budget and time, as well as a lack of subject knowledge of texts written by authors of colour and lack of confidence in talking about race in the classroom. 'Overall, this results in a systemic underrepresentation of Black, Asian and minority ethnic writers in the curriculum relative not only to their place in contemporary British literary excellence but also to the demographics of the school population in England.

So, Lit in Colour created the (incomplete) book lists as a way to support teachers, educators and those who are simply interested in wanting to bring different narratives and experiences into their classrooms or onto their bookshelves with a publisher-agnostic list of over 100 titles by authors of colour. This list was created with the intention of addressing two of the major barriers we know teachers face, the first being lack of time and the second being a lack of subject knowledge on books by authors of colour. By using this list we hope to have saved teachers time by bringing together books and authors they may not have come across before, but also deepen their knowledge of published books written by authors of colour.

This edition is the second list of titles appropriate for Key stages 3 to 5 that we have compiled. Like the first, it is a publisher-agnostic list of new work and classics that we have brought together to show the rich variety of what is available to read by authors of colour. It remains 'incomplete' as we know it cannot be a definitive list, rather this is a snapshot of what Penguin and other publishers have to offer.

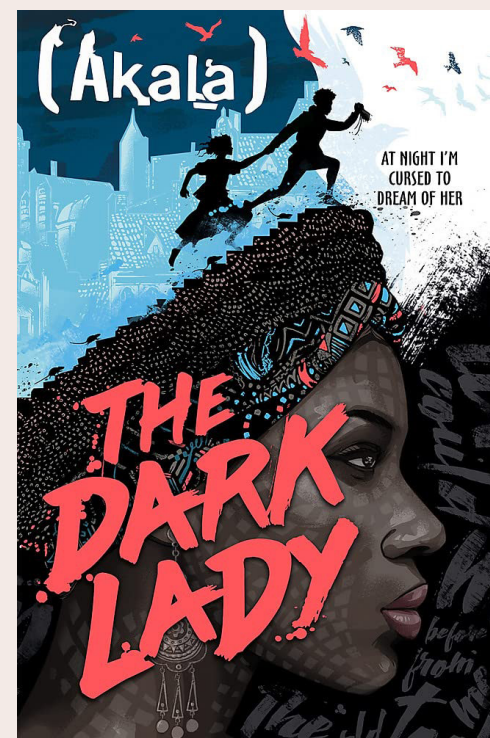
We have listed suitable titles categorised by year group, and have done our best to have a variety of books to support different reading abilities. This list is designed to give teachers new ideas of great titles to take into the classroom but also to use as suggestions of books that students could read for pleasure outside of school. Book titles and cover images are hyperlinked to get 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](mailto:Litincolour@penguinrandomhouse.co.uk)

Years  
7,8,9



**Themes/topics:** History, Race, Identity, Colonialism  
**Publisher:** Hodder Children's  
**Year:** 2021

## The Dark Lady

### Akala

Akala's first YA novel is about orphan Henry, an outsider and a thief who also has magical powers, and is haunted by dreams of a mysterious woman.

The novel is set in Elizabethan London. Speaking on BBC One's *The One Show*, Akala said: "'I wanted to write something that was from the perspective of someone from a poor background, someone working class that really showed the grit and the difficulty of London at that time.'

The [Guardian](#) said of the book: "Themes of race, class and identity... are driven by powerful prose in an exhilarating, magic-laced adventure."

Akala is a BAFTA / MOBO award-winning hip hop artist, writer and social entrepreneur. He is co-founder of The Hip-Hop Shakespeare Company, the author of a memoir, *Natives*, which interrogates race and class, and a picture book called *Hip and Hop*, with illustrator Sav Akyuz.



**Themes/topics:** Identity, History, Arts and culture  
**Publisher:** Methuen Drama  
**Year:** 2021

## Gone Too Far!

### Bola Agbaje

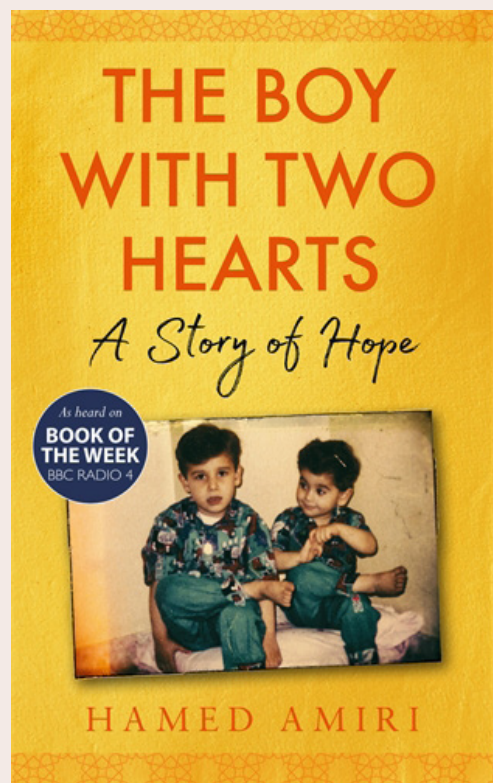
*Gone Too Far!* is a play about two brothers from different continents. When they go down the street to buy a pint of milk, they lift the lid on a disunited nation where everyone wants to be an individual but no one wants to draw attention to themselves.

Playwright Bola Agbaje graduated from the young writers programme at the Royal Court in 2007, and *Gone Too Far!* premiered at the Royal Court Theatre in 2007. It won the Laurence Olivier Award for Outstanding Achievement in an Affiliate Theatre in 2008.

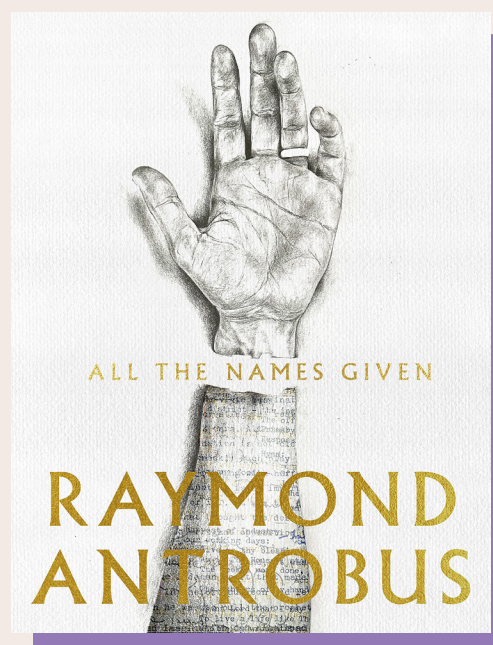
The play was revived in 2008 and returned for a run in the main Downstairs space at the Court, as well as at the Hackney Empire and Albany Theatre, and Agbaje was also nominated for the *Evening Standard* Most Promising Playwright of the Year in 2008.

This version is an abridged form of the play published as part of Methuen Drama's Plays For Young People series.





**Themes/topics:** War, Family, Health  
**Publisher:** Icon Books  
**Year:** 2021



**Themes/topics:** Language, Memory  
**Publisher:** Picador  
**Year:** 2021

## The Boy With Two Hearts

Hamed Amiri

Hamed Amiri grew up in Afghanistan, where his mother spoke out against the fundamentalist leaders of the country and the whole family worried about his older brother Hussein, who had a rare heart condition.

When the Taliban ordered Hamed's mother's execution, the family decided to escape and try and make their way to the UK, a journey made more perilous by Hussein's deteriorating condition and a destination made more urgent by the need to get him life-saving treatment.

*The Boy with Two Hearts* is Hamed's memoir, telling the tale of a family in crisis and the hope and reassurance offered by the NHS as the family tried to save Hussein.

The book was a BBC Radio 4 Book of the Week and was turned into a play by Amiri, his younger brother Hessam and Phil Porter.

## All the Names Given

Raymond Antrobus

*All the Names Given* is the second poetry collection from Raymond Antrobus, who was named *Sunday Times* Young Writer of the Year 2019. Antrobus's debut collection, *The Perseverance*, won the Rathbones Folio Prize and the Ted Hughes Award, among other accolades.

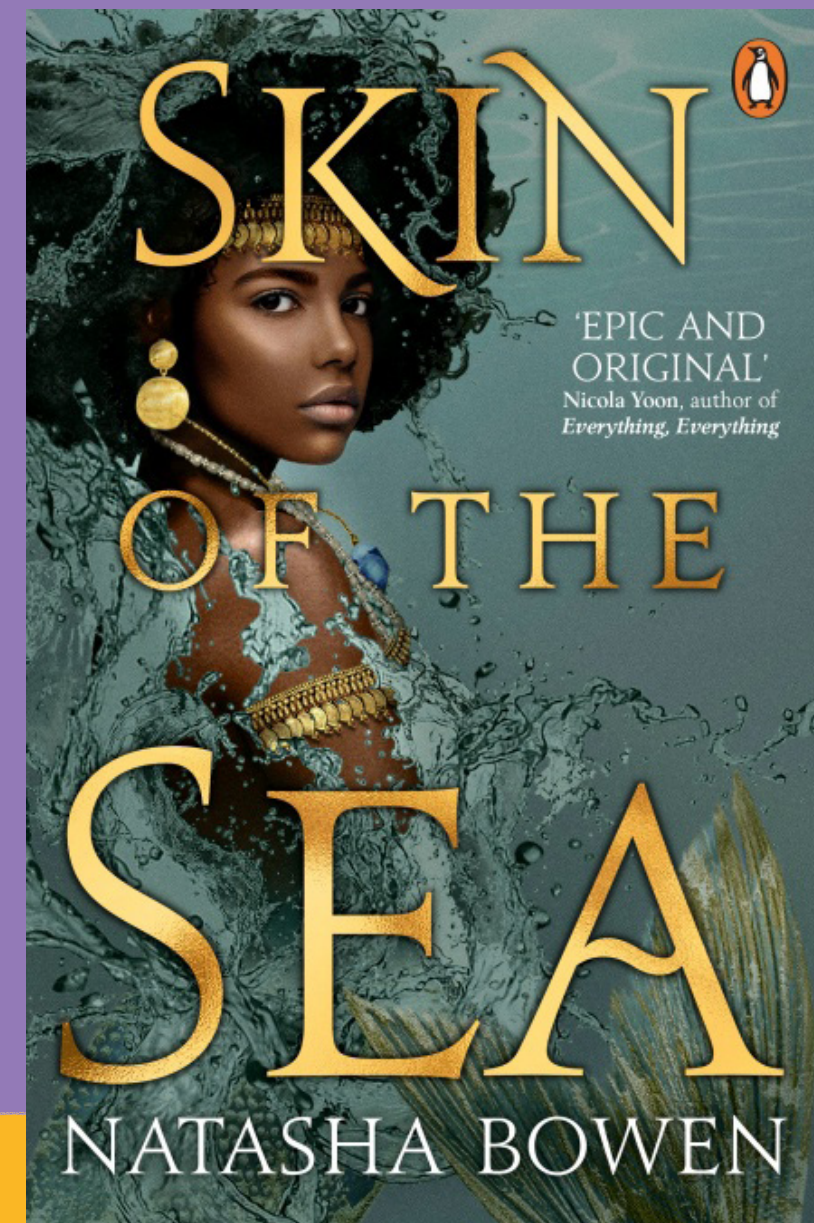
This collection continues Antrobus' investigation into language, miscommunication, place, and memory, and was shortlisted for the T. S. Eliot Prize 2021.

*All The Names Given* is punctuated throughout with [Caption Poems] partially inspired by Deaf sound artist Christine Sun Kim.

Writing in *inews*, Isobel Shirlaw said *All the Names Given* "transcends speech, sound, silence, words – and what we are left with, when we close this astonishing book, is the vibration of the emotion on the blank page".

"Fantastical creatures and vengeful gods form a vivid backdrop to this rich and original story of one girl's journey to find herself".

– Fiona Noble,  
*The Observer*



## Skin of the Sea

Natasha Bowen

Infused with West African mythology, *Skin of the Sea* is about Simidele, who is a Mami Wata, one of the mermaids duty-bound to collect the souls of those who die at sea and bless their journeys back home to the Supreme Creator. When she rescues a living boy thrown overboard by a slave ship, Simidele endangers the lives of her community, and has to make a journey she cannot fail.

A sequel to *Skin of the Sea*, called *Soul of the Deep*, will be released in autumn 2022 and will continue the story.

This book is for fans of *The Gilded Ones* by Namina Forna, *Children of Blood and Bone* by Tomi Adeyemi and *Circe* by Madeleine Miller.

**Themes/topics:** Adventure, Mythology, Slavery  
**Publisher:** Penguin  
**Year:** 2021





**Themes/topics:** Grief, Death, Mental health  
**Publisher:** Little Tiger  
**Year:** 2021

## When Shadows Fall

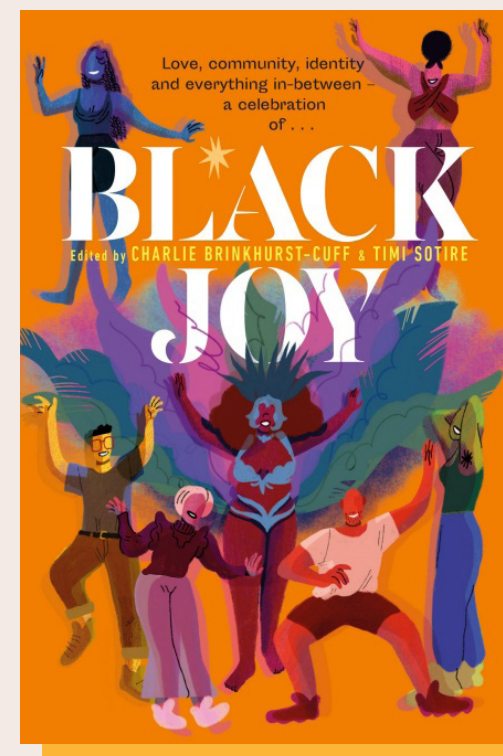
Sita Brahmachari, Natalie Sirett (illustrator)

Sita Brahmachari's *When Shadows Fall* is about three friends – Kai, Orla and Zak – who grew up together exploring a patch of wilderness in between their homes.

Set in the time after Kai's family suffers a huge loss, the book follows Kai as he's drawn into a new and more dangerous crowd, while Orla, Zak and new classmate Om try to help him.

Michael Rosen said the novel is "an invitation to join a community at the heart of which is the tale of a young man gripped by tragedy and trauma", and offers "hope through mutual support and a focus in figuring out what really matters".

*When Shadows Fall* was named by *The Times* as one of the best children's books of 2021.



**Themes/topics:** Black history  
**Publisher:** Penguin  
**Year:** 2021

## Black Joy

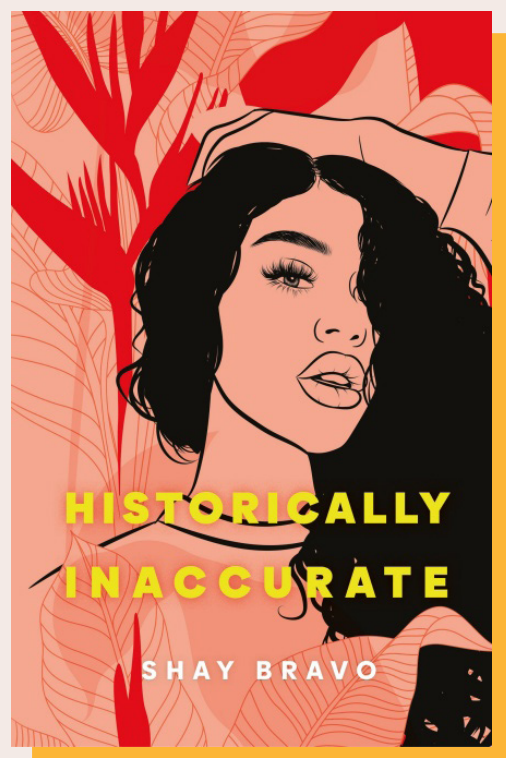
Charlie Brinkhurst-Cuff and Timi Sotire (editors)

An anthology of writing, this book is edited by former *gal-dem* editor-in-chief Charlie Brinkhurst-Cuff, who is now a senior staff editor at the *New York Times*, and Timi Sotire, an up-and-coming talent.

Among the contributors to the collection, which celebrates Black British culture in all its glory, are comedian Munya Chawawa, politician Diane Abbott, author Vanessa Kisuule and writer, performer and theatre maker Travis Alabanza.

Topics covered include Nigerian dance hall parties, the importance of having a work BFF, and the pleasure of tucking into chicken and chips after school.

This book is perfect for fans of *Feminists Don't Wear Pink (and other lies)*, edited by Scarlett Curtis, *Slay in Your Lane* by Yomi Adegoke and Elizabeth Uviebinené and *Love in Colour* by Bolu Babalola.



**Themes/topics:** Immigration  
**Publisher:** Penguin  
**Year:** 2020

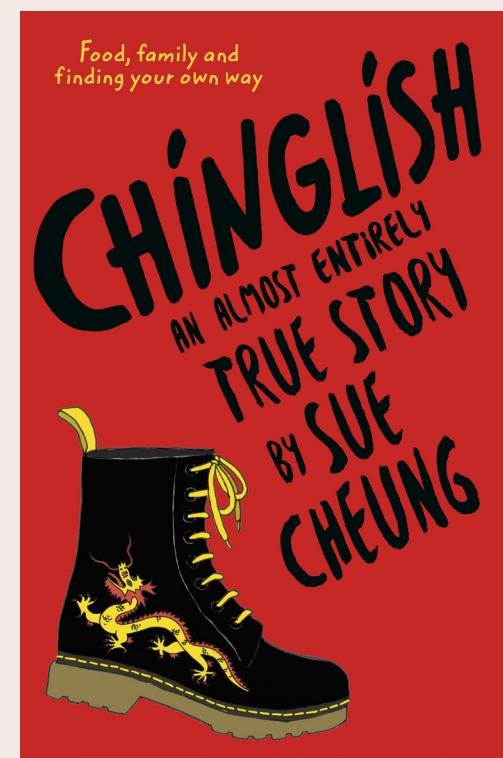
## Historically Inaccurate

Shay Bravo

This romance novel is about Soledad 'Sol' Gutierrez, whose mother has been deported. Trying to keep up schoolwork and a part-time job, Sol joins her college's history club as a way to make her CV look good. But when she's tasked with stealing a fork from the oldest house in her village as an 'initiation' into the club, she finds herself caught up in a series of adventures that will change her life forever.

This book is part of the Wattpad novels series.

Bravo is a Mexican-born author who has lived half of her life in the USA. She began sharing her work online through Wattpad when she was 15. *Historically Inaccurate* won the 2019 Watty Awards run by Wattpad.



**Themes/topics:** Identity, Immigration, Bullying, Language  
**Publisher:** Andersen Press  
**Year:** 2019

## Chinglish

Sue Cheung

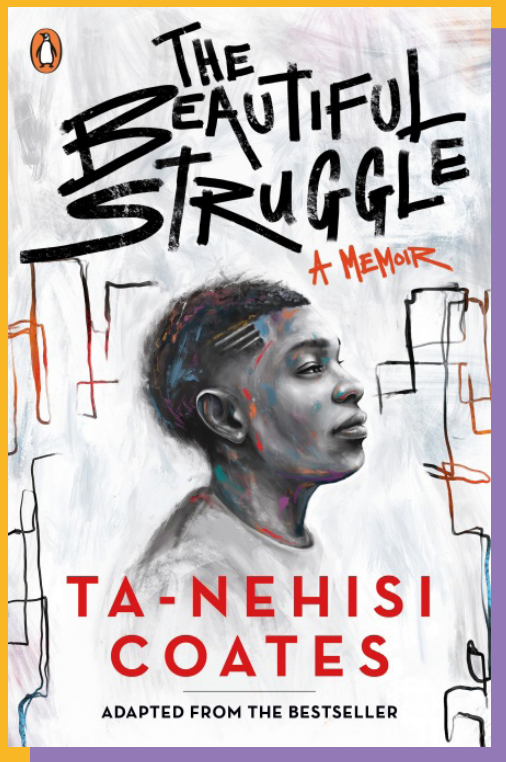
Growing up in the 1980s, Jo Kwan is a teenager trying to deal with an annoying little sister, a too-cool older brother, a series of very unlucky pets and utterly bonkers parents, who own a Chinese takeaway the family lives above. And she's doing it all while trying to navigate a new school and posh cousins, and nurture her dreams of becoming an artist.

*Chinglish* is told through diary entries and doodles. It is a novel about fitting in and standing out, and an honest portrayal of life on the other side of the takeaway counter.

Cheung was born in the Midlands and won a scholarship to the London College of Fashion. She worked in fashion and then began writing and illustrating children's books, before writing *Chinglish*.

*Chinglish* was named one of the best books of 2019 by the *Guardian* and won the young adult category at the Diverse Book Awards.





**Themes/topics:** Family, Black history, Masculinity  
**Publisher:** Penguin  
**Year:** 2021

## The Beautiful Struggle

Ta-Nehisi Coates

Journalist Ta-Nehisi Coates is the author of books including *Between the World and Me*, which won America's National Book Award, and the essay collection *We Were Eight Years in Power*. His essay "The Case for Reparations", written for the *Atlantic*, won the National Magazine Award, the Hillman Prize for Opinion and Analysis Journalism, and the George Polk Award.

He grew up in the 1980s in Baltimore, with seven siblings, four mothers and a father, Paul Coates, who was a Vietnam veteran and a Black Panther.

In *The Beautiful Struggle*, adapted from his adult memoir *Beautiful Struggle: A Father, Two Sons, and an Unlikely Road to Manhood*, he tells the story of his upbringing, his experiences as a young Black person, and his relationship with his father.



**Themes/topics:** Arts and culture, Representation, Mental health, Trauma  
**Publisher:** Ebury Press  
**Year:** 2021

## Misfits: A Personal Manifesto

Michaela Coel

*Misfits* is the first book from Michaela Coel, creator of acclaimed television shows *I May Destroy You* and *Chewing Gum*.

The book builds on her MacTaggart lecture at the Edinburgh festival about race, class and gender, and is her personal declaration against fitting in. Coel was the fifth woman and the first person of colour to give the lecture.

Coel tells of her reckoning with trauma and metamorphosis into a champion for herself, inclusivity and radical honesty. By embracing our differences, she argues, we can transform our lives. A timely book for anyone who has ever worried about fitting in, making it ideal for young people who are navigating teenage life.

*Misfits* was named as a must-read book by outlets including *Vogue*, *Vulture*, *Time Magazine*, *Entertainment Weekly*, *Bustle* and *LitHub*.



**Themes/topics:** Family  
**Publisher:** 4th Estate  
**Year:** 2019

## The Half-God of Rainfall

Inua Ellams

*The Half-God of Rainfall* is a poem about Demi, a boy whose anger causes storm clouds to gather and whose tears result in rivers bursting their banks. The first time he takes a shot on the basketball court, the deities of the land take notice.

Demi's mother, Modupe, looks on with a mixture of pride and worry, and on the day the gods tire of Demi's life, it will be the mothers, daughters and goddesses who will stand between the boy and a lightning bolt.

Inua Ellams is an award-winning poet and playwright. His play *Barber Shop Chronicles* was critically acclaimed, and played to sold out audiences during two runs at the National Theatre.



**Themes/topics:** Black history, Racism, Arts and culture  
**Publisher:** Hamish Hamilton  
**Year:** 2021

## Manifesto

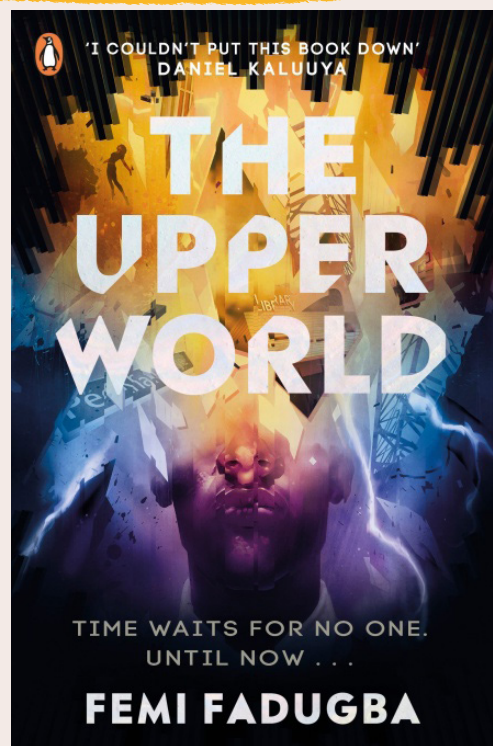
Bernardine Evaristo

Booker Prize-winning author Bernardine Evaristo turns her hand to memoir for *Manifesto*, a look at her journey to becoming the first Black woman to ever win the prestigious literary prize, even though it had been going for more than 50 years at the time of her win.

In *Manifesto*, Evaristo allows us a glimpse into her childhood, which was steeped in racism from neighbours, priests and even some white members of her own family. She takes readers through her discovery of arts through her local youth theatre to her adulthood moving between temporary homes, as well as gives us a look at her relationships and finding her soulmate.

*Manifesto* also chronicles Evaristo's trailblazing efforts as a writer, theatre-maker, teacher, mentor and activist, and offers insights into the nature of race, class, feminism, sexuality and ageing in modern Britain.





**Themes/topics:** Science, Family  
**Publisher:** Penguin  
**Year:** 2021

## The Upper World

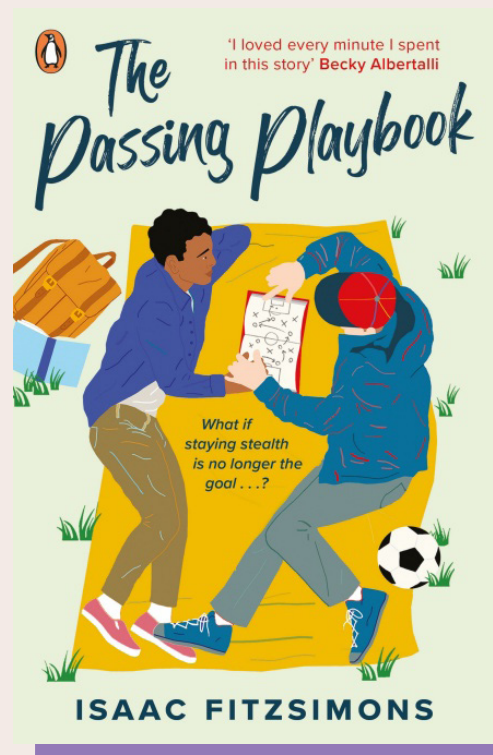
Femi Fadugba

Shortlisted for the Waterstones Children's Book Prize 2022, *The Upper World* is the debut novel from Femi Fadugba, who has a Master's degree from Oxford University where he published in Quantum Physics, and who has worked as a science tutor as well in solar energy and consulting.

A dual narrative, the book follows Esso, a 15-year-old boy who has a chilling vision after he suffers a knock to the head, and Rhia, a teenager in foster care in the future.

Set in South East London, the book looks at fate, destiny and the power we have to change the future, as well as being a study of familial dynamics.

*The Upper World* is due to be adapted for the screen by Oscar-winning actor Daniel Kaluuya.



**Themes/topics:** LGBTQ+, Sport, Activism  
**Publisher:** Penguin  
**Year:** 2021

## The Passing Playbook

Issac Fitzsimons

Described as *Love, Simon* meets *Friday Night Lights*, *The Passing Playbook* is about 15-year-old Spencer Harris, who is a proud nerd, a football fan and a big brother. He also has moved schools after being bullied for being transgender.

At Oakley, his new school, Spencer fits right in, but no one knows he is trans. When a discriminatory law forces his football coach to bench him because of the 'F' on his birth certificate, Spencer has to decide if he's going to cheer on his team from the sidelines, or fight for his right to play, publicly.

*The Passing Playbook*, which is part of the Wattpad series, was a Junior Library Guild Gold Standard selection, a Summer/Fall 2021 Indies Introduce title, a *Kirkus* Best Young Adult Book of 2021, and a 2022 Lambda Literary Award Finalist.



**Themes/topics:** Patriarchy, Family, Feminism  
**Publisher:** Usborne  
**Year:** 2022

## The Merciless Ones

Namina Forna

*The Merciless Ones* is the sequel to Namina Forna's bestselling novel *The Gilded Ones*, and continues to follow Deka, who bleeds gold and discovers she is an Alaki, a near-immortal being with exceptional gifts.

In this book, Deka has discovered her true role, and the secrets the kingdom has been hiding, and now a battle is waging.

The series is inspired by West African mythology, and is an exploration of patriarchy and women's power.

Forna said in the [Guardian](#) that she became a writer because she "wanted to create a fantasy world on par with the ones in my favourite books from childhood". She continued: "I wanted to put Black and brown people at the forefront of this world; and women, who have so often been pushed to the periphery of fantasy, at the very centre."



**Themes/topics:** Feminism, Sexual assault, Racism, Mental health  
**Publisher:** Penguin  
**Year:** 2021

## Off the Record

Camryn Garrett

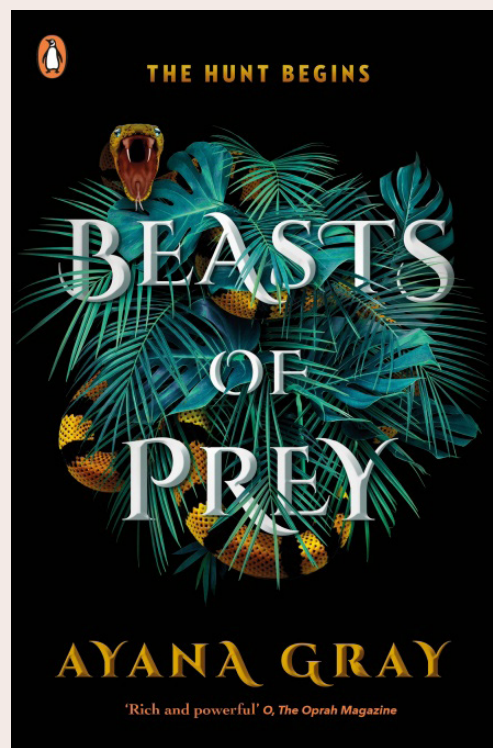
Camryn Garrett's second novel, after the acclaimed *Full Disclosure*, is the story of a teenager who wins the chance to write a celebrity profile for a magazine. Soon Josie is rubbing elbows with the rich and famous, and finds herself falling for the subject of her profile, Marius Canet.

But when a young actress tells her a secret, and Josie uncovers more hidden truths from other women about the same man, she has to decide whether she's the right person to tell the story, and what the consequences are if she chooses to go ahead.

*Off the Record* is a moving testament to the #MeToo movement, and a look at how women stand up for each other.

[Kirkus Reviews](#) called the book "an irresistible, unapologetically feminist story".





## Beasts of Prey

Ayana Grey

Inspired by Pan-African mythology, *Beasts of Prey* follows Koffi and Ekon, both with links to the notorious Night Zoo.

Koffi cares for the zoo's fearsome mythical creatures to pay off her family's debts, and unleashes a power she doesn't fully understand when they're threatened by the zoo's cruel master.

Meanwhile, Ekon is the son of a decorated hero and is destined to become an elite warrior, until a fire at the Night Zoo upends his future.

Ekon and Koffi must capture the Shetani, a vicious monster that plagues their city, if they are to set themselves back on the paths they wanted.

Soon to be adapted for a Netflix film, *Beasts of Prey* is for fans of the *Ember in the Ashes* series by Sabaa Tahir and *The Gilded Ones* by Namina Forna. Sequel *Beasts of Ruin* will be released later in 2022.

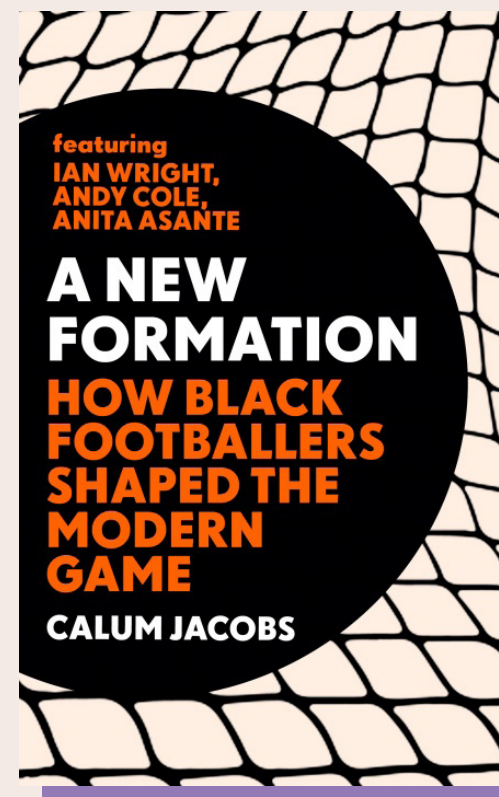
## A New Formation: How Black Footballers Shaped the Modern Game

Calum Jacobs

*A New Formation* explores the role Black British footballers have played in shaping football both on and off the pitch, and looks at the intersections between football and wider Black British culture.

Calum Jacobs, founder of CARICOM Magazine, a print and online platform dedicated to discussing football and broader culture through a Black lens, turns away from the frameworks of trauma and oppression that are usually foisted on narratives about Black people to highlight the vibrancy and nuance of contemporary Black life in Britain.

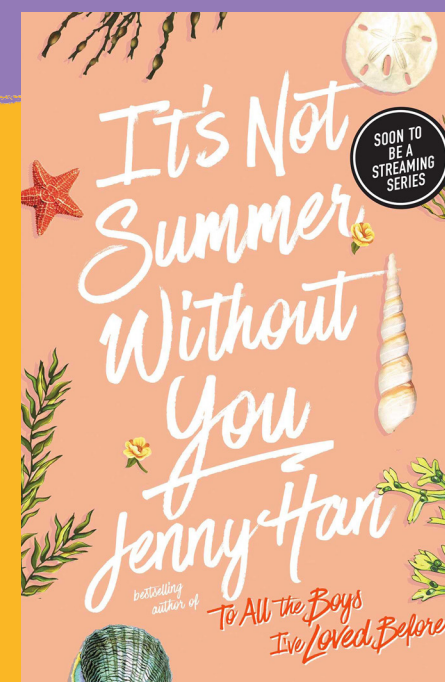
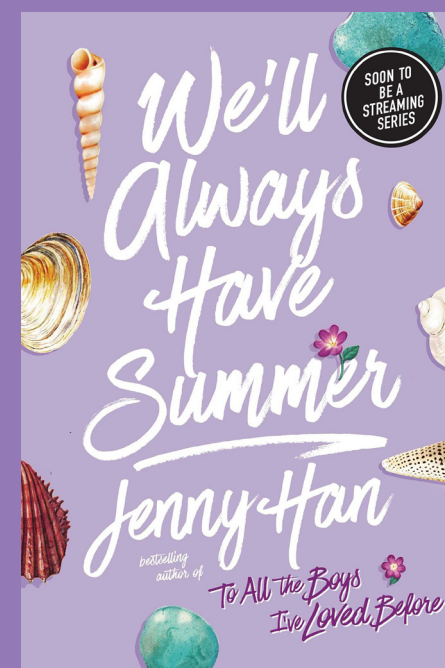
Co-contributors to the book include authors Musa Okwonga and Aniefiok Ekpoudom and sports broadcaster Jeanette Kwakye, and *A New Formation* includes interviews with players including Ian Wright, Anita Asante and Andy Cole.



**Themes/topics:** Non-fiction, Sport, Arts and culture  
**Publisher:** Merky Books  
**Year:** 2022

"Jenny Han takes you to carnivals, midnight swimming, broken hearts and first kisses"

– Guardian



**Themes/topics:** Romance, Friendship  
**Publisher:** Penguin  
**Year:** 2009–2011



## Summer I Turned Pretty series

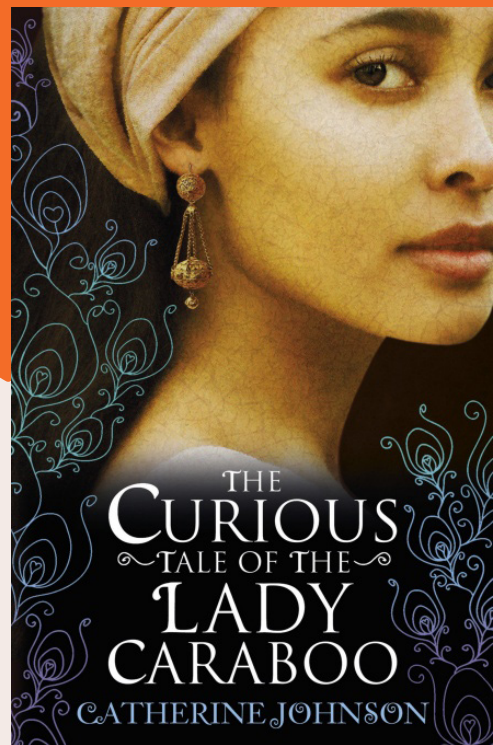
Jenny Han

Jenny Han is known for her *To All the Boys I've Loved Before* trilogy, which was adapted into three films for Netflix. She's also the author of a number of other books, including *The Summer I Turned Pretty*, and its sequels *It's Not Summer Without You* and *We'll Always Have Summer*.

The series follows Isabel, who is noticed by two brothers on her latest summer holiday at the beach. She's been in love with aloof and unavailable Conrad forever, while cute and relaxed Jeremiah has always paid her attention. As the seasons pass and promises are made, Isabel finds herself torn between the two, and a difficult decision awaits.

The trilogy has been adapted for an Amazon Prime series.





## The Curious Tale of the Lady Caraboo

Catherine Johnson

Catherine Johnson is often inspired by sidenotes in British history, and for *The Curious Tale of the Lady Caraboo* she's taken Mary Willcox (also known as Mary Willcocks or Mary Baker) as her starting point.

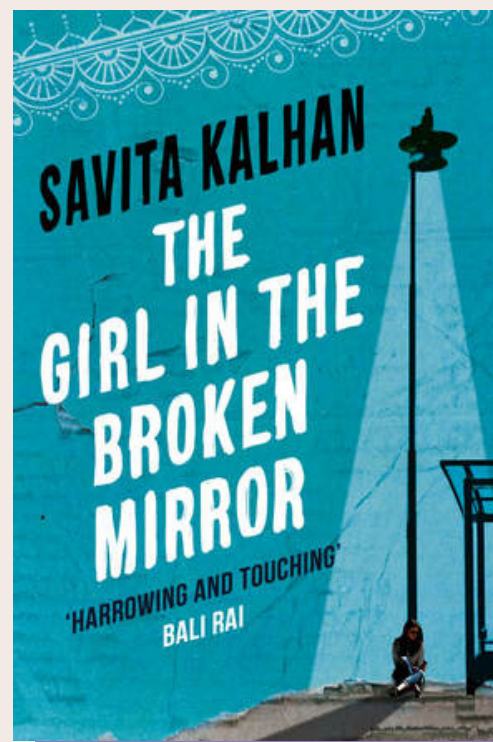
The novel follows a young woman who turns up bruised and beaten and is taken in by a woman and her daughter. Soon, she becomes a curiosity, and goes by the moniker Princess Caraboo of the Malay Islands.

*The Curious Tale of the Lady Caraboo*, which was shortlisted for the YA Book Prize 2016, is a story about the relationship between pretence and reality, and how everyone is playing a role in life.

**Themes/topics:** Colonialism, Racism, History

**Publisher:** Penguin

**Year:** 2015



## The Girl in the Broken Mirror

Savita Kalhan

*The Girl in the Broken Mirror* follows Jay, an only child whose father died some years before. Now, Jay and her mother have to move in with Jay's aunt, uncle and cousins.

There, Jay is forced to live under strict rules informed by Indian customs and traditions, despite her father's belief that well-educated girls could make successful, independent lives. When Jay's life implodes, she has to try and find a way to get past the shame and keep going.

*The Girl in the Broken Mirror* was nominated for the CILIP Carnegie Medal in 2019.

Author Bali Rai called the novel "both harrowing and touching", and said the honesty was "very refreshing, and very hard-hitting, which is much needed".

**Themes/topics:** Trauma, Grief, Feminism

**Publisher:** Troika Books

**Year:** 2018

## Catching Teller Crow

Ambelin & Ezekiel Kwaymullina

Told from the point of view of two Aboriginal protagonists, *Catching Teller Crow* is partly a mystery novel, partly a thriller, and partly a look at family and identity.

It follows Beth Teller, who died in a car crash and can only be seen by her detective father, who is drowning in grief. The only thing that might save them both is a suspected murder and a mystery to solve.

Their potential witness is Isobel Catching, who is Aboriginal by birth, like Beth, and seems lost and isolated. She is also the only other person who can see Beth. The investigation leads everyone closer to something dark and terrible at the heart of the Australian town they live in.

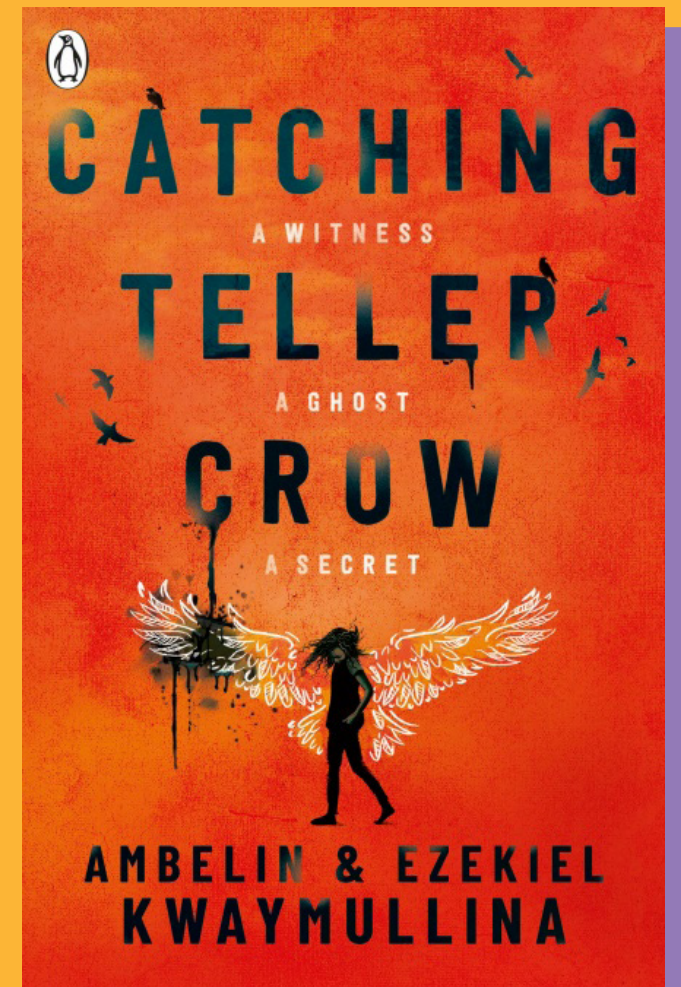
Ambelin and Ezekiel Kwaymullina are a brother-sister team of Aboriginal writers who come from the Palyku people of the Pilbara region of Western Australia. They've worked together on a number of short novels and picture books, and *Catching Teller Crow* is their first joint young adult novel.

*Catching Teller Crow* won the Victorian Premier YA Prize for Literature and the Best Young Adult Novel at the Aurealis Awards – two of Australia's most prestigious writing awards.

**Themes/topics:** Grief, Colonial history, Love, Family

**Publisher:** Penguin

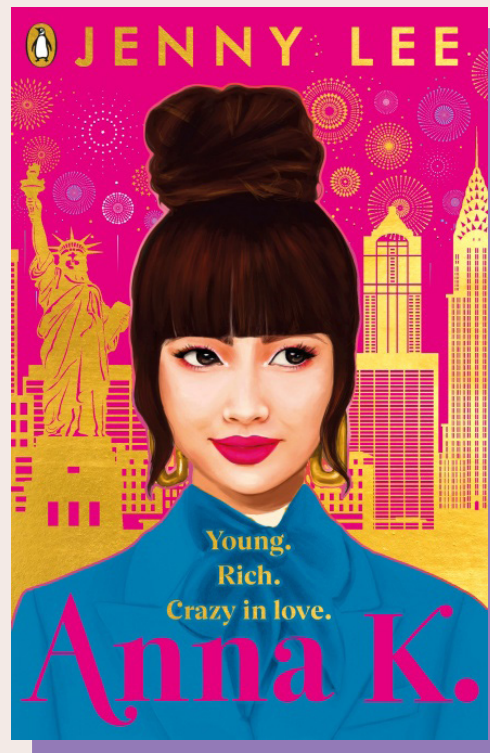
**Year:** 2019



**"Combining taut, intricate thriller with ancient Indigenous tales and the darker side of Australian history, this is a deeply poignant and original novel"**

– Imogen Russell Williams, *Guardian*





## Anna K

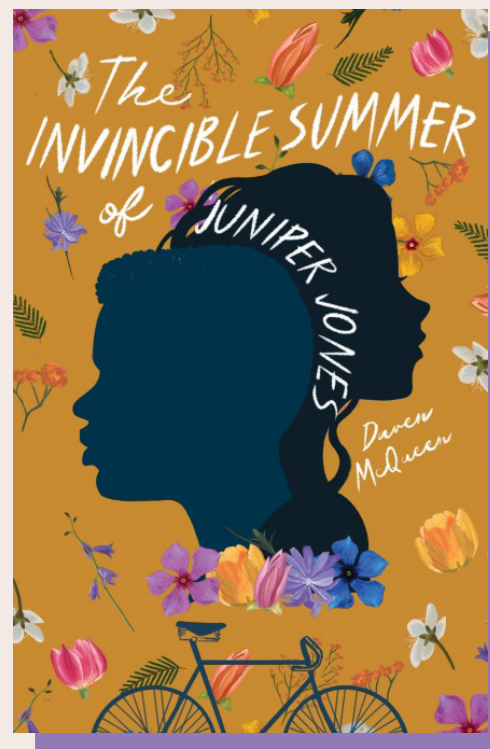
Jenny Lee

"Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way," wrote Tolstoy at the start of his epic novel *Anna Karenina*. Jenny Lee has adapted that famous line for her teenage retelling of the novel, telling us that "every happy teenage girl is the same, while every unhappy teenage girl is miserable in her own special way".

Transporting the action of the novel to Manhattan's Upper East Side, *Anna K* is a subversive reimagining of Tolstoy's timeless love story.

This book is perfect for fans of *Gossip Girl* and *Crazy Rich Asians*, and has an audiobook read by *Glee* actress Jenna Ushkowitz.

**Themes/topics:** Love, Wealth, Family  
**Publisher:** Penguin  
**Year:** 2020



## The Invincible Summer of Juniper Jones

Daven McQueen

Set in 1955, when calls for equality are sweeping through America, *The Invincible Summer of Juniper Jones* follows two characters who are searching for their place in a town set on rejecting them.

Sixteen-year-old Ethan Harper, who is mixed race, has been sent to stay with his white uncle and aunt in Ellison, Alabama, where he discovers the small-mindedness of the town's inhabitants.

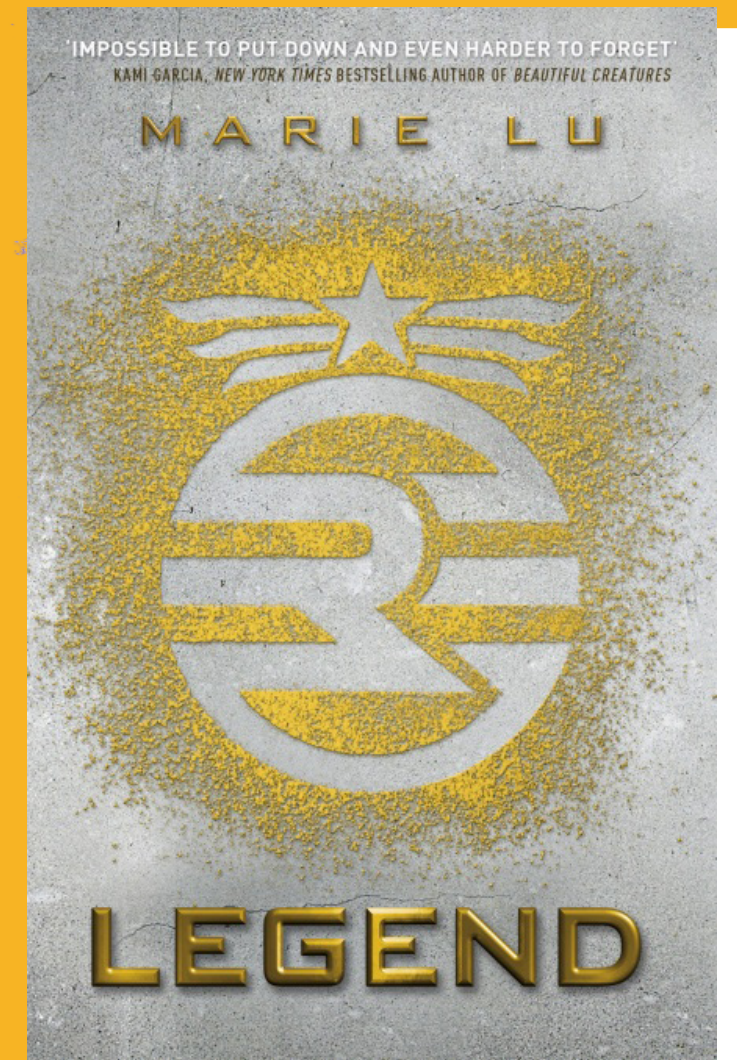
The only person who rejects that is Juniper Jones, a self-proclaimed free spirit who is determined to ignore the tide of prejudice and disapproval that follows Ethan, and enlists him in her quest to have an unforgettable summer.

This is part of the Wattpad novel series.

**Themes/topics:** Racism, Love, Family  
**Publisher:** Penguin  
**Year:** 2020

"This is no didactic near-future warning of present evils, but a cinematic adventure featuring endearing, compelling heroes"

– *Kirkus Reviews*



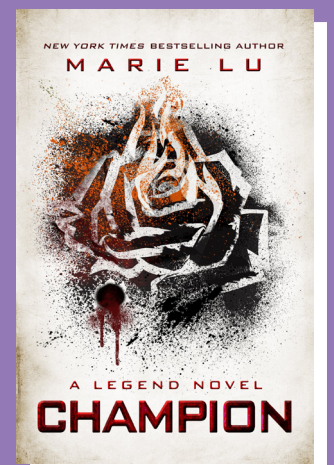
## Legend series

Marie Lu

Partially inspired by *Les Misérables*, the Legend series is set in a dark and futuristic Los Angeles in an America that is now at war.

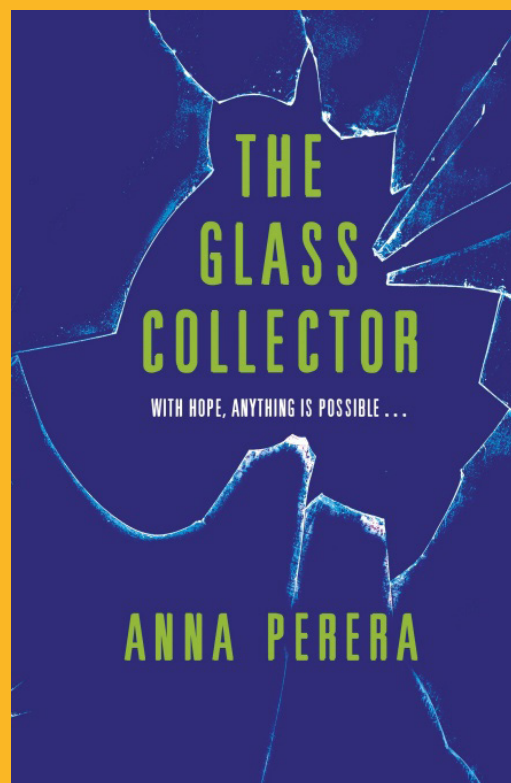
The trilogy – comprising of *Legend*, *Prodigy* and *Champion* – focuses on two very different teenagers. Day is a notorious criminal, while June is a government prodigy who has sworn to avenge her brother's death. Both on the run and undercover, the pair meet, not knowing that Day murdered June's brother.

The trilogy is followed by a standalone novel, *Rebel*, bringing back some of the characters from the original, and has also been turned into a graphic novel series.

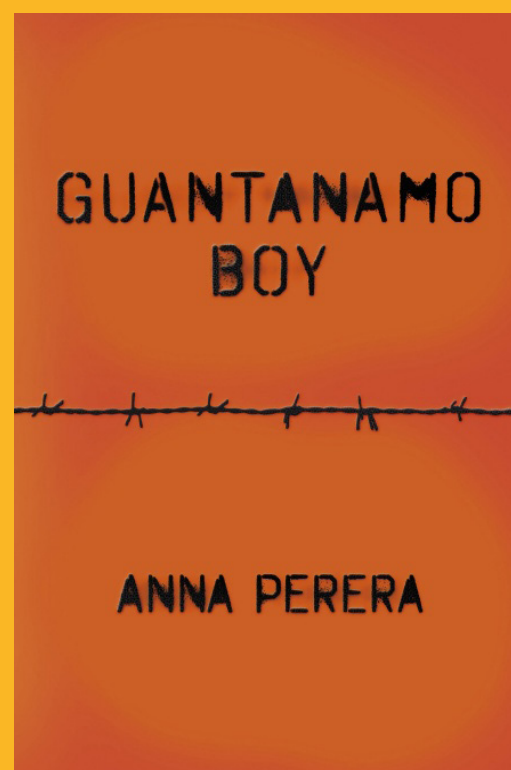


**Themes/topics:** War, Conflict, Inequality, Family  
**Publisher:** Penguin  
**Year:** 2011–2019





**Themes/topics:** Wealth inequality  
**Publisher:** Penguin  
**Year:** 2011



**Themes/topics:** Islam, Activism, Justice  
**Publisher:** Penguin  
**Year:** 2009

## The Glass Collector

Anna Perera

*The Glass Collector* follows 15-year-old Aaron, who lives amongst the rubbish piles in the slums of Cairo and who, like the book's title suggests, collects broken glass to make a living.

In the [Guardian](#), Josh Lacey said of the book: "This novel will definitely interest teenage readers who are eager to know more about the wider world."

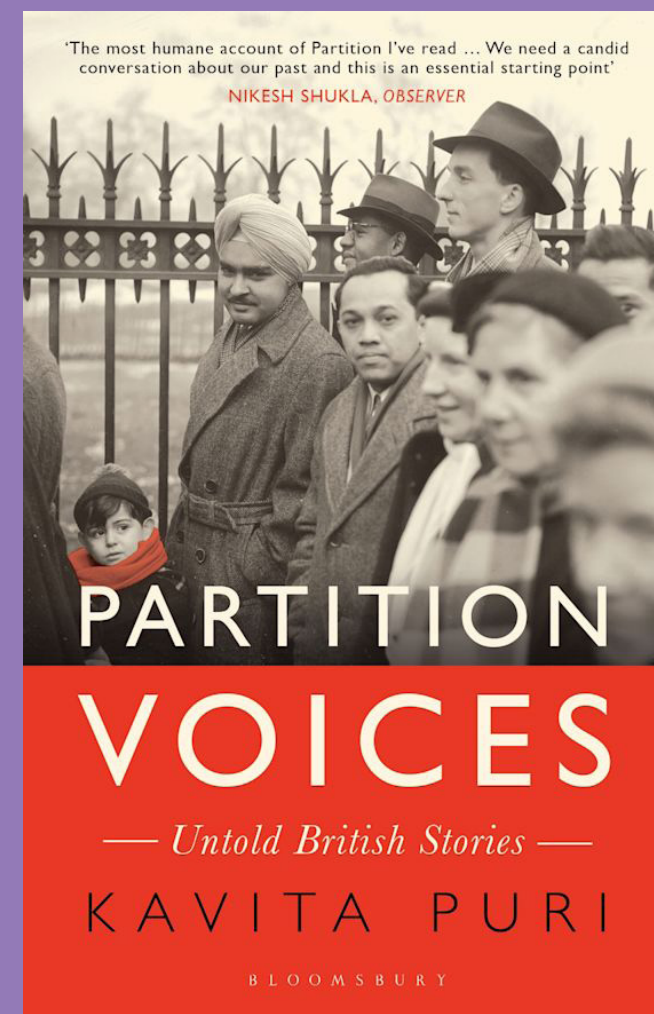
## Guantanamo Boy

Anna Perera

Anna Perera's novel is the story of 15-year-old Muslim boy Khalid, who is from Rochdale. Abducted while on holiday in Pakistan, Khalid is taken to Guantanamo Bay and held there without charge.

Denied his freedom at a time when he should be finding it, Khalid tries and fails to understand what's happening to him, and cannot fail to be changed by his experiences.

Writing in the [Guardian](#), author SF Said said the novel was grounded in a "very believable, everyday reality", and that "its biggest achievement may simply be to represent ordinary Muslim lives that are seldom written about, precisely because of their ordinariness".



## Partition Voices

Kavita Puri

BBC Radio 4 presenter Kavita Puri, behind the show *Four Pounds in My Pocket*, collects the stories of people who lived through Partition in this book.

Each chapter in the book is a different story, with Puri speaking to Pakistani, Indian and white British people. Many of them have never spoken about their experiences and witnessing of Partition, one of the most tumultuous events of the 20th century, before.

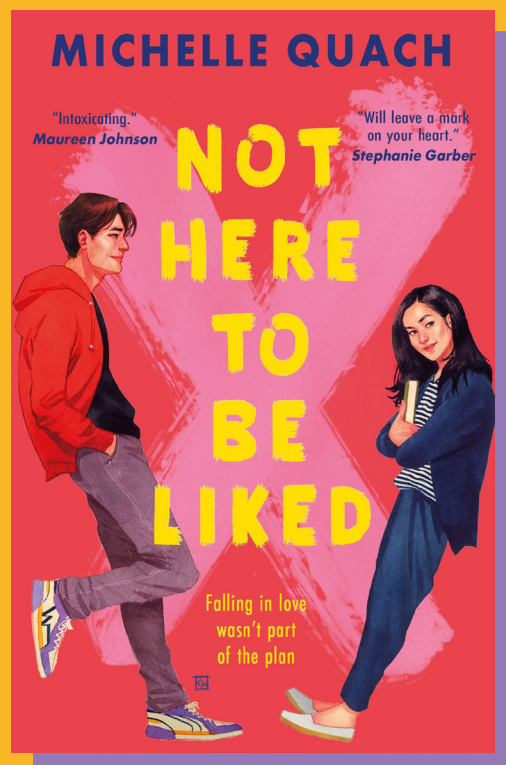
*Partition Voices* is a collective history, and a look at how events on a continent far away have shaped modern Britain. The book originally began as a BBC Radio 4 series of the same name.

**Themes/topics:** Partition, British history, Colonialism, Grief, Trauma  
**Publisher:** Bloomsbury  
**Year:** 2019

**"The most humane account of Partition I've read... it gives a voice to those affected by Partition"**

— Nikesh Shukla, *Guardian*

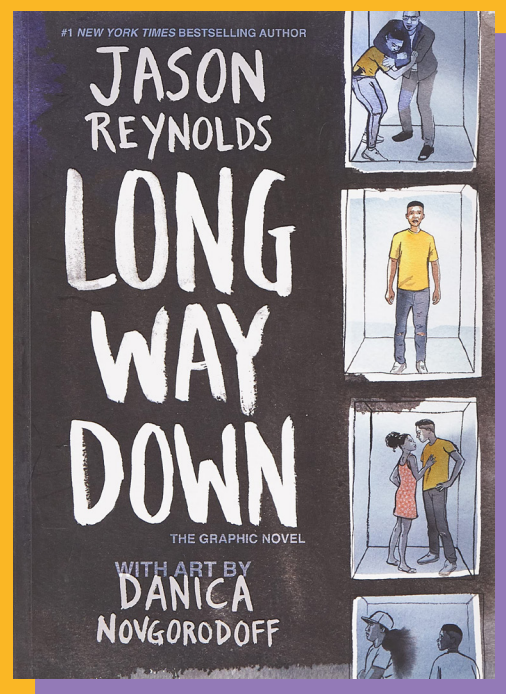




**Themes/topics:** Feminism, Sexism, Romance

**Publisher:** Usborne

**Year:** 2021



**Themes/topics:** Family, Violence, Grief

**Publisher:** Faber & Faber

**Year:** 2020

## Not Here to be Liked

Michelle Quach

*Not Here to be Liked* is a novel about ambition, as well as being a teen romance.

It follows Eliza Quan, whose expectations of being voted the next editor-in-chief of her school paper are dashed when her peers pick Len DiMartile, an injured star baseball player, to take the role.

The novel takes a look at the idea that women need to be “likeable” to succeed, and explores how there are myriad Asian experiences through Eliza, who is Chinese Vietnamese American, and Len, who is of white and Japanese heritage.

Reviewing the book, [NPR](#) said: “*Not Here to be Liked* is a thoughtful discussion about what makes each of us different, and what things bring us together despite those differences.”

## Long Way Down: The Graphic Novel

Jason Reynolds, Danica Novgorodoff (illustrator)

Jason Reynolds’ verse novel *Long Way Down* was a bestseller, and won the John Newbery Medal, one of America’s top honours for children’s books, in 2018.

It’s now been turned into a graphic novel, with illustrations by Danica Novgorodoff.

*Long Way Down*, which was also shortlisted for the CILIP Carnegie Medal, is the story of Will, whose brother is shot in a gang crime. He knows what he has to do, but when he gets in a lift with Shawn’s gun, he’s confronted by Buck, his friend who died years ago. And Dani, who was shot years before that. As more people from his past arrive, Will has to ask himself if he really knows what he’s doing.



**Themes/topics:** Love

**Publisher:** Penguin

**Year:** 2021



**Themes/topics:** Identity, Friendship, Racism, Love

**Publisher:** Penguin

**Year:** 2020

## Instructions for Dancing

Nicola Yoon

Nicola Yoon’s latest novel follows Evie, who has been disillusioned about love ever since her dad left her mum for another woman. She’s so done with love that she’s thrown out her beloved romance novel collection.

But when she’s given a copy of a book called *Instructions for Dancing*, which contains a note that leads her to a dilapidated dance studio, Evie discovers that she can see a couple’s whole future play out if they kiss in front of her.

Convinced more than ever that love doesn’t last, Evie’s mind might be changed by X, a tall, dreadlocked and fascinating stranger who she learns to dance with at the studio.

[Publishers Weekly](#) said of the book: “With deadpan humor, realistically wrought relationships among the Black principal cast, and a well-executed fantastical element, Yoon delivers a story of love’s unpredictability and the importance of perspective that unfolds with ease and heart.”

## Super Fake Love Song

David Yoon

David Yoon, the author of *Frankly in Love*, weaves a contemporary YA romantic comedy about a case of mistaken identity in *Super Fake Love Song*.

The novel follows Sunny, a profoundly insecure nerd, who develops an instant crush on the impossibly cool Cirrus. When she invites herself to what she thinks is his bedroom – but is his hipster rockstar older brother’s – to hang out, Sunny finds himself pretending to be something he’s not.

[School Library Journal](#) said of the book: “Readers will be drawn in by the sweet romance and Sunny’s hilarious narration. But in a novel filled with excellent writing, strong characterisation, and abundant positive messages, perhaps the greatest strength of all is the emotional openness of the male characters.”



## Iron Widow

Xiran Jay Zhao

*Iron Widow* combines science fiction with East Asian mythology, and is a retelling of the rise of Wu Zetian, the only female emperor in Chinese history.

In Huaxia, boys dream of the celebrity status that comes with piloting Chrysalises, giant transforming robots that battle the aliens beyond the Great Wall. Their female co-pilots are expected to serve as concubines and sacrifice their lives.

When 18-year-old Zetian offers herself up as a concubine-pilot, it's so she can be in a position to assassinate the ace male pilot responsible for her sister's death. But on miraculously emerging from the cockpit unscathed after her first battle, she is declared an Iron Widow, the most feared pilot of all, and her sights are set instead on stopping more girls from being sacrificed.

Xiran Jay Zhao is a first-generation immigrant to Canada from small-town China. *Iron Widow* is their first novel.

**Themes/topics:** Patriarchy, Feminism

**Publisher:** Rock the Boat

**Year:** 2021

**"The action-packed plot, involving battles both physical and mental, is original and incorporates queer themes"**

– *Kirkus Reviews*



Years  
10-11



**Themes/topics:** History, Arts and culture  
**Publisher:** Penguin  
**Year:** 2021



**Themes/topics:** Racism, Class, Wealth  
**Publisher:** Usborne  
**Year:** 2021

## A Little Devil in America

Hanif Abdurraqib

Poet Hanif Abdurraqib's book is inspired by Josephine Baker's speech at the 1963 March on Washington, where she said: "I was a devil in other countries, and I was a little devil in America, too."

*A Little Devil in America* sees Abdurraqib explore a sequence of iconic and intimate performances that have had an impact on him and on wider culture, including Aretha Franklin's homegoing, Beyoncé's Super Bowl show, and Dave Chapelle's skits.

Through them, he looks at his own personal history of love and grief, as well as the politics of American empire.

*A Little Devil in America* has won a number of awards, including the Gordon Burn Prize and the Andrew Carnegie Medal for Excellence in Nonfiction, and was shortlisted for the National Book Award in America.

## Ace of Spades

Faridah Àbíké-Íyímídé

Declared "one of 2021's biggest books" by *gal-dem*, *Ace of Spades* is described as *Gossip Girl* meets *Get Out*.

Set in an exclusive academy in the US, Faridah Àbíké-Íyímídé's debut novel follows two very different Black teenagers – rich and popular Chiamaka, and scholarship student Devon – who band together when an anonymous bully begins exposing their secrets.

The [Guardian](#) said the book was an "impressive debut, combining a highly addictive thriller with a blistering take-down of institutional racism".

*Ace of Spades* was a *New York Times* bestseller.

Àbíké-Íyímídé is a Morris Award 2022 Finalist, the winner of the Books Are My Bag 2021 Reader's Award for Young Adult Fiction, and the winner of the 53rd NAACP Image Awards in the Outstanding Literary Work for Youth/Teens.



**Themes/topics:** Grief, Friendship, Family, Arts and culture  
**Publisher:** HarperCollins  
**Year:** 2021

## The Reading List

Sara Nisha Adams

*The Reading List* is about Aleisha, a teenager who discovers a reading list tucked into a tattered library book, and Mukesh, a widower desperate to connect with his bookworm granddaughter.

Through books including *Life of Pi* by Yann Martel, *Beloved* by Toni Morrison and *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee, both Aleisha and Mukesh discover new meaning in their lives, and learn to connect and go outside their comfort zones.

*The Reading List*, which was a finalist for the Goodreads Choice Awards for Fiction 2021, will place classic and set texts for students in a new light.

**"A quiet and thoughtful look into loneliness, community, and the benefits of reading – suited for true bibliophiles"**

– *Kirkus Reviews*



## We Are Not Yet Equal

Carol Anderson with Tonya Bolden

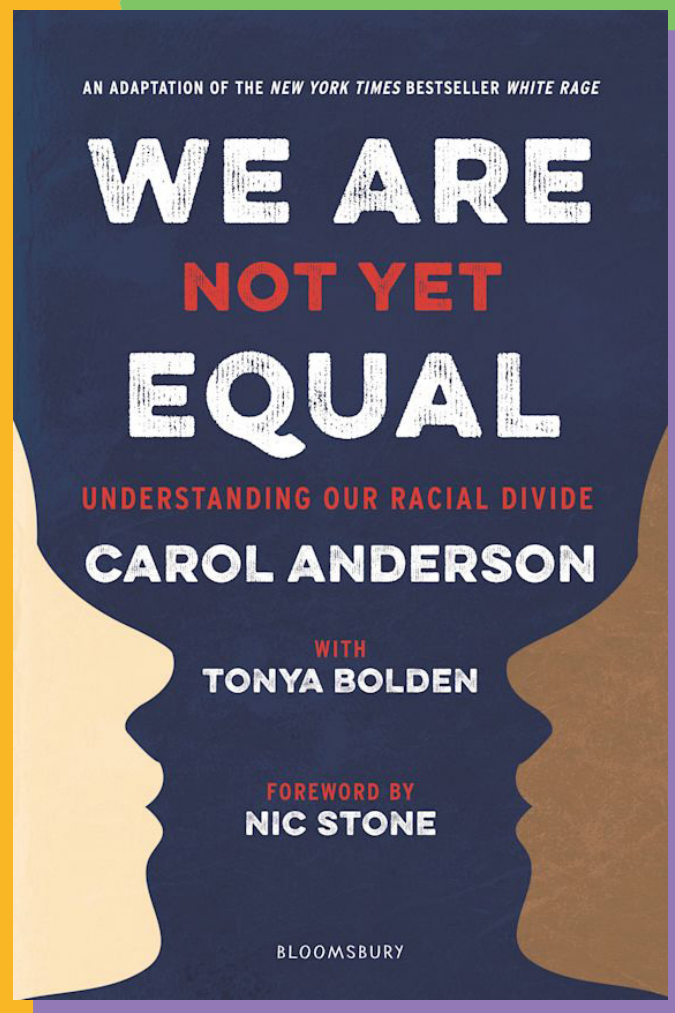
This book is adapted for a young adult audience from the *New York Times*' bestselling *White Rage* by Carol Anderson.

It examines five moments of progress towards Black equality that were met with racist legal and political manoeuvrings meant to limit that progress.

The five moments include the end of the Civil War and Reconstruction being met with Jim Crow laws and the promise of new opportunities in the North during the Great Migration being limited when Black people were physically blocked from moving away from the South. It covers the Supreme Court's landmark 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, which was met with the shutting down of public schools throughout the South, and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Voting Rights Act of 1965 that were followed by laws that disenfranchised millions of African American voters and a War on Drugs that disproportionately targeted Black people.

And it brings things to the modern day with the election of President Obama, which led to an outburst of violence as well as the election of Donald Trump.

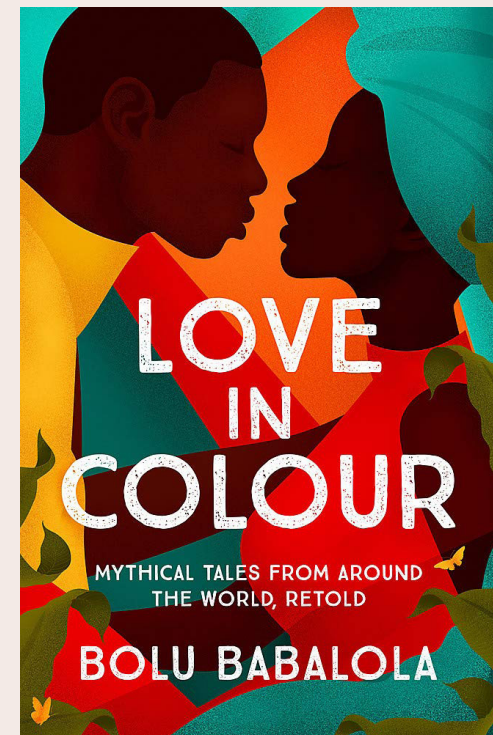
*We Are Not Yet Equal* was a finalist for the NAACP Image Award, named a book of the year by *Kirkus Reviews*, and named a best book for teenagers by NYPL.



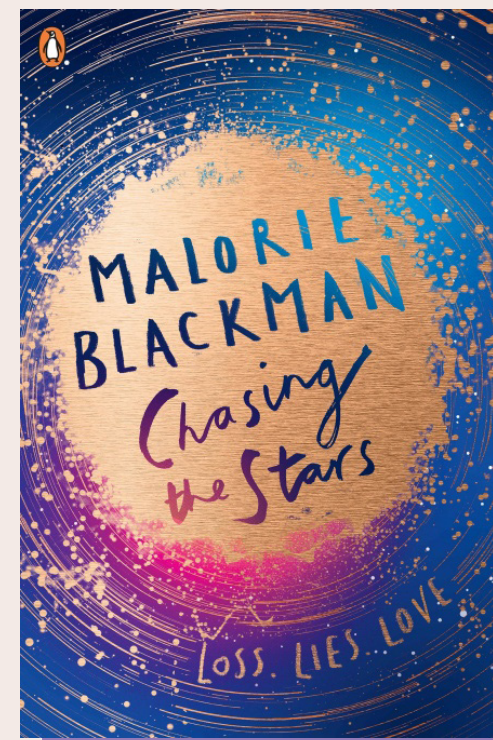
**Themes/topics:** History, Racism, Politics  
**Publisher:** Bloomsbury  
**Year:** 2018

**“Anderson writes in an accessible narrative form, showing young people through pivotal historical events the ways in which white rage has been able to effectively undermine black-led social movements for equality and justice”**

– *Kirkus Reviews*



**Themes/topics:** Mythology, Love  
**Publisher:** Headline  
**Year:** 2020



**Themes/topics:** Family, Romance  
**Publisher:** Penguin  
**Year:** 2016

## Love in Colour

Bolu Babalola

*Love in Colour* is a collection of love stories from history and mythology across the world, from the magical folktales of West Africa and iconic Greek myths to ancient legends from the Middle East.

In addition to 10 retellings, it also contains three original stories by Bolu Babalola, who is a TV writer and pop culture connoisseur.

[Shondaland](#) said the collection “subverts old patriarchal tropes, instead focusing on women empowerment and self-love”, and described it as one of the best reads of 2021.

*Love in Colour* was a *Sunday Times* bestseller and was featured on the BBC2 book show *Between the Covers*.

Babalola was shortlisted in 2016 for 4th Estate's B4ME competition for her short story “Netflix & Chill”, and has worked as a writer for books and TV.

## Chasing the Stars

Malorie Blackman

Malorie Blackman turns her hand to a retelling of Shakespeare's *Othello* in *Chasing the Stars*.

Set in space, the book follows Olivia and her twin brother Aidan as they head alone back to Earth following the virus that completely wiped out the rest of their crew and their family.

Nathan's ship is heading in the opposite direction and when their lives unexpectedly collide, Nathan and Olivia find themselves falling in love. But not everyone is pleased with their relationship, and things begin to take a sinister turn.

Reviewing the book for the [Guardian](#), author Tony Bradman said: “*Chasing the Stars* goes boldly where few YA titles have gone before: never before have I come across a book that's a combination of *Star Trek*, *Ten Things I Hate About You* and a murder mystery. What's not to like?”



**“Ablly conveys a sense of place and nuanced, complex feeling; it’s both an interrogation of racist misogyny and a swift-paced, compelling thriller”**

– The Guardian

## Firekeeper’s Daughter

Angeline Boulley

Angeline Boulley’s award-winning novel is about a Native American teen who must root out the corruption in her community.

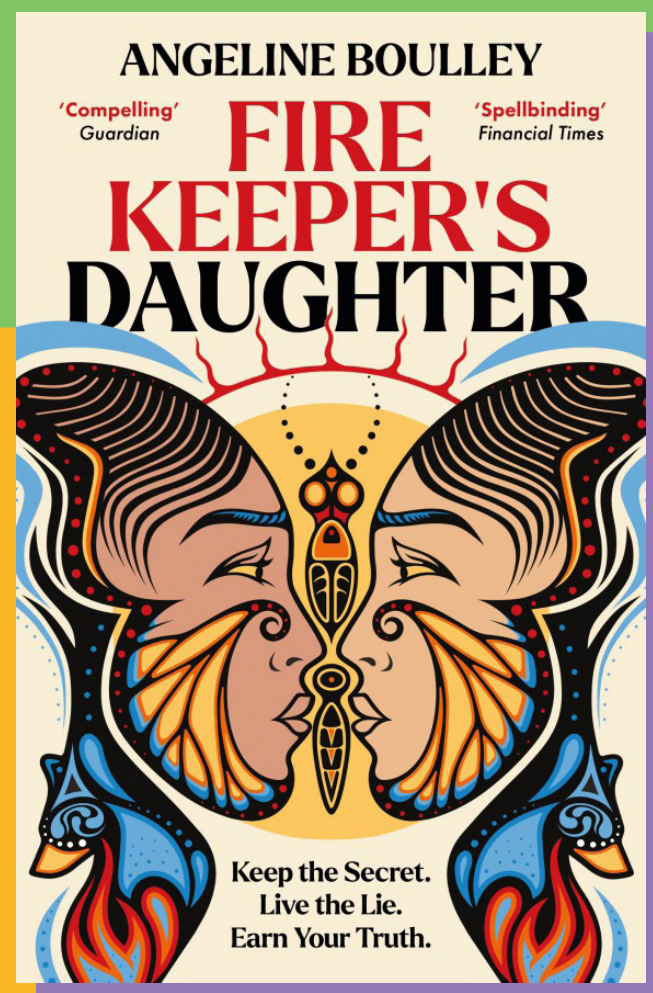
*Firekeeper’s Daughter* centres Daunis, whose mixed heritage has made her feel like an outsider in both her hometown and on the nearby Ojibwe reservation.

When she witnesses a murder, Daunis reluctantly agrees to go undercover. But secretly she pursues her own investigation, tracking down the culprits with her knowledge of traditional medicine.

*Firekeeper’s Daughter* was shortlisted for the Waterstones Children’s Book Prize, was named by *Time Magazine* as one of its best young adult novels of all time, and won the Young Adult Fiction Goodreads Choice Awards.

It was a Reese Witherspoon YA book club pick, and is being adapted for a Netflix series by Higher Ground Productions, the production company founded by Barack and Michelle Obama.

*Firekeeper’s Daughter* was a *New York Times* bestseller. Boulley is an enrolled member of the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians in Michigan.



**Themes/topics:** Misogyny, Racism  
**Publisher:** Rock the Boat  
**Year:** 2021

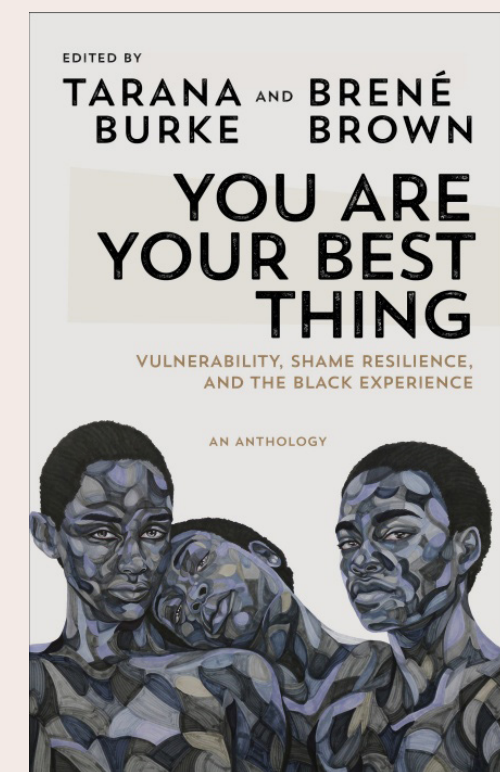
## You Are your Best Thing

Tarana Burke and Brené Brown (editors)

This essay collection was inspired by a conversation between friends Tarana Burke, founder of the #MeToo movement, and Brené Brown, the writer and researcher.

Burke told Brown that the latter’s work was deeply affecting, but as a Black woman she had to contort herself to fit some of Brown’s words. Burke proposed the pair work together on a book about the Black experience with vulnerability and shame resilience.

*You Are Your Best Thing* brings together people including Kiese Laymon, Imani Perry, Laverne Cox, Jason Reynolds, Austin Channing Brown and more to talk about this topic, addressing the trauma of white supremacy and offering a space to be vulnerable and affirm the fullness of Black love and Black life.



**Themes/topics:** Trauma, Racism  
**Publisher:** Vermilion  
**Year:** 2021

## Kindred

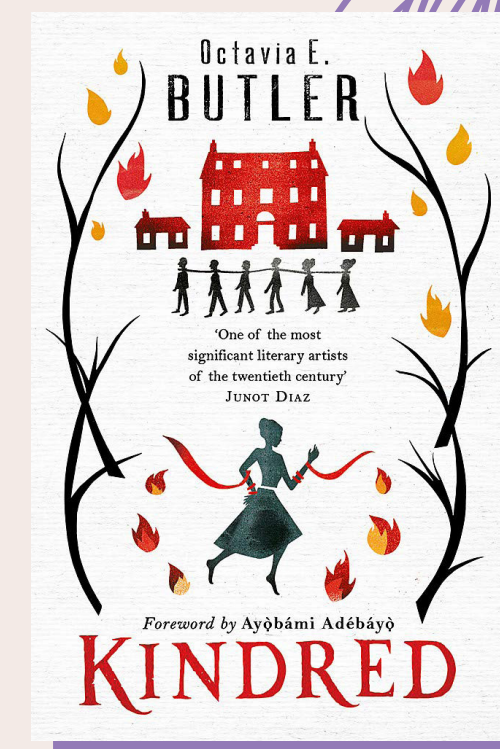
Octavia Butler

Octavia Butler’s classic science fiction novel is about Dana, who in 1976 dreams of being a writer and in 1815 is assumed a slave.

The first time Dana meets Rufus on a Maryland plantation, he’s drowning and she saves his life. And then she does it over and over again. Neither understands his power to summon her whenever his life is threatened, nor the significance of the ties that bind them.

Butler was an American science fiction author and a multiple recipient of the Hugo and Nebula awards. In 1995, she became the first science-fiction writer to receive a MacArthur Fellowship. She has been described as a “visionary” by actor Viola Davis, while actor Lupita Nyong’o said she “writes with such a familiarity that the alien is welcome and intriguing” and “artfully exposes our human impulse to self-destruct”.

This edition of *Kindred* features a foreword by author Ayòbámi Adébáyò.



**Themes/topics:** Racism, Slavery  
**Publisher:** Headline  
**Year:** 1979





**Themes/topics:** Racism, Homophobia, Death, Mental health, Love  
**Publisher:** Hodder Children's  
**Year:** 2021

## Afterlove

Tanya Byrne

In *Afterlove*, the only thing separating Ash Persaud from seeing her first love Poppy Morgan again is death.

When Ash dies in a car accident, she gets an invitation from the afterlife she can't decline: to join a clan of fierce girl reapers who take the souls of the city's dead to await their fate. But Ash can't forget Poppy, and will do just about anything to see her again, if only for a few days.

Tanya Byrne worked at BBC Radio for eight years before leaving to write her debut young adult novel, *Heart-Shaped Bruise*, which earned her a nomination for New Writer of the Year at the National Book Awards.

She is working to adapt *Afterlove* for television.



**Themes/topics:** Race, Class, Sexuality  
**Publisher:** Faber & Faber  
**Year:** 2021

## Flèche

Mary Jean Chan

Mary Jean Chan's collection is named for the French word for 'arrow' and also refers to an offensive technique commonly used in fencing, a sport Chan took part in as a young adult, when she competed locally and internationally for her home city, Hong Kong.

In *Flèche*, Chan explores the queer, non-white body as both vulnerable flesh and weaponised flèche. Central to the collection is Chan's mother, whose fragmented memories of political turmoil in China are threaded through the book.

*Flèche* won the Costa Poetry Award, and Chan, a London-based poet, lecturer and editor, has twice been shortlisted for the Forward Prize for Best Single Poem.



**Themes/topics:** Racism, Class, Family, Politics  
**Publisher:** Vintage Classics  
**Year:** 1999

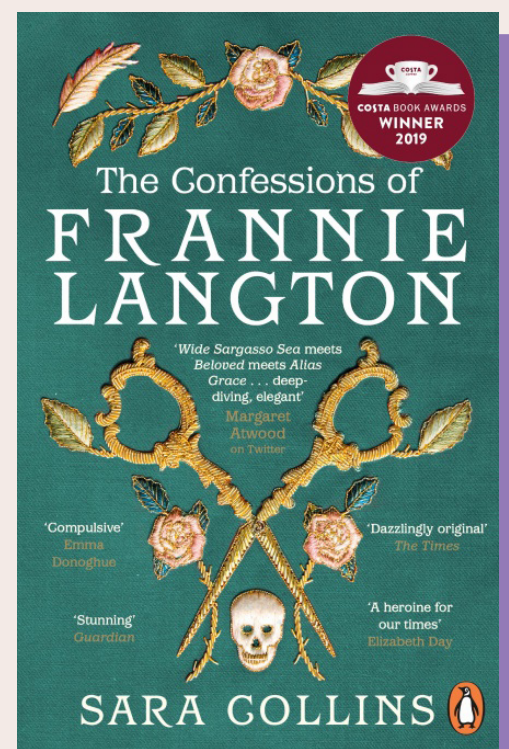
## Those Bones Are Not My Child

Toni Cade Bambara

*Those Bones Are Not My Child* was written over the course of 12 years, and was edited by Toni Morrison when she worked in publishing before becoming a writer.

It follows Zala Spencer, who is barely surviving on the margins of Atlanta's booming economy when she awakens one summer's morning in 1980 to find her teenage son, Sonny, has disappeared. Growing disillusioned with the authorities' indifference to Sonny's disappearance, Zala and her estranged husband embark on an epic search in a city roiling with political, racial and class tensions.

Toni Bambara was an author, teacher, activist and filmmaker who was involved in the Black liberation and women's movements. Upon her death in 1995, the *New York Times* praised Bambara as "a major contributor to the emerging genre of contemporary Black women's literature".



**Themes/topics:** History, Class, Racism, Colonialism  
**Publisher:** Penguin  
**Year:** 2019

## The Confessions of Frannie Langton

Sara Collins

Set in 1826, *The Confessions of Frannie Langton* is told in first person by the woman of the title, a maid who is currently in jail accused of the murder of her bosses, Mr and Mrs Benham.

All of London is talking about the forthcoming trial at the Old Bailey, but only Frannie knows what happened, and how her whole history is relevant to why she's now sitting in jail.

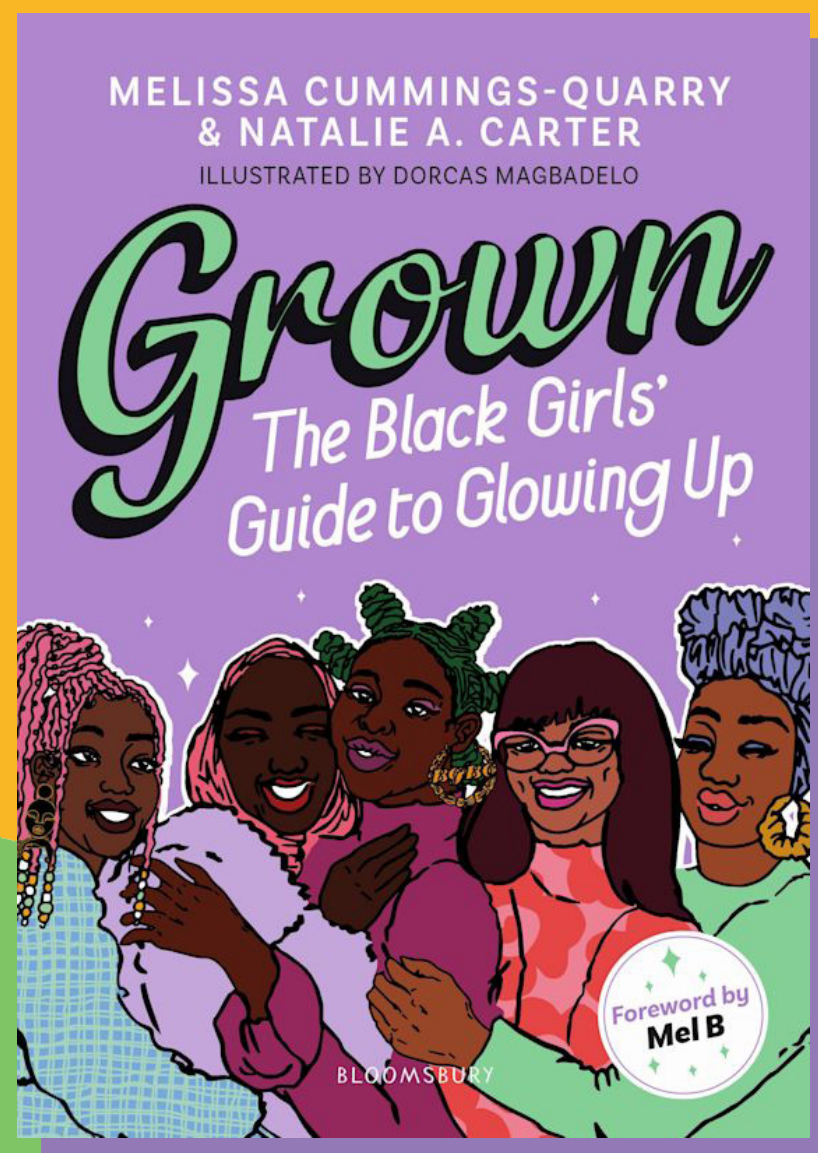
*The Confessions of Frannie Langton* won the Costa First Novel award in 2019, was shortlisted for the HWA Debut Crown in 2020, and was a Waterstones Book of the Month.

This novel is Sara Collins' debut. Collins was a lawyer for 17 years before embarking on a writing career. She was shortlisted for the Lucy Cavendish Prize in 2016, for a book that became *The Confessions of Frannie Langton*.



## Grown: The Black Girls' Guide to Glowing Up

Melissa Cummings-Quarry and  
Natalie A. Carter, Dorcas Magbadelo  
(illustrator)



Melissa Cummings-Quarry and Natalie A. Carter are the founders of Black Girls' Book Club, a community for Black women who love to read.

In *Grown*, they address Black teenagers who don't see themselves represented in pop culture. Topics include understanding identity, the politics of hair and dealing with microaggressions, as well as maintaining squad goals.

*Grown* is described as "your big sis in book form". The book's foreword is written by Spice Girl

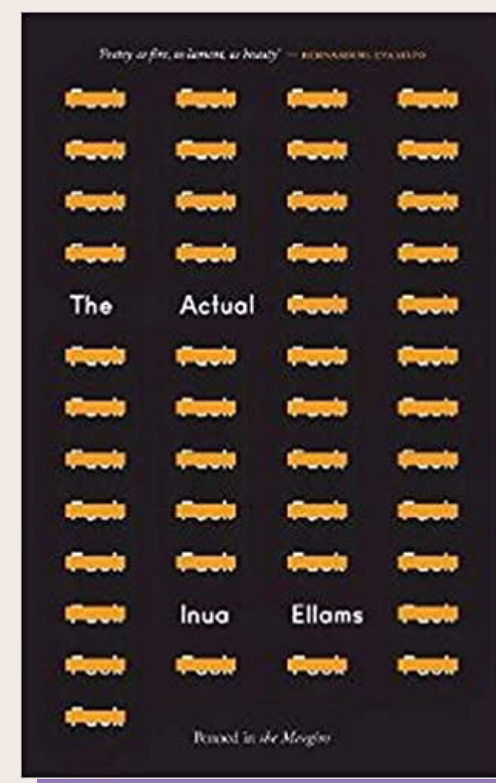
Melanie Brown, and there are contributions from MP Diane Abbott and authors Candice Carty-Williams and Dorothy Koomson.

The book is illustrated by visual designer Dorcas Magbadelo.

**Themes/topics:** Family, Coming-of-age  
**Publisher:** Bloomsbury  
**Year:** 2021

"Such a loving and warm guide and ode to Black girls, I am so happy the younger generation have this in their lives."

– Bolu Babalola



**Themes/topics:** Colonialism, History, Empire, Masculinity  
**Publisher:** Penned in the Margins  
**Year:** 2020



**Themes/topics:** Masculinity, Black history  
**Publisher:** Faber & Faber  
**Year:** 2010

## The Actual

Inua Ellams

This collection features 55 poems that address empire and its legacies of racism, injustice and toxic masculinity.

Written by Ellams on his phone – while commuting, between meetings, before falling asleep and just after waking – *The Actual* is described as "poetry as polemic, as an act of resistance".

Critiquing hero culture through history, the poems in this book ask the question: "What the actual...?"

## Barber Shop Chronicles

Inua Ellams

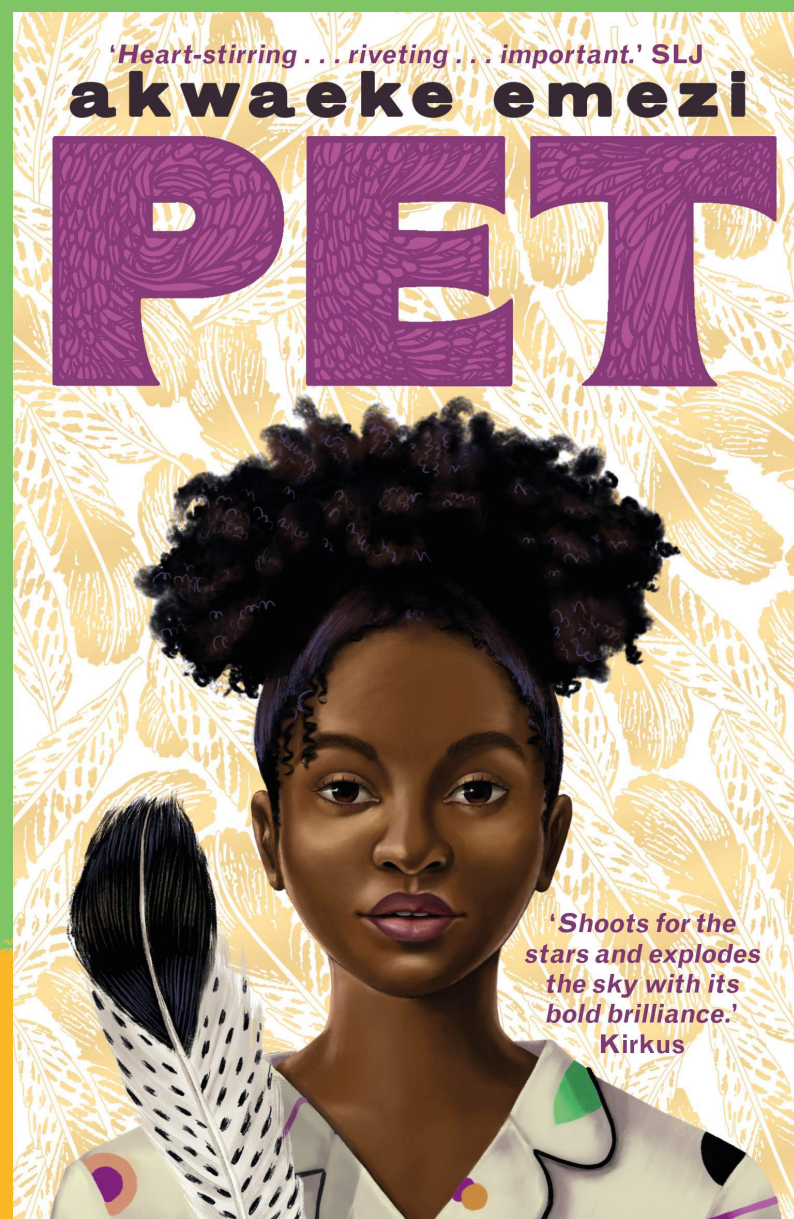
Inua Ellams' play *Barber Shop Chronicles* had two sell-out runs at the National Theatre, a world tour, and a summer residency at London's Roundhouse.

It is partly inspired by verbatim recordings, and is a heart-warming and insightful look at the multiple roles – from newsroom to football stadium to local hot spot – barber shops have played in the lives of African men around the world.

Set in the course of a single day, the play's action leaps from Peckham to Johannesburg, Harare, Kampala, Lagos and Accra.

This edition has commentary and notes by Oladipo Agboluaje.





## Pet

Akwaeke Emezi

*Pet* is Akwaeke Emezi's second YA novel, and is set in a world where there are no more monsters – or so children in the city of Lucille are taught.

When Jam meets Pet, a creature made of horns and colours and claws, who emerges from one of her mother's paintings and a drop of Jam's blood, she must reconsider what she's been told.

Pet has come to hunt a monster, and the shadow of something grim lurks in the house of Jam's best friend, Redemption. Jam must fight not only to protect her best friend, but also to uncover the truth.

**"This soaring novel shoots for the stars and explodes the sky with its bold brilliance"**

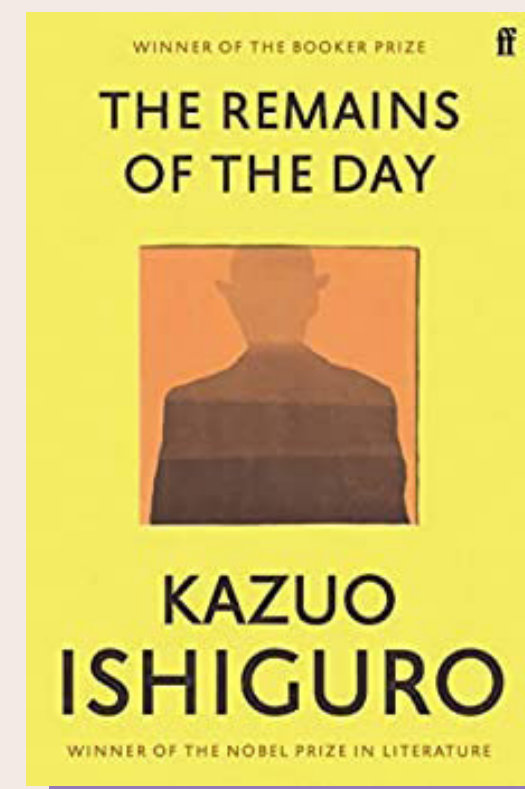
– *Kirkus Reviews*

*'Shoots for the stars and explodes the sky with its bold brilliance.'*  
Kirkus

The [New York Times](#) called the novel "genre-bending".

Emezi is a multidisciplinary artist and writer who has published poetry, fiction and memoir. They were named by *Time* as a 2021 Next Generation Leader.

**Themes/topics:** Family  
**Publisher:** Faber & Faber  
**Year:** 2019



**Themes/topics:** War, Family, Work  
**Publisher:** Faber & Faber  
**Year:** 1989



**Themes/topics:** Family, Love, Romance, Grief, Trauma  
**Publisher:** Arrow  
**Year:** 2021

## The Remains of the Day

Kazuo Ishiguro

*The Remains of the Day* won the Booker Prize in 1989, and was adapted into a 1993 film starring Anthony Hopkins and Emma Thompson.

The book is set in the summer of 1956 and is about Stevens, the ageing butler at Darlington Hall, who embarks on a leisurely holiday that will take him not just deep into the countryside, but also into his past.

Writing about the book for the [Guardian](#) in 2012, author Salman Rushdie said: "With *The Remains of the Day* Ishiguro turned away from the Japanese settings of his first two novels and revealed that his sensibility was not rooted in any one place, but capable of travel and metamorphosis."

## The Mismatch

Sara Jafari

Sara Jafari's debut novel is the story of two women – Soraya in the present day, and her mother Neda in the past – and how their lives, desires and expectations are not as different as they might think.

Having graduated university, Soraya is trying to figure out her place in the world while unexpectedly falling for Magnus, who seems her opposite in every way.

In her mother Neda's timeline we are transported to Iran to watch Neda fall in love and try to forge her own path, and learn how decisions made then, including leaving with her husband after the revolution, are still being felt decades later.

[Culturefly](#) said of the book: "Relevant, enlightening and refreshing in its portrayal of complex family dynamics, Sara Jafari's debut is a rewarding read that packs a lot into its pages."





**Themes/topics:** Family, Class, Gender, Migration, Colonialism, Partition  
**Publisher:** Myraid Editions  
**Year:** 2021

## The Roles We Play

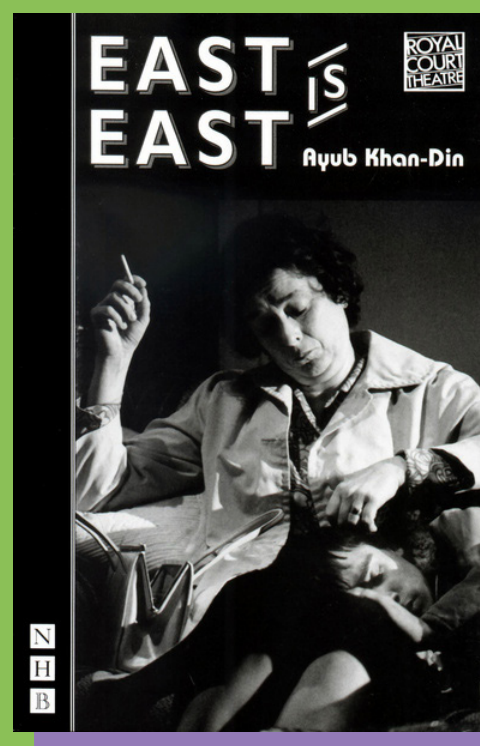
Sabba Khan

Two-thirds of today's British Pakistani diaspora trace their origins back to Mirpur in Azad Kashmir, which saw mass displacement and migration when it was submerged by the waters of a dam built after Partition.

In her debut graphic memoir, Sabba Khan explores what identity, belonging and memory mean for her and her family against the backdrop of this history.

Growing up as a second-generation Azad Kashmiri migrant in East London, Khan takes a look at issues of race, gender and class in this personal narrative.

*The Roles We Play* was shortlisted for the Myriad First Graphic Novel Competition 2018 and won the 2022 Jhalak Prize for Best Book by a Writer of Colour.



**Themes/topics:** Family, Racism, Class  
**Publisher:** Nick Hern Books  
**Year:** 1996

## East is East

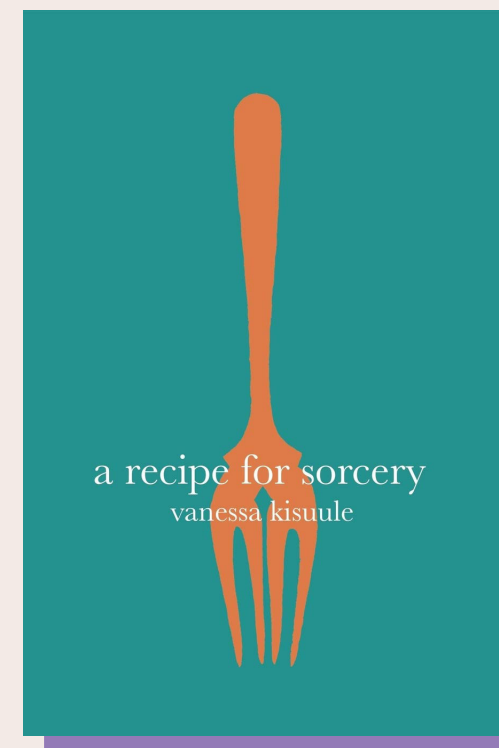
Ayub Khan-Din

*East is East* is familiar to many as a cult classic film, but it began life as a play by Ayub Khan-Din.

The story follows the six Khan children, grown up in 1970s Salford and caught between their Pakistani father's insistence on Asian traditions, their English mother's laissez-faire attitude, and their own wish to become citizens of the modern world.

First performed at Birmingham Repertory Theatre in 1996, the play won the John Whiting Award the same year and was nominated for the Olivier Award for Best New Writing in 1998. It transferred to the Royal Court in London after its Birmingham run, and the author wrote the screenplay for the film.

The film adaptation of *East is East* was released in 1999 and starred Archie Panjabi, Jimi Mistry and Jimmi Harkishin.



**Themes/topics:** Friendship and Feminism  
**Publisher:** Burning Eye Books  
**Year:** 2017

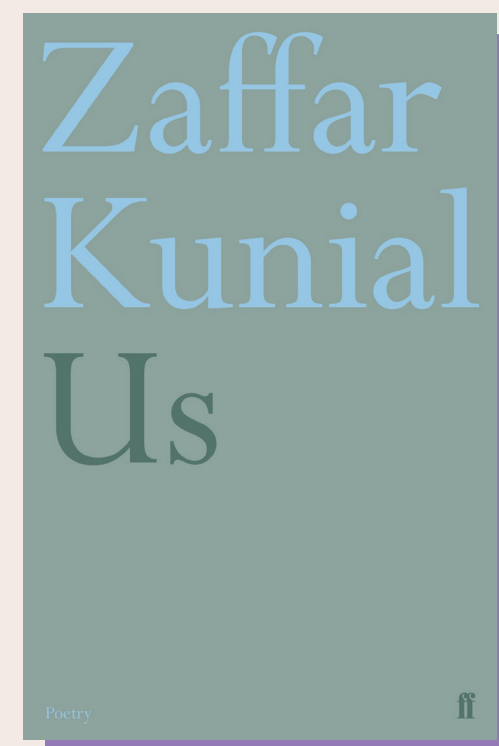
## A Recipe for Sorcery

Vanessa Kisuule

*A Recipe for Sorcery* is a poetry collection laid out like a recipe book; Vanessa Kisuule described it in an [interview](#) "the illegitimate love child" of the two.

It addresses topics including the power of friendship and the nature of womanhood.

Kisuule is a writer, performer and burlesque artist based in Bristol. She also goes under the moniker Shonda Rhymez when she does rap battles and Nina Nunchucks when she graces burlesque stages. She served as Bristol City Poet for 2019–20.



**Themes/topics:** Family, History  
**Publisher:** Faber & Faber  
**Year:** 2018

## Us

Zaffar Kunial

*Us* is a poetry collection about language, identity, memory and time, and about being a human being.

Writing in the [Guardian](#), Carol Rumens said: "The relaxed vernacular of Zaffar Kunial's newly published first collection, *Us*, may at first conceal the precision with which his poems search the vexations of identity."

Zaffar Kunial published a pamphlet in the Faber New Poets series in 2014 and spent that year as the Wordsworth Trust Poet-in-Residence.



## The Black Album

Hanif Kureishi

*The Black Album* is set in 1989, the year of the fall of the Berlin Wall and the fatwah, and is about Shahid, a clean-cut student from Kent who goes to college in London.

There, his academic prospects are threatened by his gangster brother Chili, who moves into Shahid's bedsit as a hideout, bringing unnecessary danger and excitement with him.

Exploring religious ferment and sexual passion, *The Black Album* is a coming-of-age story and a look at how the events of 1989 have shaped today's world.



**Themes/topics:** History, Family, Religion, Sexuality  
**Publisher:** Faber & Faber  
**Year:** 1995

## The Book of Harlan

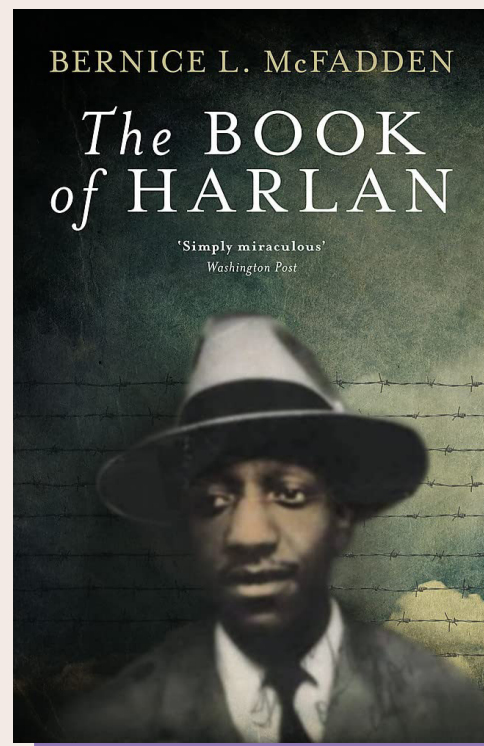
Bernice L. McFadden

*The Book of Harlan* is named for its main character, a professional jazz musician who grew up in Harlem. When he and his best friend, trumpeter Lizard Robbins, are invited to perform at a popular cabaret in the Parisian enclave of Montmartre, they jump at the chance.

But while they're there, the city falls under Nazi occupation, and the men are thrown into the German concentration camp Buchenwald, changing the course of Harlan's life.

Bernice L. McFadden's book is based on exhaustive research, and blends the stories of her own ancestors with those of real and imagined characters.

*The Book of Harlan* won the American National Book Award and an NAACP Image award, and has been optioned for a movie deal by Mark Tonderai of Shona Films.



**Themes/topics:** War, Racism, History  
**Publisher:** Jacaranda  
**Year:** 2016

## I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter

Erika L. Sánchez

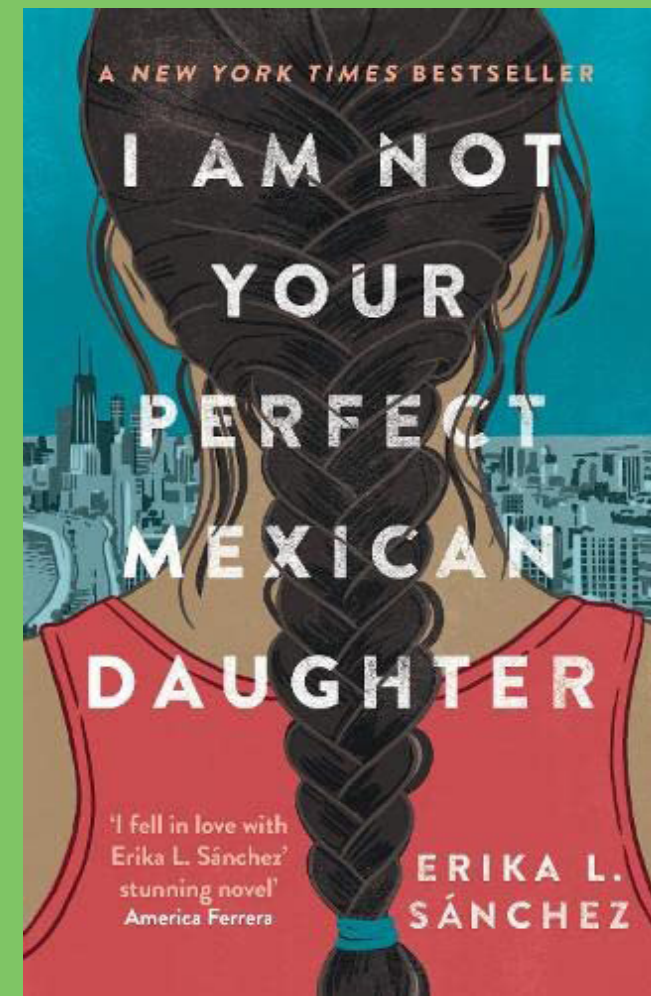
When her sister Olga dies in a tragic accident, Julia is left to pick up the pieces of her family and expected to fill Olga's shoes.

But Julia has never been as perfect as Olga, and as she struggles to find her place in the world she discovers her sister wasn't as perfect as everyone thought.

This coming-of-age novel is being adapted for a Netflix film directed by *Ugly Betty* and *Superstore* actor America Ferrera.

*I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter* was a *New York Times* bestseller.

Sánchez is a Mexican American poet, novelist, and essayist, and *I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter* was her debut YA novel.



**Themes/topics:** Family, Grief, Death, Coming-of-age  
**Publisher:** Rock the Boat  
**Year:** 2019

**"I fell in love with Erika L. Sánchez' stunning novel... The depth, wit and searing intelligence of her writing, and her young Latina heroine, struck me to my core"**

— America Ferrera



## When We Were Birds

Ayanna Lloyd Banwo

Picked as a recommended read for 2022 by publications including the *Observer*, *New Statesman*, *Buzzfeed* and more, *When We Were Birds* is a story about destiny, faith and magic.

It follows Darwin, a down-on-his-luck gravedigger, newly arrived in the Trinidadian city of Port Angeles to seek his fortune, estranged from his mother and the Rastafari faith she taught him.

In an old house on a hill, Yejide's mother is dying, passing on her power to talk to the dead to her daughter. The women of Yejide's family are descended from corbeau, the black birds that fly east at sunset, taking with them the souls of the dead. Darwin and Yejide's destinies are intertwined, and trouble is brewing.

Hepzibah Anderson described *When We Were Birds* as "radiant first novel" in the [Guardian](#).



**Themes/topics:** Family, Death, Magic  
**Publisher:** Hamish Hamilton  
**Year:** 2022

## In Search of Equilibrium

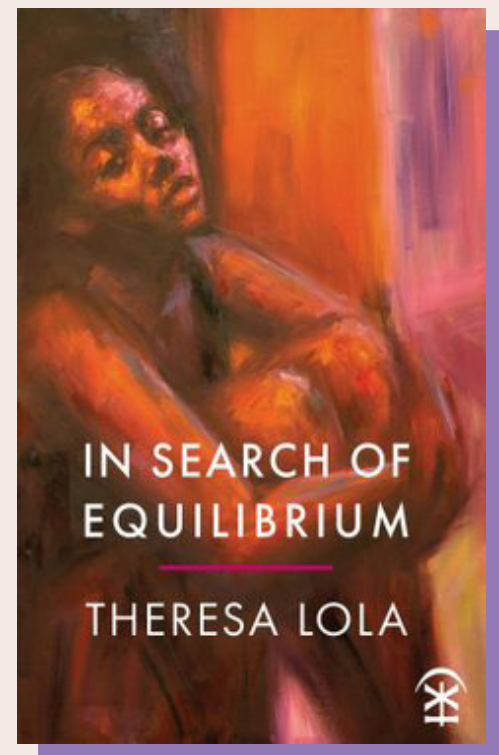
Theresa Lola

*In Search of Equilibrium*, the debut poetry collection from Theresa Lola, sees the poet studying death, grieving and faith through her work.

Author Bernardine Evaristo said of Lola that her poems "never fail to surprise with her breath-taking ability to create unexpected imagery; they never fail to move as she laments the last years of a loved one; and they never fail to delight with the transformative and healing power of poetry to create beauty".

Lola is a British Nigerian poet, writer, editor, and creative strategist. She was featured in the September 2019 issue of *British Vogue* which celebrated forces for change. She served as Young People's Laureate for London from 2019 to 2020.

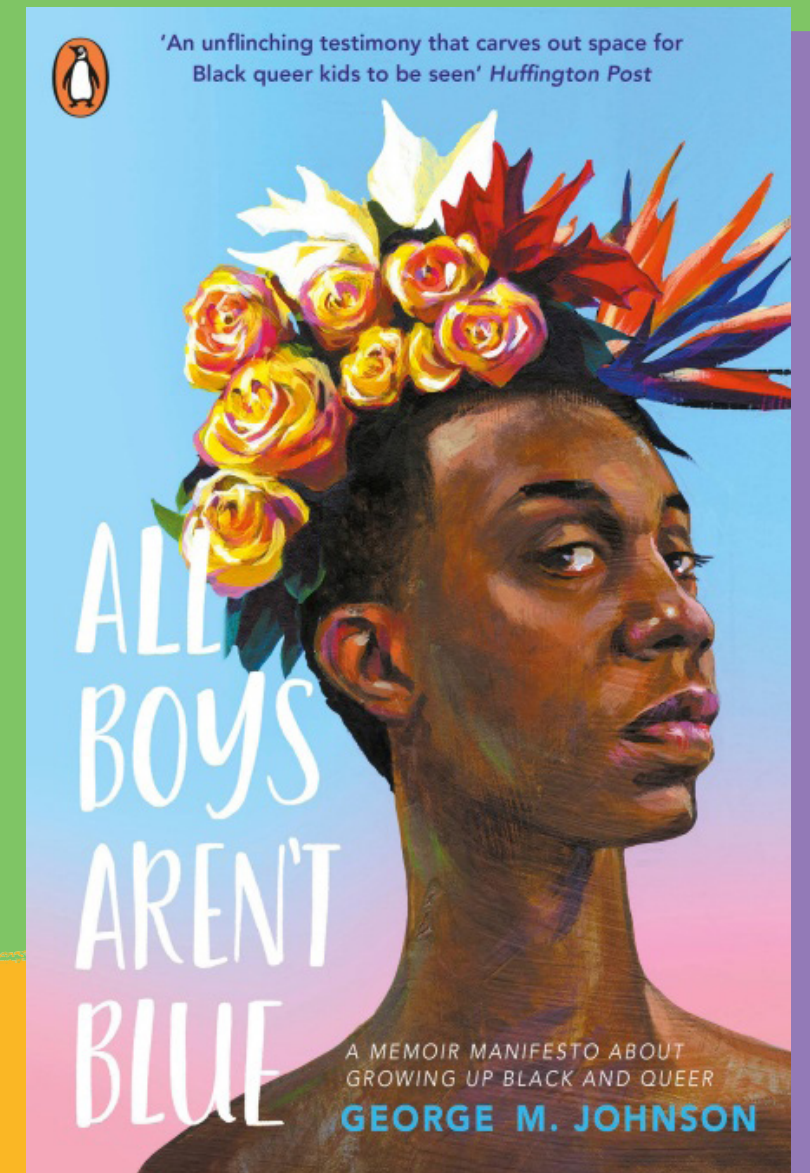
Lola was the joint winner of the 2018 Brunel International African Poetry Prize, and was shortlisted for the 2017 Bridport Poetry Prize.



**Themes/topics:** Grief, Death, Poetry  
**Publisher:** Nine Arches Press  
**Year:** 2019

"Unflinching testimony that carves out space for Black queer kids to be seen while serving as a much-needed resource for parents who need more affirming tools to raise their children"

– *Huffington Post*



## All Boys Aren't Blue

George M. Johnson

*All Boys Aren't Blue* is a memoir and manifesto following journalist and LGBTQ+ activist George M. Johnson as they explore the duality of being Black and queer.

Johnson shares stories from throughout their life, including getting their teeth kicked out by bullies aged five, their loving relationship with their grandmother, and their first sexual experience.

*All Boys Aren't Blue* is a book about tragedy and triumph, and addresses topics including gender identity, toxic masculinity, and Black joy.

Johnson is a writer and activist who has written

on race, gender, sex, and culture for *Essence*, the *Advocate*, *BuzzFeed News*, *Teen Vogue*, and more.

*All Boys Aren't Blue* is their debut, and was an Amazon Best Book of the Year, an Indie Bestseller, a *People Magazine* Best Book of the Year, and has been optioned for television by actor Gabrielle Union.

**Themes/topics:** Sexuality, Masculinity, Coming-of-age, Family  
**Publisher:** Penguin  
**Year:** 2021





**Themes/topics:** War, Exile, Migration, Politics  
**Publisher:** Peepal Tree Press  
**Year:** 2017

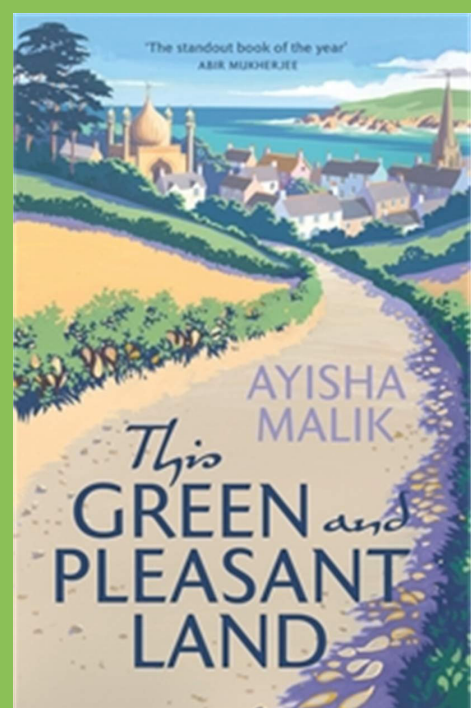
## Kingdom of Gravity

Nick Makoha

Nick Makoha's debut poetry collection looks at the horrors of the civil war in Uganda that ousted Idi Amin, and the impact of imperialism and neo-colonialism and the trauma of a nation. It's also a personal collection about longing, flight and exile.

*Kingdom of Gravity* was shortlisted for the 2017 Felix Dennis Prize for Best First Collection.

Makoha's poems have appeared in a number of anthologies as well as magazines including the *Poetry Review*, *Rialto*, and the *Boston Review*.



**Themes/topics:** Family, Love, Grief, Religion  
**Publisher:** Zaffre  
**Year:** 2019

## This Green and Pleasant Land

Ayisha Malik

*This Green and Pleasant Land* is set in the sleepy village of Babel's End, which is rocked when Bilal Hasham announces he wants to build a mosque in the area following a deathbed request from his mother.

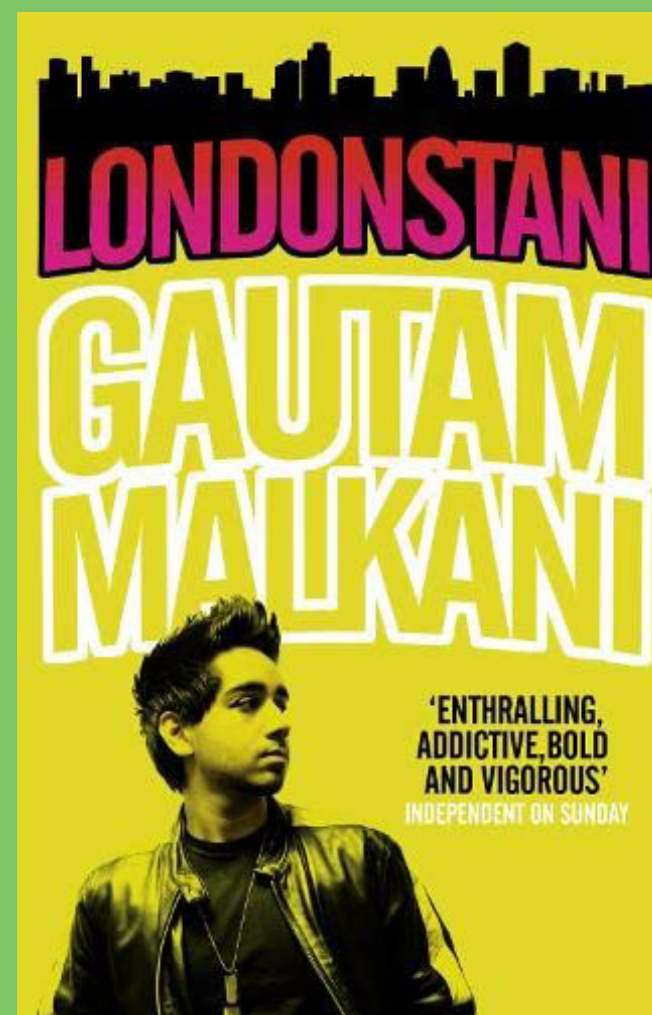
The village is split by the news, and just as unlikely as the construction of the mosque is the friendship that springs up between village busybody Shelley Hawking and Bilal's elderly auntie Rukhsana, who can't speak English.

A comic novel, this book also explores grief, love and the meaning of home in a small community.

*This Green and Pleasant Land* was shortlisted for the Diverse Book Awards.

**"In a linguistic politics redolent of Sam Selvon, Victor Headley and Irvine Welsh, Malkani conveys with élan and expertise, through a suburban "desi-dialect", the absurdity of adolescence and the complex self-deceptions of contemporary cultural dynamics in the UK"**

– *Independent*



**Themes/topics:** Patriarchy, Masculinity, Love, Coming-of-age  
**Publisher:** 4th Estate  
**Year:** 2006

## Londonstani

Gautam Malkani

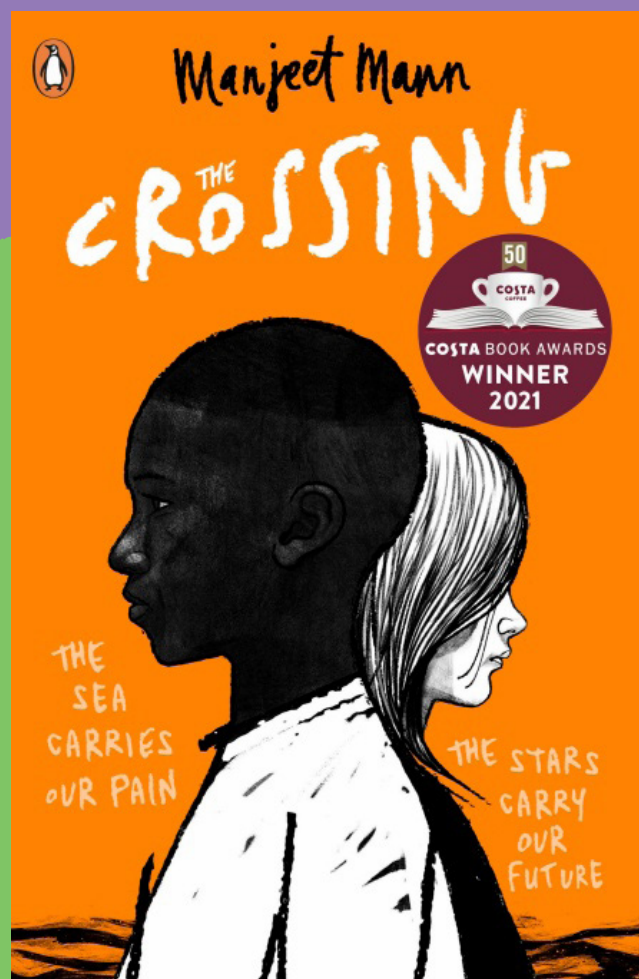
Set close to Heathrow Airport, *Londonstani* is about the lives of a gang young men: ring leader Hardjit, a Sikh, who is determined his caste stay pure; Ravi, a sheep following the herd; and Amit, whose brother Arun is struggling to win the approval of his mother for the Hindu girl he has chosen to marry.

Telling their story and his own is Jas, who is desperate to win the others' approval and desperate too for Samira, a Muslim girl.

Written in the language of its protagonists – a mix of slang, Bollywood, texting, Hindu and bastardised gangsta rap – *Londonstani* was Gautam Malkani's debut novel and explores a generation trying to work out a place for themselves in the shadows of their parents' cultures.

Malkani was a journalist and editor for the *Financial Times* for 19 years and his writing has also appeared in the *Guardian*, the *New York Times* and *Prospect Magazine*.





## The Crossing

Manjeet Mann

*The Crossing* is Manjeet Mann's second novel, told in verse, and is about two teenagers who seem to be from opposite sides of the political divide.

Natalie, who has lost her mum and whose brother marches the streets of Dover full of hate and anger, can only find refuge in swimming. Sammy has fled his home and family in Eritrea for a new life in Europe, and is faced with an unwelcoming future. When a twist of fate brings the pair together, hope fills them both, but it may not be enough to change the world.

*The Crossing* won the 2021 Costa Children's Book award and was named as a *Sunday Times* Children's Book of the Week.

Mann is an actor, writer and producer, and the founder of Run the World, a not-for-profit organisation that uses sport and theatre as a means to empower young women and girls. Her debut YA novel, *Run, Rebel*, won the CILIP Carnegie Shadowers Choice Award, the UKLA Award, Diverse Book Award and the Sheffield Children's Book Award.

**Themes/topics:** Refugees, Politics, Family, Grief, Death

**Publisher:** Penguin

**Year:** 2021

**"Powerful, compassionate and ultimately hopeful"**

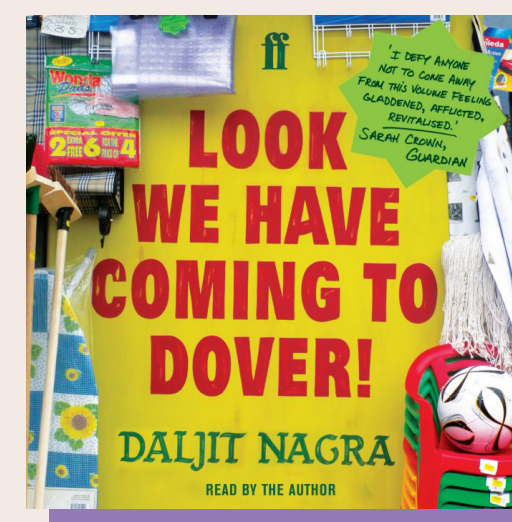
– *Guardian*



**Themes/topics:** Family, Grief, Trauma, Colonialism, War

**Publisher:** Viking

**Year:** 2021



**Themes/topics:** Immigration, Refugees, Family

**Publisher:** Faber & Faber

**Year:** 2009

## Fragile Monsters

Catherine Menon

*Fragile Monsters* is set largely in rural Malaysia, where Mary is visiting her grandmother Durga, and unwittingly digging up the past.

Durga is sharp-tongued and ferocious, and she and Mary have a fractious relationship, made more so by the mystery surrounding Mary's mother, and what happened to her after Mary's birth.

Stuck together in the rising heat, the women must untangle truth from myth, forcing Mary to confront a childhood tragedy, and for both women to consider why so many of their family members disappeared during the war.

Named as one of the best novels of 2021 by the *Telegraph*, Catherine Menon's debut book is the story of one family from 1920 to the present. The *Evening Standard* said of *Fragile Monsters*: "Leavened with a brisk, dry humour, the novel is as propulsive as any mystery, with a bewitching sense of place."

## Look We Have Coming to Dover!

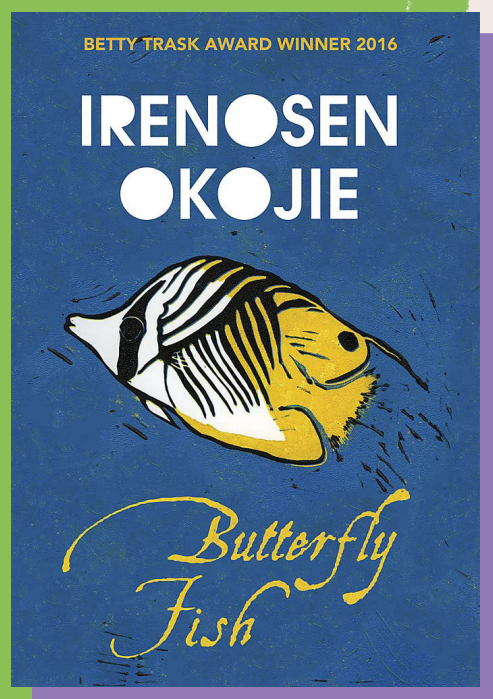
Daljit Nagra

Daljit Nagra draws on English and Indian-English traditions to tell stories of alienation and assimilation in his poetry collection *Look We Have Coming to Dover!*

The collection includes works about a stowaway's first footprint on Dover Beach and the disenchantment of the children of immigrants.

Nagra has won the Forward Prize for Best Individual Poem and Best First Collection, the South Bank Show Decibel Award and the Cholmondeley Award. His books have been nominated for the Costa Prize and twice for the T. S. Eliot Prize.





## Butterfly Fish

Irenosen Okojie

After her mother's sudden death, outsider Joy struggles to pull the threads of her life back together. It's during this time that she's drawn to an artefact she inherited from her mother: a warrior's head cast in brass that belonged to a king in eighteenth century Benin, Nigeria.

Joy is haunted by a beautiful young woman, and begins to dream of a different time and place. As family secrets come to light, she unearths the ties between her mother, grandfather, the wife of the king, a fearsome warrior, and the brass head's pivotal connection to them all.

*Butterfly Fish* won the Betty Trask Award 2016.

Irenosen Okojie is a British-Nigerian writer. Her short story collection *Speak Gigantular* was shortlisted for the Edge Hill Short Story prize, the Saboteur Awards, the Shirley Jackson Award and the Jhalak Prize.

## One of Them: An Eton College Memoir

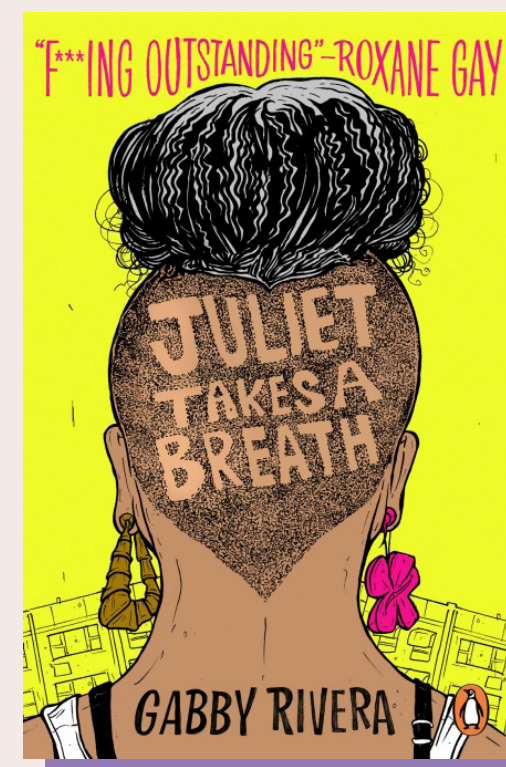
Musa Okwonga

Musa Okwonga grew up in a predominantly working class town, and spent five years at Eton in the 1990s.

This book chronicles his experience at the prestigious school and combines it with a present-day narrative in which Okwonga engages with wider questions about social and political issues: privilege, the distribution of wealth, the rise of the far right in the UK, systemic racism, the "boys' club" of government and the power of the few to control the fate of the many.

Writing in the [New Statesman](#), Stephen Bush said: "One of Them slips along so gracefully that I spent the last few chapters in a state of horror that the book didn't have much longer to run."

This book pairs well with Dillibe Onyeama's *A Black Boy at Eton*.



**Themes/topics:** Identity, Sexuality, Coming-of-age, Love, Family  
**Publisher:** Penguin  
**Year:** 2019

## Juliet Takes a Breath

Gabby Rivera

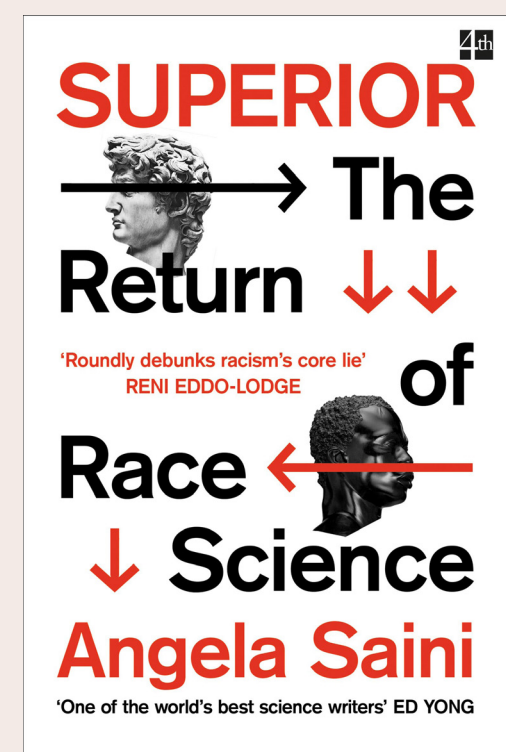
Juliet Palante is hoping an internship with her favourite writer, the author of *Raging Flower: Empowering Your Pussy by Empowering Your Mind*, will help her understand the kind of feminist she wants to be, and come out to herself, her family and the world.

Set over a summer full of queer dance parties and a fling with a motorcycling librarian, Juliet explores her sexuality and identity.

The [Los Angeles Review of Books](#) said Juliet's "radiant heart and voice are a gift to readers", and fans of the book include writer Roxane Gay.

Gabby Rivera first published *Juliet Takes a Breath* with a small independent publisher in 2016, before it became a hit and was picked up by a bigger publisher for wider distribution.

Rivera was the first Latina to write for Marvel comics, penning the solo series *America* about America Chavez, who uses the moniker Miss America.



**Themes/topics:** Science, Race, Politics, Racism  
**Publisher:** HarperCollins  
**Year:** 2020

## Superior: The Return of Race Science

Angela Saini

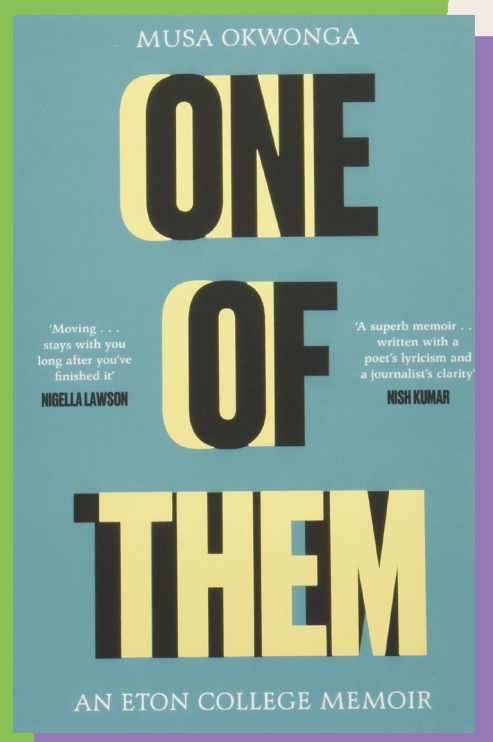
*Superior* is a shocking exploration of race science, uncovering how it's not just a school of thought from the distant past, but one that still has practitioners today.

Author Angela Saini investigates the concept of race, from its origin to the present day, talking to geneticists, anthropologists, historians and social scientists from across the globe, and exposing how many scientists – who the world often thinks of as neutral – still believe that some groups of people are superior to others because of their ethnicity.

The [Guardian](#) called *Superior* an "important book".

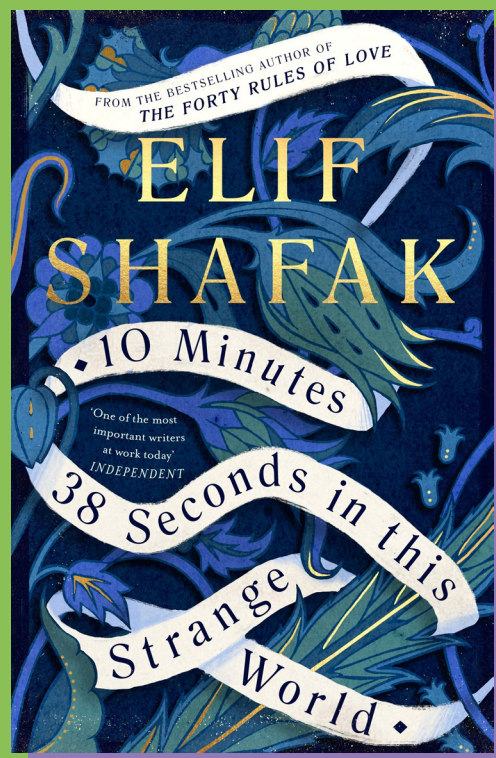
*Superior* was named a book of the year by the *Financial Times*, the *Telegraph*, the *Guardian* and the *New Statesman*.

**Themes/topics:** Grief, History, Death, War  
**Publisher:** Jacaranda Books  
**Year:** 2015



**Themes/topics:** Racism, Class, Wealth, Inequality, Education  
**Publisher:** Unbound  
**Year:** 2021





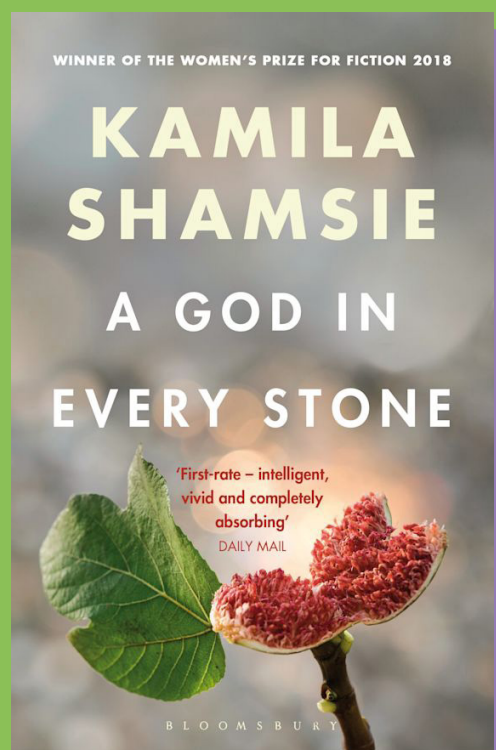
## 10 Minutes 38 Seconds in This Strange World

Elif Shafak

*10 Minutes 38 Seconds in This Strange World* is about the death of a sex worker, Tequila Leila. As the minutes after her death pass, memories of her life, from her childhood to adulthood, brings back the friends she made in her life.

Mirza Waheed in the [Guardian](#) said: "Shafak takes a piercing, unflinching look at the trauma women's minds and bodies are subjected to in a social system defined by patriarchal codes. It's a brutal book, bleak and relentless in its portrayal of violence, heartbreak and grief, but ultimately life-affirming."

**Themes/topics:** Love, Friendship, Sexuality  
**Publisher:** Penguin  
**Year:** 2019



## A God in Every Stone

Kamila Shamsie

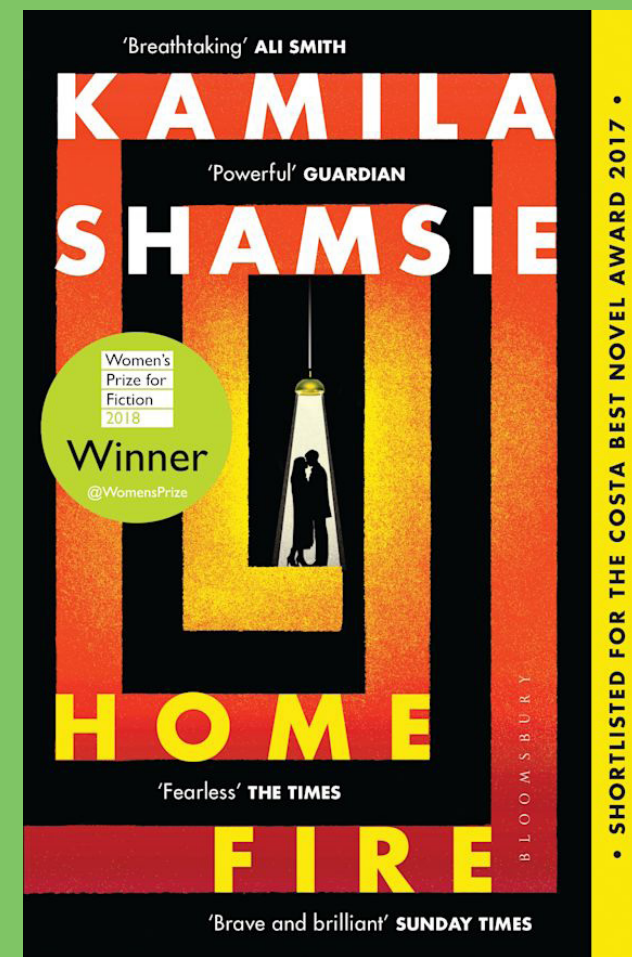
*A God in Every Stone* is set in 1915, after young Englishwoman Vivian Rose Spencer has been separated from the man she loves, and former soldier Qayyum Gul has lost his eye at Ypres.

The pair meet on a train to Peshawar, unknowingly forging a connection that will reveal itself 15 years later when they are brought together again.

*A God in Every Stone* was shortlisted for the Baileys Prize (now the Women's Prize for Fiction), the Walter Scott Prize for Historical Fiction and the DSC Prize for South Asian Literature.

Kamila Shamsie is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature and was named a Granta Best of Young British Novelist in 2013.

**Themes/topics:** Colonialism, War, Grief, Love  
**Publisher:** Bloomsbury  
**Year:** 2017



## Home Fire

Kamila Shamsie

A contemporary reimagining of Sophocles' *Antigone*, *Home Fire* is about Isma and her siblings, twins Aneeka and Parvaiz. She raised the two of them in the wake of their mother's death, and is now finally pursuing a dream long deferred.

But when handsome and privileged politician's son Eamonn enters the sisters' lives, and their brother Parvaiz disappears to prove himself to the dark legacy of the jihadist father he never knew, Isma's life is upended in a way she never imagined.

*Home Fire* won the Women's Prize for Fiction, was shortlisted for the Costa Novel Award and the DSC Prize for South Asian Literature and was longlisted for the Man Booker Prize. It was named as a book of the year by publications including the *New York Times*, the *Evening Standard*, the *Telegraph* and the *New Statesman*.

**Themes/topics:** Politics, Religion, Family, Grief  
**Publisher:** Bloomsbury  
**Year:** 2017

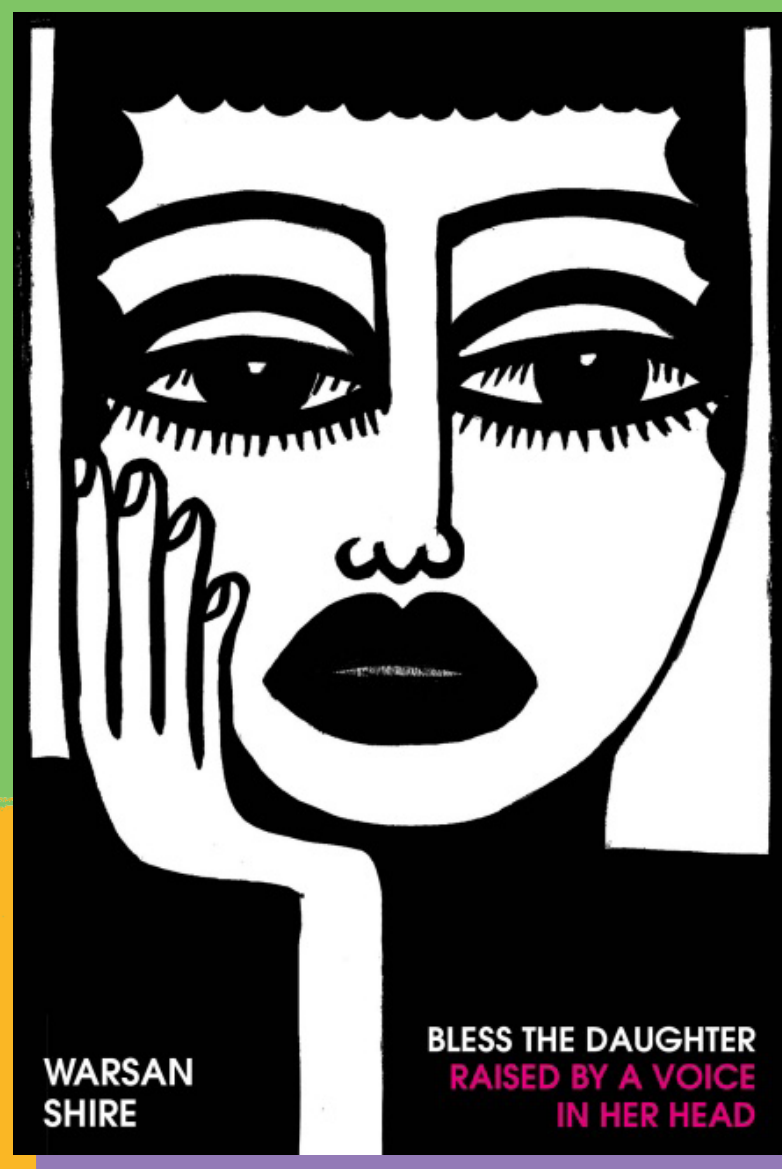
**"Home Fire pulls off a fine balancing act: it is a powerful exploration of the clash between society, family and faith in the modern world, while tipping its hat to the same dilemma in the ancient one"**

– Natalie Haynes, *Guardian*



**"Shire's assured voice teems with righteous fury, tempered by rich language to create a memorable and powerful book"**

– *Publisher's Weekly*



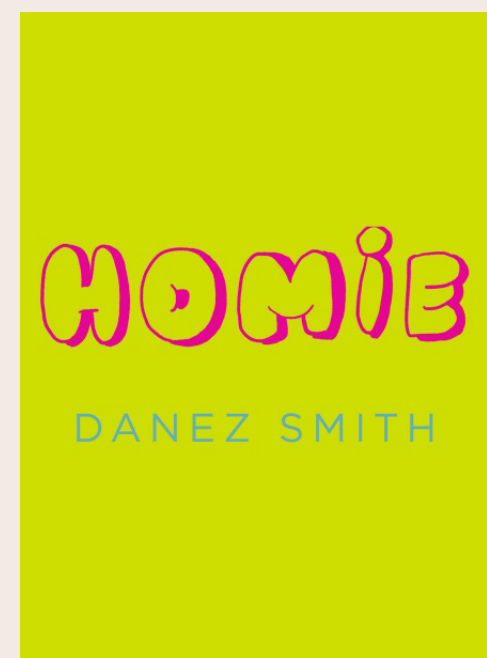
## Bless the Daughter Raised by a Voice in Her Head

Warsan Shire

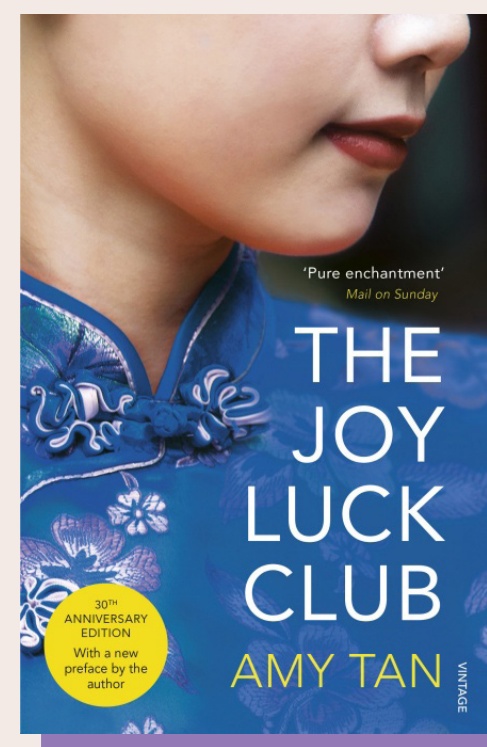
Warsan Shire's first full-length poetry collection is an exploration of the journey from being a girl to being a woman, and looks at the experiences of Black women and teenage girls, refugees and immigrants, mothers and daughters.

Shire is a Somali British poet who collaborated with Beyoncé on the singer's 2016 visual album *Lemonade*, contributed to Beyoncé's 2020 film *Black is King*, and wrote a specially commissioned poem, "I Have Three Hearts", to announce the singer's 2017 pregnancy with twins.

**Themes/topics:** Motherhood, Coming-of-age  
**Publisher:** Chatto & Windus  
**Year:** 2022



**Themes/topics:** Friendship Grief, Death, Love, Sexuality, Politics  
**Publisher:** Chatto & Windus  
**Year:** 2020



**Themes/topics:** Family, Immigration, Grief, Trauma, Inheritance  
**Publisher:** Vintage  
**Year:** 1989

## Homie

Danez Smith

Described as "part friendship diary, part bright elegy, part war cry", Danez Smith's poetry collection *Homie* is an anthem about friendship.

Poet Amanda Gorman, reviewing the collection in the [Los Angeles Review of Books](#), said: "In its cutting compassion, *Homie* is as much a celebration of loved ones' lives as it is a lament for their loss, equally a war cry for kinship and the burial dirge after the battle. The collection rings as a heartfelt call to love our beloveds as if they'll be gone tomorrow, because they just might be. Yet Smith teaches us that one thing is still certain for today: in our homies, despite our most harrowing of hurts, we can always find the hope of healing."

## The Joy Luck Club

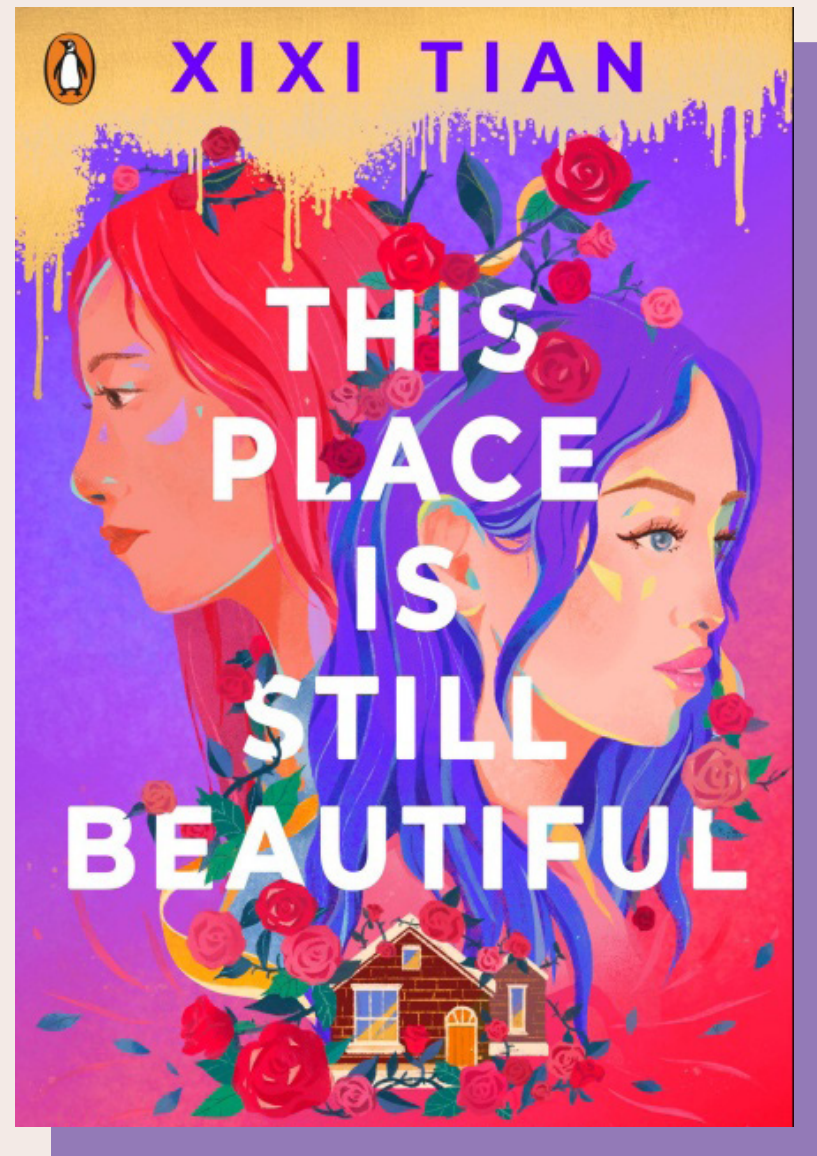
Amy Tan

In 1949, four Chinese women, all recent immigrants to San Francisco, meet weekly to play mahjong and tell stories about what they left behind. The name they give to their group gives Amy Tan's novel its title.

Their daughters, all born in America, think their mothers' advice is irrelevant to their modern lives, until their own inner crises reveal how much they've unknowingly inherited of their mothers' pasts.

Tan's novel was adapted into a film in 1993, starring actors including Ming-Na Wen and Lauren Tom.





## This Place is Still Beautiful

XiXi Tian

Sisters Annalie and Margaret have nothing much in common: Annalie is sweet, content and looking forward to a summer of flirting with the most popular boy in school, while Margaret is ambitious, a warrior for social justice and desperate to forget her ex-boyfriend.

When their family is the victim of a racial attack, Annalie wants to pretend it never happened, while Margaret is determined to fight back. Their differing views change their relationship, and a crushing secret threatens to tear them apart forever.

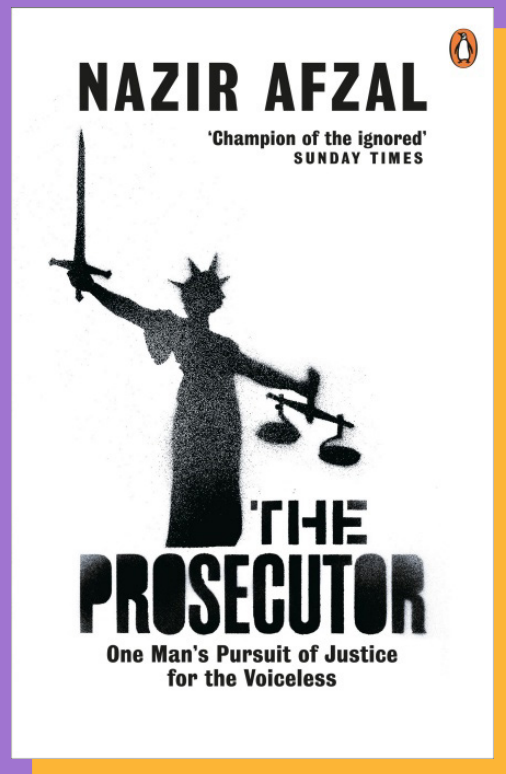
**Themes/topics:** Racism, Politics, Activism

**Publisher:** Penguin

**Year:** 2022

Years  
12-13





## The Prosecutor

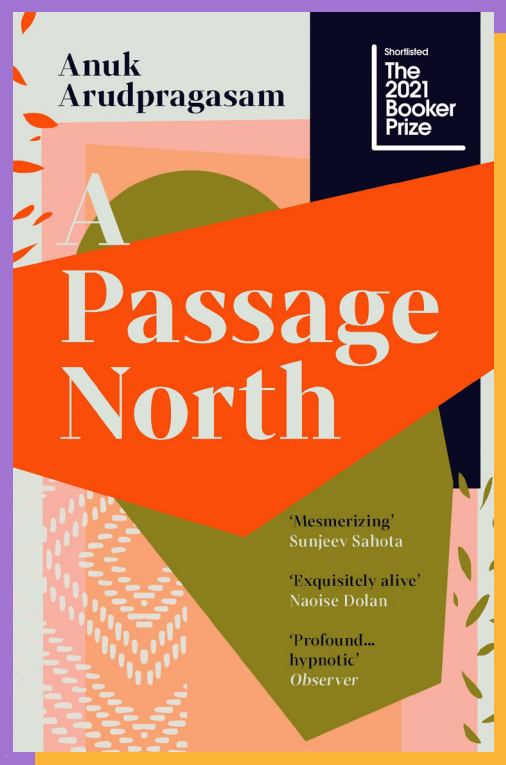
Nazir Afzal

Nazir Afzal is a former chief prosecutor, working on cases including the earliest prosecutions for honour killing and modern slavery, and the Rochdale sex ring.

In *The Prosecutor* he tells his story, going back to his childhood in Birmingham in the 1960s, where he faced racist violence and the tragic death of a young family member, setting him on the path to his groundbreaking career.

*The Prosecutor* is part memoir, part recounting of some of the most significant legal cases in recent British history, and part insight into the justice system and its strengths and weaknesses.

**Themes/topics:** Justice, Racism, Law  
**Publisher:** Ebury Press  
**Year:** 2015



## A Passage North

Anuk Arudpragasam

Set after the Sri Lankan civil war, *A Passage North* follows Krishan as he receives a call telling him that his grandmother's former care-giver, Rani, has died in unexpected circumstances, at the bottom of a well in her village in the north, her neck broken by the fall.

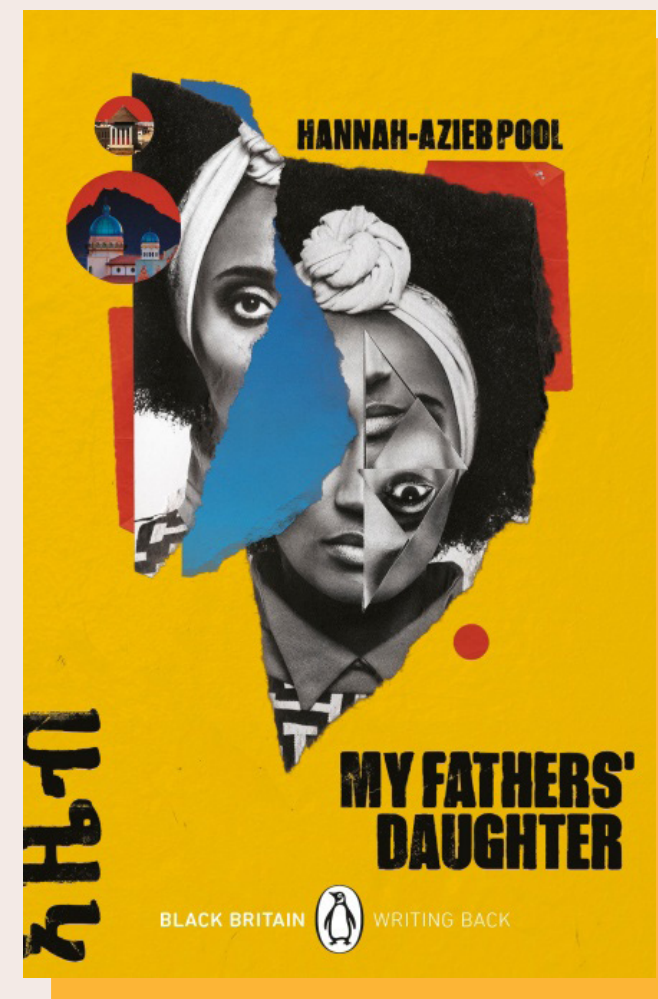
The news comes shortly after an email from Anjum, an activist Krishan fell in love with four years before in Delhi, stirs memories and desires.

As Krishan makes his way by train from Colombo into the war-torn Northern Province for Rani's funeral, he encounters an island devastated by violence.

[NPR](#) called the novel a "tender elegy" and said *A Passage North* is a "wholehearted and necessary act of preservation by its author".

*A Passage North* was shortlisted for the Booker Prize.

**Themes/topics:** Death, Grief, War, Love  
**Publisher:** Granta Books  
**Year:** 2021



## My Fathers' Daughter

Hannah Azieb-Pool

Eritrean-British journalist Hannah Azieb-Pool was adopted from an orphanage in Eritrea and brought to the UK, with everyone believing she had no surviving relatives.

But in her 20s, she received a letter from her brother telling her her birth father was alive and her Eritrean family wanted to meet her.

*My Fathers' Daughter* follows Azieb-Pool on her journey of self-discovery, and her travels to Eritrea to uncover her own story.

This edition features a new introduction from Bernardine Evaristo and an updated afterword from Pool.

Part of the Black Britain: Writing Back series, selected by Evaristo, which celebrates and rediscovers books depicting Black Britain.

**Themes/topics:** Family, Belonging  
**Publisher:** Penguin  
**Year:** 2005



## Growing Out

### Barbara Blake Hannah

Barbara Blake Hannah was one of the first Black women reporting on TV, covering celebrity stories, travelling around the world and rubbing shoulders with well-known people including Germaine Greer and Michael Caine.

But the flood of hateful letters, abuse and complaints she got from viewers eventually cost her her job, and in the aftermath of the fallout she went through a period of self-discovery.

Carving out a new space for herself first in the UK and then back home in Jamaica, where she now lives, Blake Hannah came to embrace and celebrate her Black identity, rather than feeling stifled by attempts to conform to the white culture around her.

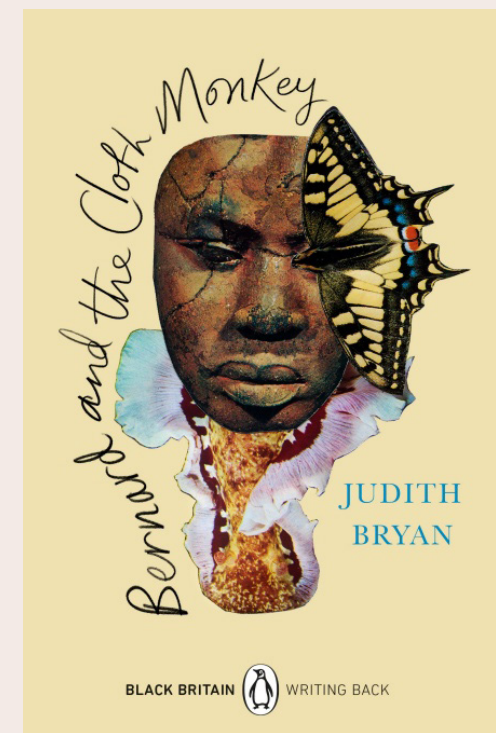
*Growing Out* is her memoir of race and womanhood in the 1960s, and is part of the Black Britain: Writing Back series, selected by Bernardine Evaristo, which celebrates and rediscovers books depicting Black Britain.

**Themes/topics:** Racism, Media, Identity  
**Publisher:** Penguin  
**Year:** 2016

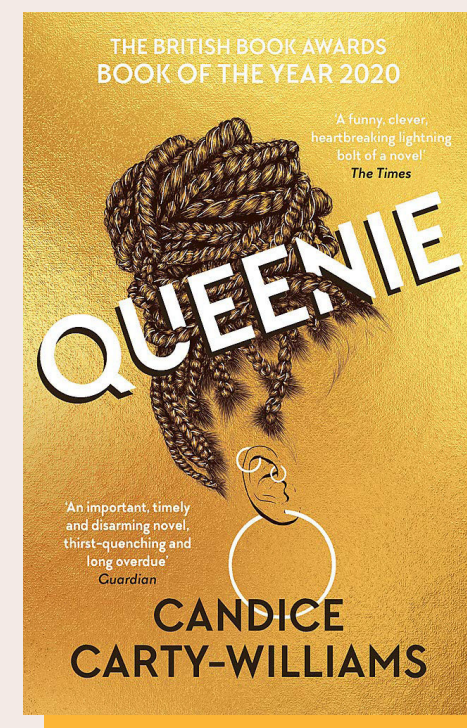


**“A gorgeously exuberant account. . . a fascinating and hugely enjoyable read”**

– Bernardine Evaristo, from the introduction to *Growing Out*



**Themes/topics:** Family, Grief, Trauma  
**Publisher:** Penguin  
**Year:** 1998



**Themes/topics:** Coming-of-age, Love, Sexuality, Family, Faith, Friendship  
**Publisher:** Trapeze  
**Year:** 2019

## Bernard and the Cloth Monkey

### Judith Bryan

*Bernard and the Cloth Monkey* is about Anita, who returns to London after a long absence. Her father is dead, her mother is away and she and her sister Beth are alone together for the first time in years.

Tentatively, she and Beth begin to reach out to each other for connection, but the house they're in echoes with unspoken words and deep secrets.

*Bernard and the Cloth Monkey* won the Saga Prize in 1997, a literary award for trailblazing new Black British novelists.

Part of the Black Britain: Writing Back series, selected by Bernardine Evaristo, which celebrates and rediscovers books depicting Black Britain.

## Queenie

### Candice Carty-Williams

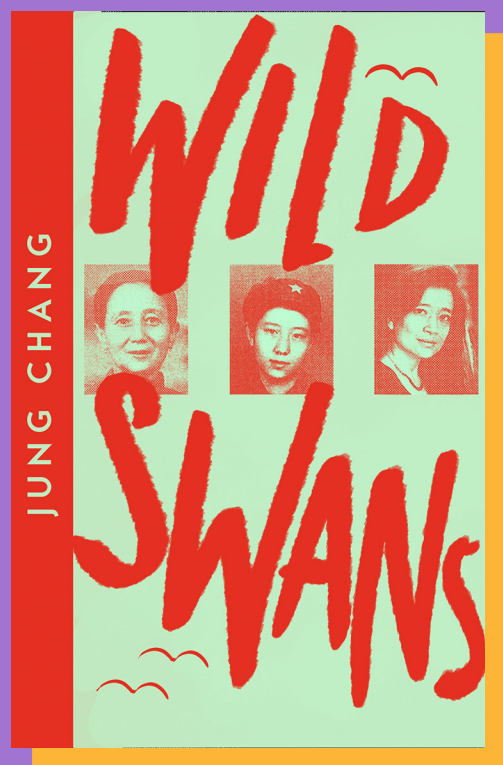
Candice Carty-Williams' debut novel *Queenie* is about the titular character, who has just broken up with her boyfriend and is forced to move in with her strict Caribbean grandmother and grandfather.

With fans including writers Jojo Moyes, Dolly Alderton and Kit de Waal, *Queenie* is a novel about a woman feeling lost, and will resonate with young people trying to figure out their paths in life.

[Kirkus Reviews](#) described the book, which is being adapted for a Channel 4 series, as “perfectly of the moment”.

Carty-Williams' second novel, *People Person*, was published in 2022.





**Themes/topics:** Family, History, Communism, Feminism  
**Publisher:** HarperCollins  
**Year:** 1991

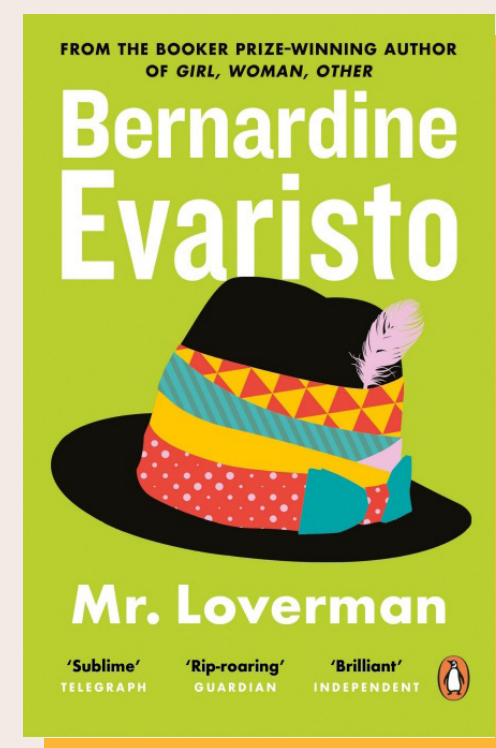
## Wild Swans

Jung Chang

Jung Chang's epic family history spans three generations of women in her own family, and in doing so tells the story of China in the 20th century.

There is the author herself, her Communist mother, and her grandmother, who was given to a warlord as a concubine.

The book has been wildly celebrated, with [Kirkus Reviews](#) saying: "A valuable historical perspective on the impact of Mao on traditional Chinese culture and character – as well as an unusual window on the female experience in the modern world. Mostly, however, Chang offers an inspiring story of courage, sensitivity, intelligence, loyalty, and love, told objectively, without guilt or recrimination, in an unassuming and credible documentary style."



**Themes/topics:** Sexuality, Family, Community, Love  
**Publisher:** Penguin  
**Year:** 2013

## Mr Loverman

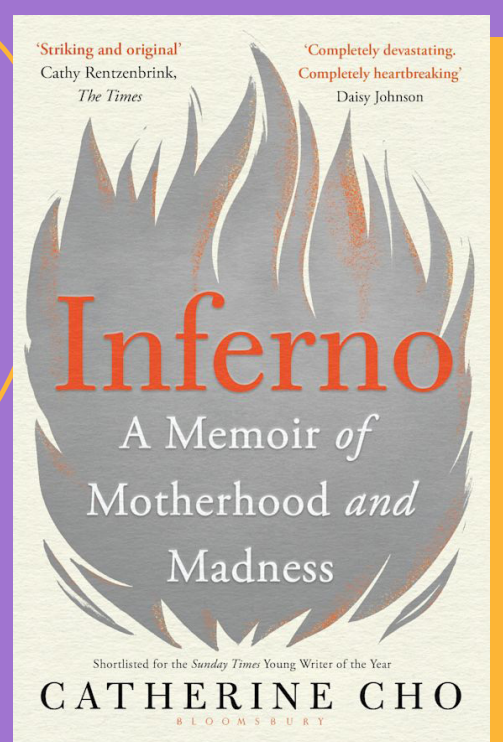
Bernardine Evaristo

In *Mr Loverman*, the novel Bernardine Evaristo published directly before her Booker Prize-winning *Girl, Woman, Other*, readers meet Barrington Jedidiah Walker, a 74-year-old who leads a double life.

Married to the deeply religious Carmel, Barrington is secretly gay, and in a relationship with his childhood friend Morris.

When his and Carmel's marriage falls apart, Barrington wants a divorce and to live with Morris, but a lifetime of fear and deception may prevent him from breaking away.

An exploration of Britain's older Caribbean community, *Mr Loverman* won the Jerwood Fiction Uncovered Prize 2014 and the Ferro Grumley Award for LGBT Fiction 2015.



**Themes/topics:** Mental health, Motherhood  
**Publisher:** Bloomsbury  
**Year:** 2020

## Inferno

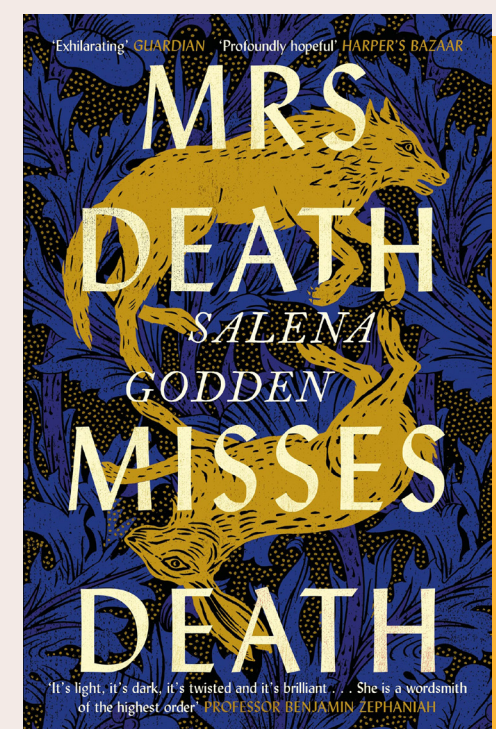
Catherine Cho

When literary agent Catherine Cho's son was three months old, she and her husband took him to America to introduce him to their families.

While there, Cho ended up in an involuntary psychiatric ward and suffering from postpartum psychosis. Separated from her husband and child, and unable to remember how she got there, Cho used the two weeks she spent on the ward to reconstruct who she was, piece by piece.

The result is *Inferno*, an exploration of psychosis and motherhood, as well as societal and cultural expectations and the effects they have.

Cho was shortlisted for the *Sunday Times* Young Writer of the Year Award, while *Inferno* was shortlisted for the Jhalak Prize for Book of the Year by a Writer of Colour, and was named as a memoir of 2020 by the [Guardian](#), which called it a "brilliantly frightening memoir".



**Themes/topics:** Death, Grief  
**Publisher:** Canongate  
**Year:** 2021

## Mrs Death Misses Death

Salena Godden

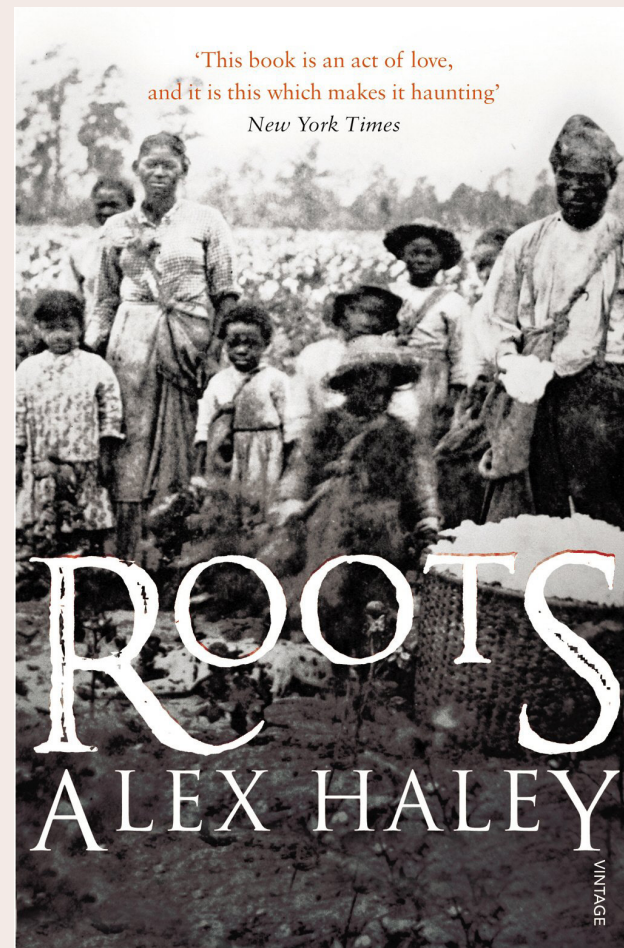
In *Mrs Death Misses Death*, poet and spoken word artist Salena Godden's debut novel, Wolf, a troubled young writer, begins to write Mrs Death's memoirs.

The pair are both exhausted by life and the losses they have suffered, but through it all Wolf must continue to live and Death must carry on holding humans' fates in her hands, appearing when we least expect her.

The [Irish Times](#) said the novel "manages to uplift and reaffirm the power of connection and collectivism".

*Mrs Death Misses Death* was shortlisted for the Gordon Burn Prize.





## Roots

Alex Haley

Described by Alex Haley as "faction" – a mix of fact and fiction – *Roots* is the story of Kunta Kinte, a 16-year-old ripped from his home and brought to the slave markets of the New World.

*Roots*, which won a Pulitzer Prize, reimagined Kunta's journey and is based on Haley's research into his ancestry, which he traced back through six generations to Kunta.

Part memoir, part history of slavery and part fiction, *Roots* is seen as a landmark in African American literature.

*Roots* was adapted into a groundbreaking television series in 1977, and a remake of the show was released in 2016.

This edition has an introduction by historian David Olusoga, author of *Black and British*.

Haley also collaborated with Malcolm X on the activist's memoir, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*.

**Themes/topics:** Racism, Slavery, American history  
**Publisher:** Vintage Classics  
**Year:** 1976

"Here is a novel that resists a single, moralistic interpretation; instead, how one reads the ending largely depends on what one assumes about Pakistan and America. We can shape events, and, perhaps more importantly, events can reshape us, can recreate us, like impulsive gods, in their own image"

– Gabrielle Bellot, LitHub



## The Reluctant Fundamentalist

Mohsin Hamid

"Excuse me, sir, but may I be of assistance? Ah, I see I have alarmed you. Do not be frightened by my beard. I am a lover of America..." The opening lines of Mohsin Hamid's novel are uttered by a mysterious stranger at a cafe in Lahore.

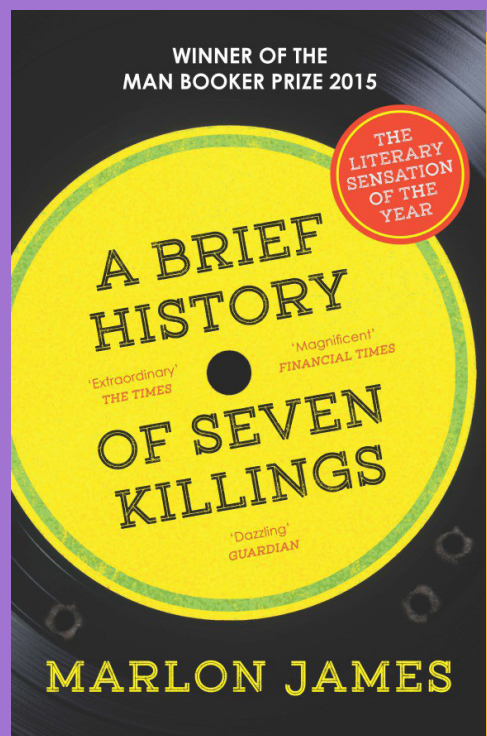
That stranger is Changez, a young man from Pakistan, whose journey we follow as he leaves Lahore and becomes a successful businessman in New York City and then begins to be viewed as other after 9/11.

Assumed to be Muslim because of his place of birth and ethnicity, Changez is forced into taking a series of major, unexpected steps.

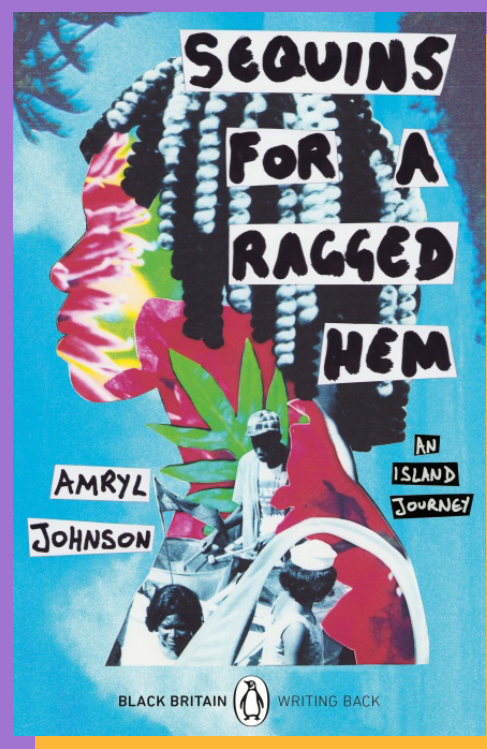
*The Reluctant Fundamentalist* was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize in 2007, and turned into a film starring Kate Hudson and Kiefer Sutherland.

**Themes/topics:** Racism, Terrorism, War  
**Publisher:** Penguin  
**Year:** 2007





**Themes/topics:** Violence, Colonialism, Politics, History  
**Publisher:** Oneworld  
**Year:** 2014



**Themes/topics:** Colonialism, Migration, History  
**Publisher:** Penguin  
**Year:** 1988

## A Brief History of Seven Killings

**Marlon James**

Marlon James' epic novel is inspired by a real-life incident in 1976 where seven gunmen stormed Bob Marley's house in an attempt to assassinate him. The singer survived, and the gunmen were never found.

The incident entered lore, leaving James plenty of room to craft a smart narrative in a book told through the lives of a host of characters, including slum kids, drug lords, journalists and prostitutes.

*A Brief History of Seven Killings* won the 2015 Man Booker Prize, making James the first Jamaican-born man to take home the award. It also won the American Book Award and the Anisfield-Wolf Fiction Prize, was a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award, and featured in more than 20 best books of the year lists.

## Sequins for a Ragged Hem

**Amryl Johnson**

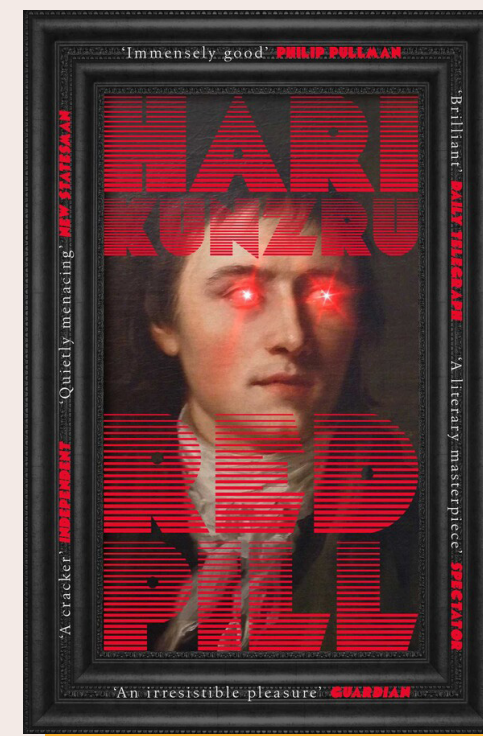
Amryl Johnson came to England from Trinidad when she was 11. As an adult, in 1983, she made the reverse journey.

Landing in Trinidad as carnival begins, she is euphoric about her freedom but soon finds her joy shatters when she discovers her childhood home has been destroyed.

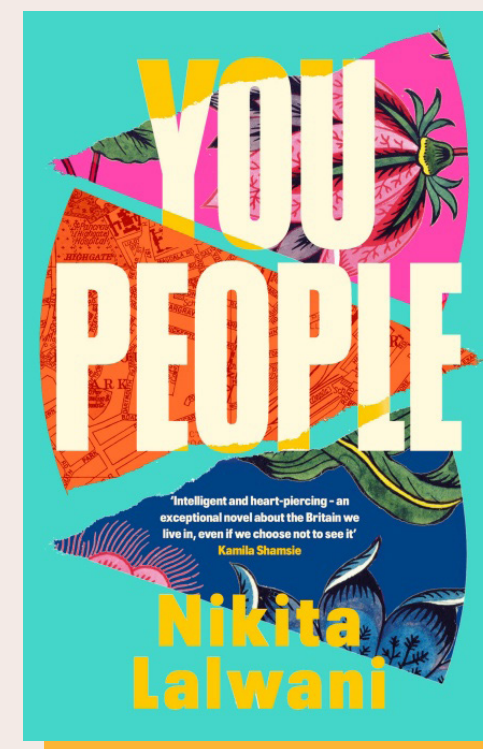
Her memoir follows her exploration of the Caribbean and her interrogation of how our past and present selves live alongside one another.

Johnson was a poet, author and performer, and died in 2001.

*Sequins for a Ragged Hem* is part of the Black Britain: Writing Back series, selected by Bernardine Evaristo, which celebrates and rediscovers books depicting Black Britain.



**Themes/topics:** Internet culture, Mental health, Extremism, Masculinity  
**Publisher:** Simon & Schuster  
**Year:** 2021



**Themes/topics:** War, Grief, Crime  
**Publisher:** Viking  
**Year:** 2020

## Red Pill

**Hari Kunzru**

In *Red Pill* a writer leaves his family in Brooklyn for a three month residency in Berlin, where he hopes to absorb himself in his artistic pursuits.

But nothing goes to plan, and instead he spends his days watching a violent cop show. One night at a party he meets the creator of the show, Anton, and strikes up a conversation that leads him into the heart of moral darkness.

*Red Pill* explores alt-right, online culture as well as creativity, history and sanity.

The *Nation* described *Red Pill* as "a novel of ideas, probing seemingly disparate poles of thought".

## You People

**Nikita Lalwani**

Revolving around an Italian restaurant in London, *You People* is a book about immigration, trauma and survival.

Much of the story is told through the eyes of waitress Nia, who is haunted by the family she has run away from, and Shan, who has fled the Sri Lankan civil war and is desperate to find his loved ones.

At the centre of their world is Tuli, the restaurant's charismatic owner who helps those in need, but who presents Shan and Nia with impossible moral choices.

Writing in the *Guardian*, Rhiannon Lucy Cosslett said: "This is a moving, authentic, humane novel which raises fundamental questions about what it means to be kind in an unkind world."



## Keisha the Sket

Jade LB

Keisha the Sket began life as Keisha Da Sket in 2005, when then 13-year-old Jade LB wrote about a 17-year-old girl from inner London and uploaded the story on a blog site. It began an online sensation among pupils at London schools.

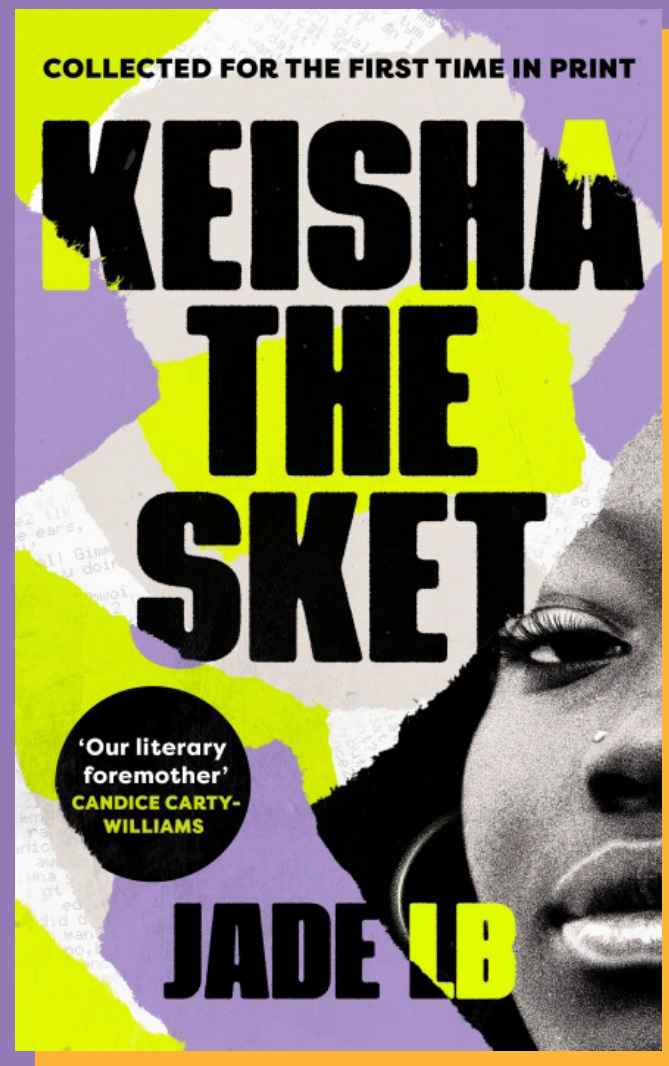
Keisha is from the ends and, after her childhood crush Ricardo wins her over, seems to have it all. But trauma comes knocking, and brings with it a host of choices that will define the kind of woman Keisha wants to be.

The coming-of-age story is now available in print for the first time, with exclusive new content from the author, as well as essays from Candice Carty-Williams, Caleb Femi, Aniefiok Ekpoudom and Enny.

Writing in the *Observer*, Kadish Morris said: "While the revised version will mean the story will travel further than the "endz" that first spread the word, the original Keisha the Sket is a rare example of what it means to create for the Black gaze, to write without asterisks."

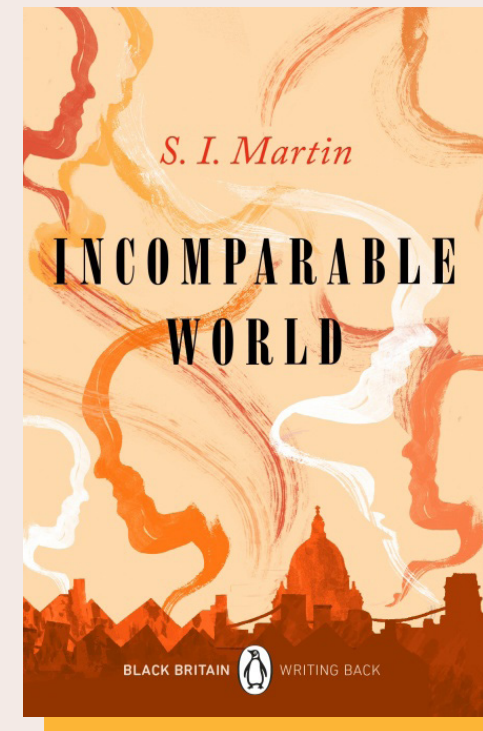
Jade LB is a creative and academic writer whose writing explores Black women and relationships, Black British culture and the Black British working-class experience. One half of The Echo Chamber podcast, she has written articles and essays for *Black Ballad* and other publications.

**Themes/topics:** Coming-of-age, School life, Friendship, Love  
**Publisher:** Merky Books  
**Year:** 2021



**"Keisha the Sket is the literary version of the Black nod – a gesture that lets us know we exist to one another, if no one else"**

– Kadish Morris, *Guardian*



**Themes/topics:** Racism, War, Poverty  
**Publisher:** Penguin  
**Year:** 1996



**Themes/topics:** Colonialism, Empire, Race, Community  
**Publisher:** Penguin  
**Year:** 1909

## Incomparable World

S. I. Martin

*Incomparable World* reimagines 1780s London, revealing the untold stories of African-American soldiers grappling with their freedom after the American revolution.

London proved an unlikely refuge for thousands of Black Americans who fought for liberty on the side of the British, and among them are S. I. Martin's characters Buckram, Georgie and William.

While they might have escaped their American oppressors, poverty awaits them on the streets of London, and their only option is to concoct an audacious scheme that will be a miracle if they can pull it off.

*Incomparable World* is part of the Black Britain: Writing Back series, selected by Bernardine Evaristo, which celebrates and rediscovers books depicting Black Britain.

## Britons Through Negro Spectacles

ABC Merriman-Labor

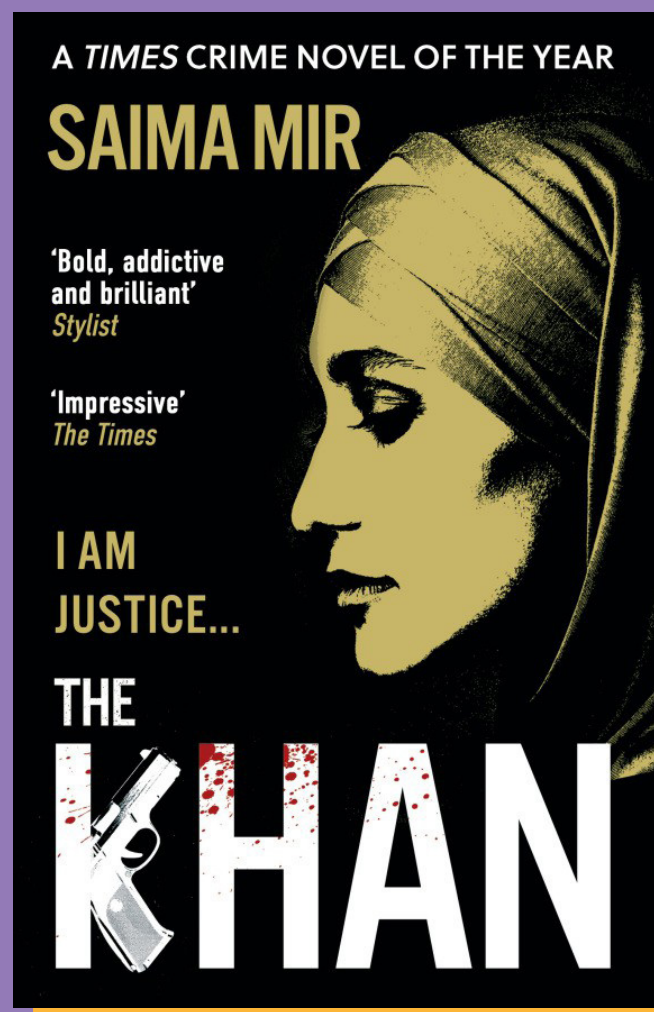
*Britons Through Negro Spectacles* is a social commentary, taking readers on a tour of London at the turn of the 20th century.

The book subverts the colonial gaze usually placed on Africa, and introduces readers to the citizens, culture and customs of Britain through ABC Merriman-Labor's mischievous gaze.

Merriman-Labor was a barrister, writer and munitions worker born in Freetown, Sierra Leone in 1877. *Britons Through Negro Spectacles* expanded on an "entertainment-lecture" tour called Life and Scenes in Britain, which he undertook through West, South West and Central Africa.

*Britons Through Negro Spectacles* is part of the Black Britain: Writing Back series, selected by Bernardine Evaristo, which celebrates and rediscovers books depicting Black Britain.





## The Khan

Saima Mir

Saima Mir's debut novel is about successful lawyer Jia Khan, who has made a life in London, far away from the northern streets where she grew up and where her father Akbar Khan still runs the local organised crime syndicate.

But when her father is murdered, Jia must take his place to restore justice and prevent chaos, while also trying to reconnect with her ex-husband and her son.

*The Khan* was named one of the best crime books of 2021 by *The Times* and *The Sunday Times*, was a Waterstones best crime and thriller of 2021 and was one of Apple's best books of 2021.

Mir has written for a number of publications, and contributed an essay to the collection *It's Not About the Burqa*.

**Themes/topics:** Family, History, Crime

**Publisher:** Point Blank

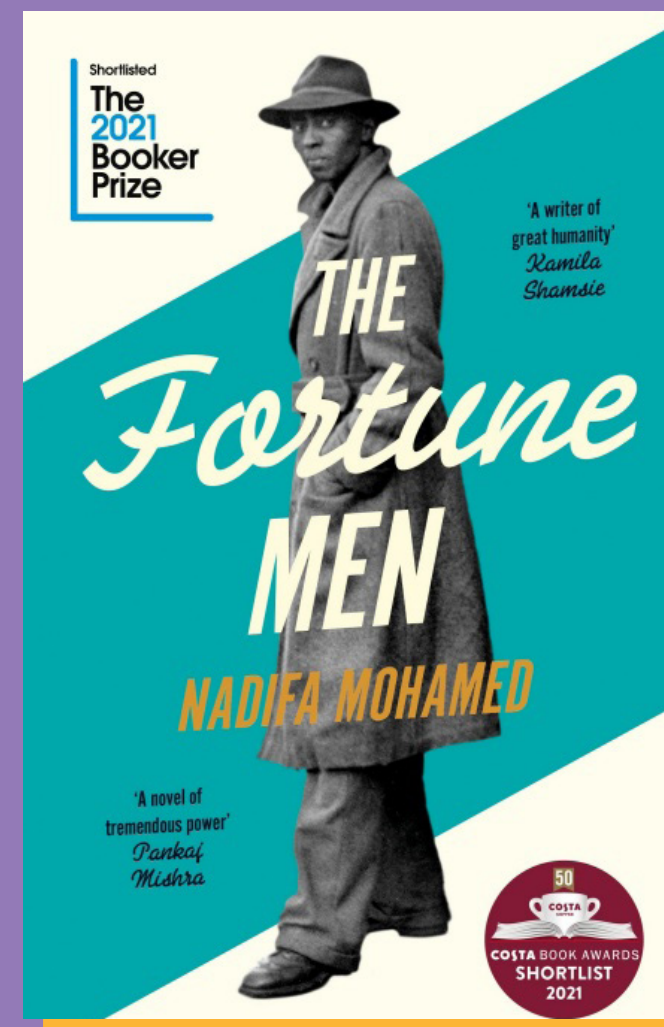
**Year:** 2021

**"Mir's strident authorial voice in calling out injustice, the female antihero protagonist, and the chemistry between the moral grey areas the protagonists occupy and the fundamentally Muslim lens through which the story is told, all combine to make *The Khan* a unique and compelling read"**

– *The Skinny*

**"We can't, of course, ever know the historical figure Mahmood Hussein Mattan. But with *The Fortune Men* Mohamed has given us a clear vision of so many victims caught in the maw of racist legal systems"**

– *The Washington Post*



## The Fortune Men

Nadifa Mohamed

*The Fortune Men* is inspired by the true story of Mahmood Mattan, who was wrongly convicted of murder and became one of the last people executed in Wales. His conviction was eventually overturned in 1998.

In Nadifa Mohamed's novel the narrative travels between Mattan, a fixture among Cardiff's Somali and West Indian communities in 1952, and the Volpert sisters, who run a shop in the area. When Lily Volpert is brutally murdered, Mattan is accused of the crime on the flimsiest of evidence and realises the justice system may not be able or willing to save an innocent man.

*The Fortune Men* was shortlisted for the Booker Prize and the Costa Novel Award.

Mohamed was born in Hargeisa, Somaliland, in 1981 and moved to Britain aged four. Her first novel, *Black Mamba Boy*, won the Betty Trask Prize. Her second novel, *Orchard of Lost Souls*, won a Somerset Maugham Award and the Prix Albert Bernard. Mohamed was selected for the Granta Best of Young British Novelists in 2013, and is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature.

**Themes/topics:** Racism, Crime, Justice, History

**Publisher:** Viking

**Year:** 2021





## Sula

Toni Morrison

*Sula* was Toni Morrison's second published novel, about friends Nel and Sula, who are inseparable as children.

As adults, they lead very different lives: Nel settles in town to raise a family while Sula escapes to the big city.

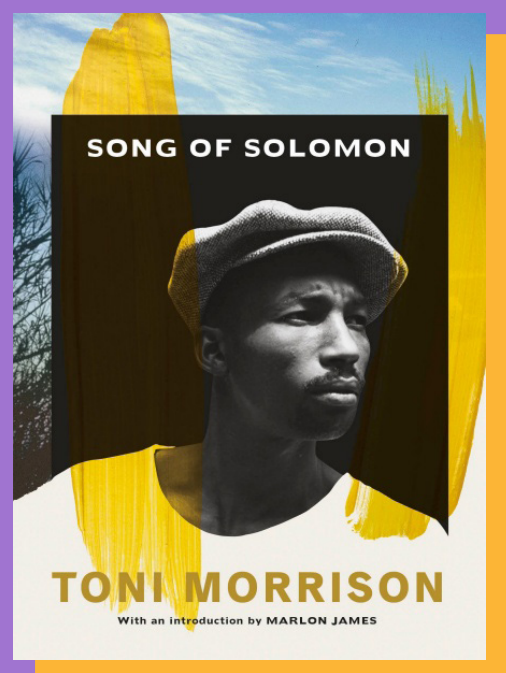
When Sula returns a decade later, it's to find a community whose values are at odds with her rebelliousness and individualism. There, Sula and Nel must confront the consequences of their actions and a dreadful shared secret from their childhood.

This edition features a new introduction by Namwali Serpell, author of *The Old Drift*.

**Themes/topics:** Friendship, Love, Race

**Publisher:** Vintage Classics

**Year:** 1973



## Song of Solomon

Toni Morrison

*Song of Solomon* is about Macon 'Milkman' Dead III, brought up by his well-off Black family to revere the white world around him.

Struggling to make sense of his conflicting identities, Milkman leaves his home in Michigan for the South, retracing the footsteps of his forebears in an attempt to understand his own buried heritage.

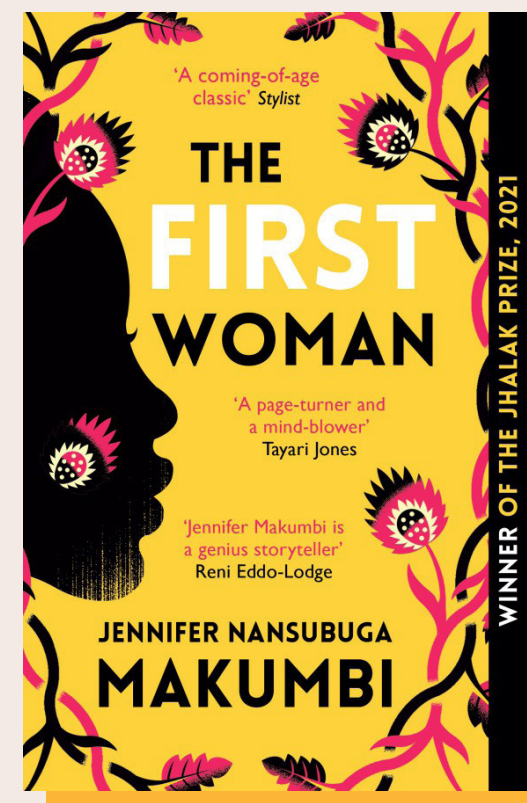
[Kirkus Reviews](#) called *Song of Solomon* "a handsome display of a major talent".

This edition features a new introduction by Booker Prize-winning author Marlon James.

**Themes/topics:** Racism, Slavery

**Publisher:** Vintage Classics

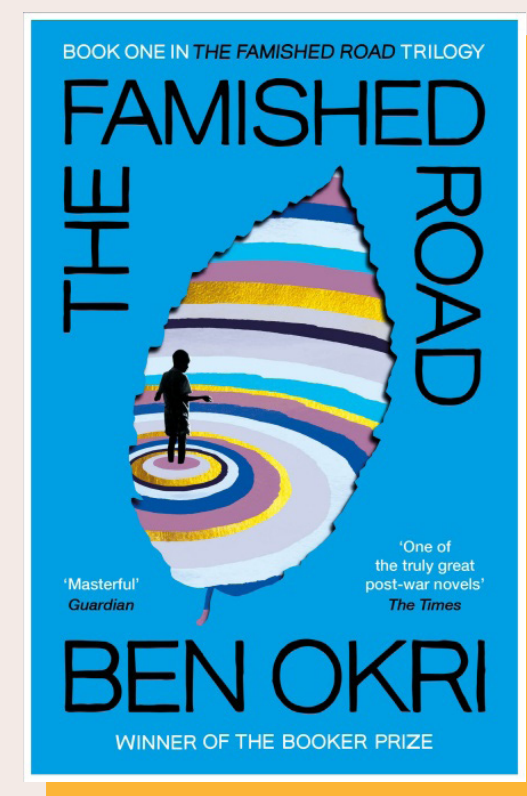
**Year:** 1977



**Themes/topics:** Feminism, Mythology, Magic

**Publisher:** Oneworld

**Year:** 2020



**Themes/topics:** Mythology, Magic, Death

**Publisher:** Viking

**Year:** 1991

## The First Woman

Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi

*The First Woman* won the Jhalak Prize for Book of the Year by a Writer of Colour.

It mixes Ugandan folklore and modern feminism to tell the story of Kirabo, who enters her teens questioning where her mother is and why she chose to leave her daughter behind. With the adults in her life ignoring her desire for knowledge, Kirabo sets out to find the truth for herself, plunging her into a world of magic, tradition and the legend of The First Woman.

[New African Magazine](#) said: "Throughout this jubilant, gorgeously penned celebration of women, Jennifer Makumbi has been perceptive, humorous and revealing about a young woman's journey, navigating her way through a changing body, family, friendships, folklore and love in a time and place where being a woman was never going to be easy."

*The First Woman* was named a book of the year by outlets including *The Sunday Times*, the *Observer* and the *Irish Independent*.

## The Famished Road

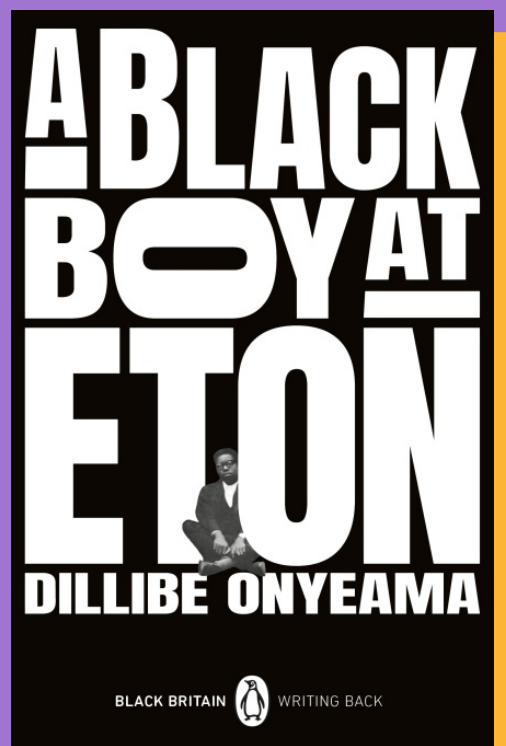
Ben Okri

*The Famished Road* is narrated by Azaro, who is an abiku, a spirit child who in the Yoruba tradition of Nigeria exists between life and death.

Despite belonging to a spirit world made of enchantment, where there is no suffering, Azaro chooses to stay in the land of the Living: to feel it, endure it, know it and love it, and *The Famished Road* tells his story.

*The Famished Road* won the 1991 Booker Prize, a win Okri dedicated to "all those who struggle and who suffer in silence and in public and who never stop fighting and always keep on dreaming".





**Themes/topics:** Racism, Education, Colonialism, Trauma  
**Publisher:** Penguin  
**Year:** 2022



**Themes/topics:** Love, Family, Sexuality  
**Publisher:** Faber & Faber  
**Year:** 2021

## A Black Boy at Eton

Dillibe Onyeama

Dillibe Onyeama was the second Black boy to attend Eton, joining the school in 1965, and the first to complete his education there.

His memoir, written when he was 21, is a deeply personal and revelatory account of the racism he endured during his time at the school, and the alienation and stereotyping he faced.

*A Black Boy at Eton* is part of the Black Britain: Writing Back series, selected by Bernardine Evaristo, which celebrates and rediscovers books depicting Black Britain.

Evaristo called it "gripping and shocking".

## Love After Love

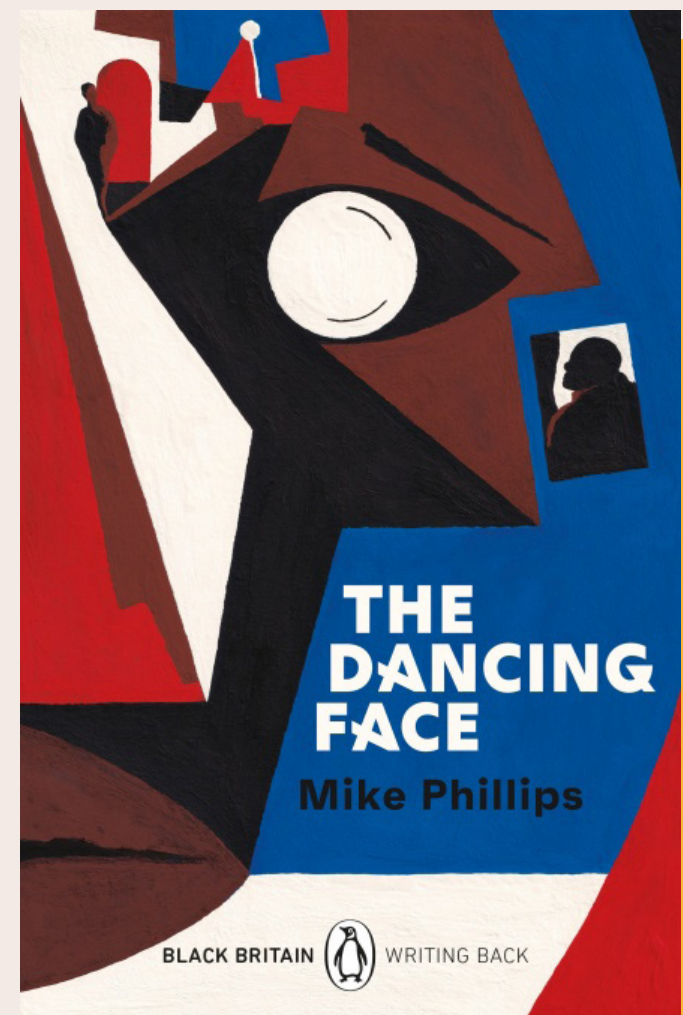
Ingrid Persaud

*Love After Love* focuses on the Ramdin-Chetan family: Betty Ramdin, her shy son Solo and their lodger, Mr Chetan.

Their household is unconventional, but it's a happy one, until one night a terrible truth is revealed that explodes their family unit and drives them apart for years to come.

The book is a love story about many different kinds of love. Reviewing it in the [Guardian](#), novelist Sara Collins said: "One of the reasons *Love After Love* is so delightful is that it reads like a modern meditation on the different kinds of love as catalogued by the ancient Greeks, crossed with the characters' deliciously gossipy self-reflection."

*Love After Love* won the Costa First Novel Award, was featured on BBC2's books programme *Between the Covers* and was long listed for the OCM Bocas Prize.



## The Dancing Face

Mike Phillips

*The Dancing Face* follows university lecturer Gus as he steals the priceless Benin mask of the title from a museum at the heart of the British establishment.

The theft gains the attention of rich and powerful characters with few morals, putting Gus' loved ones in danger.

*The Dancing Face* is part of the Black Britain: Writing Back series, selected by Bernardine Evaristo, which celebrates and rediscovers books depicting Black Britain.

**Themes/topics:** Crime, Slavery, History, Colonialism  
**Publisher:** Penguin  
**Year:** 1997



**“Roy does an admirable job of examining the events that have brought the women to this point, as they try to make sense of what has happened to them and of what is to become of their lives”**

– *Publishers Weekly*



## The Fat Lady Sings

Jacqueline Roy

*The Fat Lady Sings* explores the intersection between race, class and mental health through Gloria, who is living in a psychiatric ward in London in the 1990s.

Loud and audacious, Gloria's routine is broken by Merle, another young Black woman, who is full of silences and fear.

Despite their differences, the pair decide to confide their stories to each other via written journals and recorded messages.

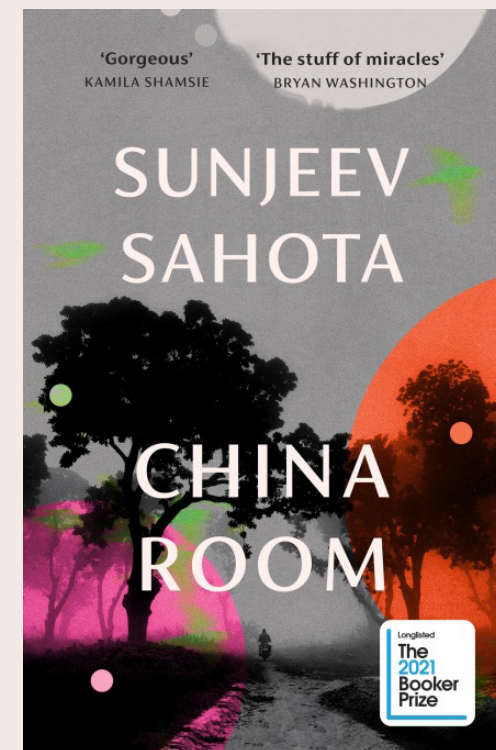
Jacqueline Roy's novel was partly informed by her own experience of entering a psychiatric ward, which she spoke about in an article for *Five Dials*.

*The Fat Lady Sings* is part of the Black Britain: Writing Back series, selected by Bernardine Evaristo, which celebrates and rediscovers books depicting Black Britain.

**Themes/topics:** Race, Class, Mental health

**Publisher:** Penguin

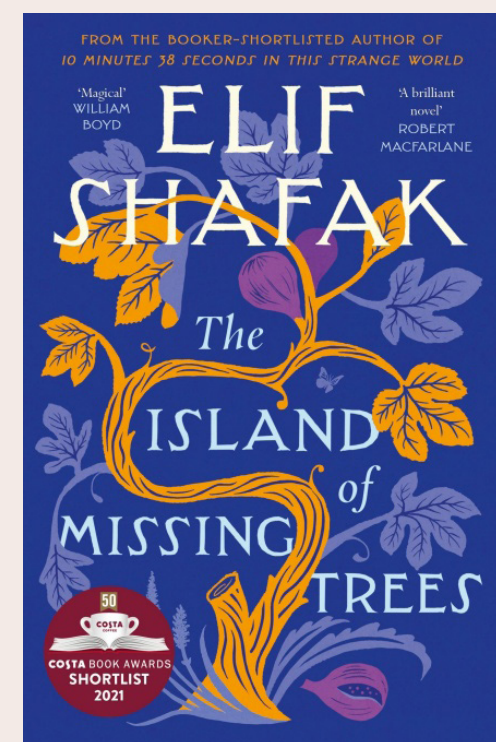
**Year:** 2000



**Themes/topics:** Love, Marriage, Addiction

**Publisher:** Harvill Secker

**Year:** 2021



**Themes/topics:** War, Trauma, History

**Publisher:** Viking

**Year:** 2021

## China Room

Sunjeev Sahota

In 1929 in Punjab, Mehar is a young bride trying to discover the identity of her new husband. She and her sisters-in-law, married to three brothers in a single ceremony, spend their days at work in the family's 'china room', sequestered from contact with the men. When Mehar develops a theory as to which of them is hers, a passion is ignited that will put more than one life at risk.

Alongside Mehar's story is that of a nameless young man in 1999, who travels from England to the now-deserted farm, where the 'china room' is locked and barred, and where he spends a summer in painful contemplation and recovery.

*China Room* was long listed for the Booker Prize and shortlisted for the Rathbones Folio Prize. It was named a book of the year by the *Daily Telegraph*, the *Guardian* and *The Times*.

The [Washington Independent Review of Books](#) said the novel "illuminates the lives of those hidden away by history and the passage of time".

## The Island of Missing Trees

Elif Shafak

Travelling between Cyprus in the 1970s and modern-day London, *The Island of Missing Trees* is the story of a family still living with the trauma of long-distant events.

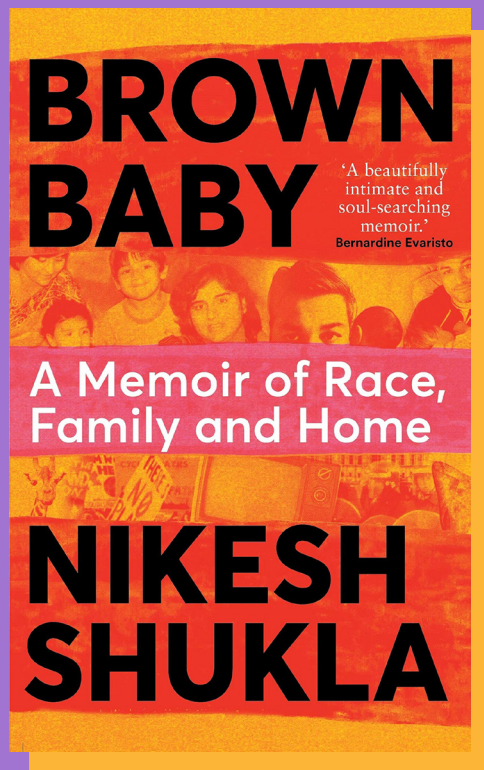
In 1974, under the protection of a fig tree Kosta, a Greek Christian, and Defne, a Turkish Muslim, meet and fall in love. In the present day, Kosta and his daughter Ada are grieving when into their lives comes Defne's sister.

Through the two timelines, Elif Shafak explores love, inherited trauma and the after-effects of conflict.

[Kirkus Reviews](#) described the book as "ambitious, thought-provoking, and poignant".

*The Island of Missing Trees* was longlisted for the Women's Prize, chosen as a Reese Witherspoon book club pick and shortlisted for the Costa Novel Award.





**Themes/topics:** Fatherhood, Grief, Love, Parenting, Racism, Feminism, Sexism  
**Publisher:** Bluebird  
**Year:** 2021



**Themes/topics:** Extremism, Friendship, Family  
**Publisher:** Quartet Books  
**Year:** 2015

## Brown Baby

Nikesh Shukla

Novelist Nikesh Shukla turns his hand to non-fiction with *Brown Baby*, a memoir about bringing up brown children in a world built on whiteness. The book was born out of a series of parenting columns Shukla wrote for the *Guardian*.

Dedicated to Shukla's two daughters, the book serves as an act of remembrance for the grandmother they never met, and addresses topics including food, grief, sexism and racism.

Intimate and soul-searching, *Brown Baby* is about our turbulent times and how we make a space in the world for future generations.

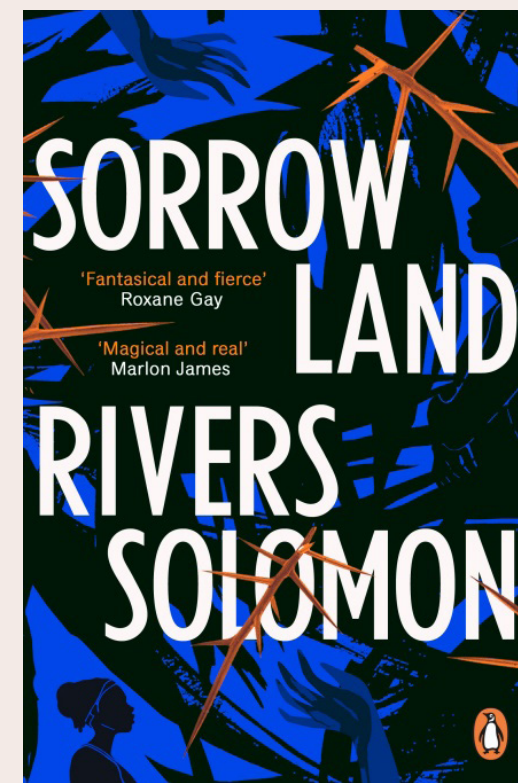
## Hotel Arcadia

Sunny Singh

Writer and academic Sunny Singh's debut novel *Hotel Arcadia* is set in the expensive hotel of the title, and revolves around Sam, a war photographer famous for her hauntingly beautiful photographs of the dead, and Abhi, the manager of the hotel.

When both are caught up in a terrorist attack at the hotel, their bond grows as Abhi takes on the reluctant role of hero – all while his lover Dieter is among the hostages – while Sam looks after Billy, a small child found alive under the dead bodies of his parents.

The [Independent](#) said of *Hotel Arcadia*: "Singh's novel is not only a page-turning thriller. It is far more than that. We never meet the terrorists: they are nearly always elsewhere. Singh's characters inhabit an arena of trauma, where little happens but the play of light and shadow on a screen and in the soul."



**Themes/topics:** Religion, Gender, Sexuality  
**Publisher:** Merky Books  
**Year:** 2021

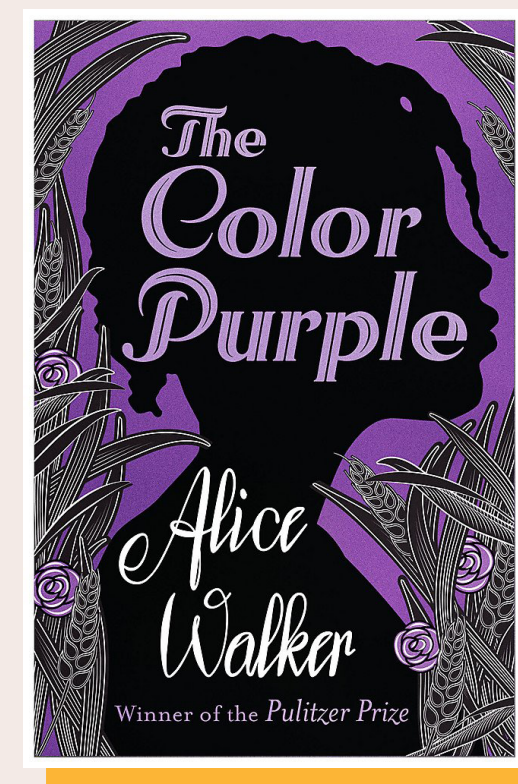
## Sorrowland

Rivers Solomon

*Sorrowland* is a Gothic fiction novel that wrestles with the history of racism in America and the marginalisation of society's undesirables.

It follows Vern, who gives birth to twins alone in the woods, and raises them away from the influence of others. But Vern soon finds herself physically changing. To understand her body's metamorphosis, she must investigate the secluded religious compound she fled and the violent history of dehumanisation, medical experimentation, and genocide that produced it.

Reviewing the novel in the [LA Review of Books](#), writer and editor Christina Orlando said: "Solomon's lyric writing cannot be denied. *Sorrowland* is filled with sentences so exquisite, so crushing that I found myself rereading them over and over again."



**Themes/topics:** Trauma, Sexuality, Feminism  
**Publisher:** Weidenfeld & Nicolson  
**Year:** 1982

## The Colour Purple

Alice Walker

*The Color Purple* is the tale of Celie, a young Black girl born into poverty and segregation who is raped by her father, has two children taken away from her, is separated from her beloved sister Nettie, and is trapped into an ugly marriage.

When Celie meets Thug Avery, a singer who has taken charge of her own destiny, Celie discovers the power and joy of her own spirit and is freed from her past.

*The Color Purple* won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 1983, and is hailed as a classic.



## Without Prejudice

Nicola Williams

*Without Prejudice* is a courtroom thriller following Lee Mitchell, a 30-year-old barrister from a working-class Caribbean background, living and working in London.

After she takes on the high-profile case of notorious millionaire playboy Clive Omartian – arrested along with his father and stepbrother for eye-wateringly exorbitant fraud – the line between her personal and professional life becomes dangerously blurred.

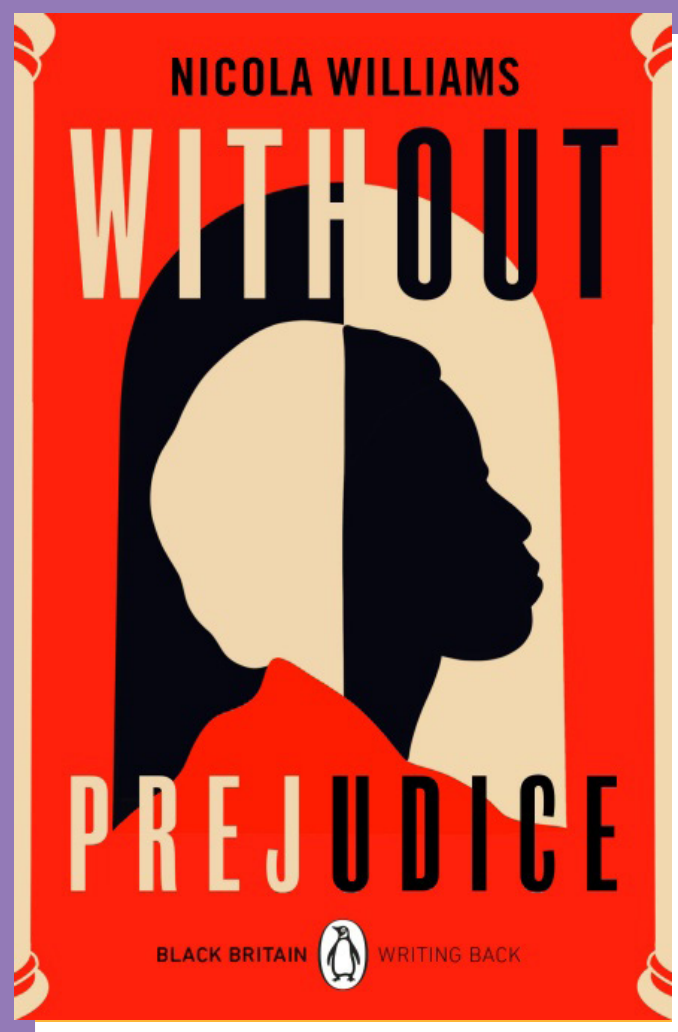
*Without Prejudice* is part of the Black Britain: Writing Back series, selected by Bernardine Evaristo, which celebrates and rediscovers books depicting Black Britain.

Evaristo said it was as “relevant today as it was over two decades ago”.

**Themes/topics:** Justice, Crime, Wealth, Inequality

**Publisher:** Penguin

**Year:** 1997

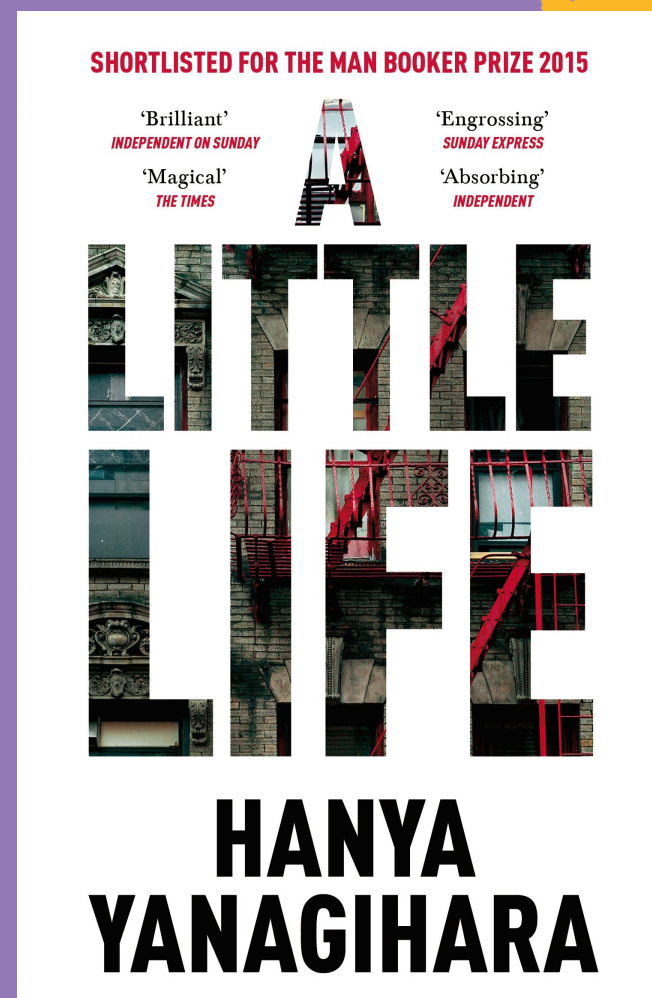


**“Relevant today as it was over two decades ago”**

– Bernardine Evaristo

**“A *Little Life* becomes a surprisingly subversive novel – one that uses the middle-class trappings of naturalistic fiction to deliver an unsettling meditation on sexual abuse, suffering, and the difficulties of recovery”**

– *The New Yorker*



## A Little Life

Hanya Yanigihara

*A Little Life* follows the brilliant, enigmatic and withdrawn Jude, and his friends Willem, JB and Malcolm.

Over the decades, as they move from a small Massachusetts college to New York, their relationships deepen and darken, and Jude is increasingly haunted by the mental and physical scars of an unspeakable childhood, despite his success in other areas of his life.

*A Little Life* was shortlisted for the Booker Prize and the Bailey's Prize (now the Women's Prize for Fiction), won the Fiction Book of the Year award at the British Book Awards, and was a finalist for America's National Book Awards.

Yanagihara's debut novel was *The People in the Trees*, and her third novel, *To Paradise*, was released in 2022. She is editor-in-chief of *T*, the *New York Times* style magazine.

**Themes/topics:** Abuse, Trauma, Friendship, Love

**Publisher:** Picador

**Year:** 2017



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