

# The (incomplete) Lit in Colour book list

100 texts  
by writers of colour

Key Stage 3, 4 & 5 edition

Volume 3

Lit in colour



# Contents

Years 7, 8, 9

p4

Years 10-11

p26

Years 12-13

p48

Index

p66

## Why have an (incomplete) list?

We call our book lists incomplete, because we know they will never manage to be exhaustive or definitive when it comes to recommending great books by writers of colour. Instead, we are hoping to offer a snapshot of exciting new texts that have just been published and spotlight older classic texts to support teachers and young people diversify their reading.

All the books listed have suggested year groups as a guide, but we realise this will vary from one individual student to another, so really this is more of a starting point for teachers to familiarise themselves with what is available and build confidence in their subject knowledge of literature by writers of colour.

With the creation of this third volume of the (incomplete) Lit in Colour book list for Secondary school age students we decided to bring in Author Focus pages. These highlight the work of particularly prominent writers, past and present, whose writing speaks to moments in history as well as our current times. We have also incorporated more international voices as we wanted to expand the narratives students encounter beyond Britain, and celebrate cultures from around the world.

We are always really keen to hear what books should be featured next time, so do get in touch if you can't see a favourite book from your own reading - just email [Litincolour@penguinrandomhouse.co.uk](mailto:Litincolour@penguinrandomhouse.co.uk) with your suggestions.

ori  
ci omnis  
orem  
stib  
st, ium  
e parch-  
um  
aion  
n ipienit  
udae 2  
niliq-  
Icimini maionsed eum fugias-  
sendus et quias rerum litis nos  
simus aut quias dellabo. Ucil et  
a vid explam qui consequat.  
Uria eos essi repero eumquisint  
lit officia conseceatium re  
nostrum ut volorerro occus sit,  
omni nobitaq uodicie ndellup-  
tatet as ex essit reperehentia vit  
abo. Ro offic te est ut volores et  
qui dolupta is qui sitati in-  
venderum nonsedipsus dolupti  
untem aperum que eum quo  
tem sandita sperio in re con  
explibe rferuntint ipsusae  
saesed que doluptum a sit  
porpora nulles et aut omnimus  
volore, cus eossimus earciat et  
velia verio blaitem rem ea con  
cum que resequo quiatii simodi  
blaut-volorition perum qui  
quiatem explate turios mi,  
consentius aliquatia sit aliquissi  
omnis vit porempo mo dolenis  
in pe pratios quaeris iminctem  
et audae omnimporatem harcil  
etur rest fugitiam illabor empo-  
rerum eati numquamet as  
Ibus arum re, sed etur sincto-  
rum doluptatur, omnis que plia  
pratest quis re cuptatibus aut  
repe laboruptam, te minus.  
Ebis maior sunt volorro opta  
nissi ut que vellabo. Et harunt  
inus comnis endent qui di  
dolenitin eum et rem ium aut  
restrum, officit atemqui dolup-  
tat.  
Et et ut ent doluptatur aut quae  
nonsequi delibus nosaperis esto  
blabo. Nequati orecepudite sam,  
ullique dolupid mi, idem volore

Years  
789

## Every Rising Sun

Jamila Ahmed



The name Shaherazad (often spelt Sheherazad) is likely familiar to anyone who loves stories, and even those who don't know her name will have heard of some of the tales told by her character in *The Thousand and One Nights*.

Jamila Ahmed's *Every Rising Sun* offers a new take on the Persian queen whose nightly storytelling kept her husband, the king, from murdering her. In her reimagining of Shaharezad's life, Ahmed taps into an untold story: that of Shaherazad herself.

Ahmed is a graduate of Harvard Law School and Barnard, where she studied medieval Islamic history.

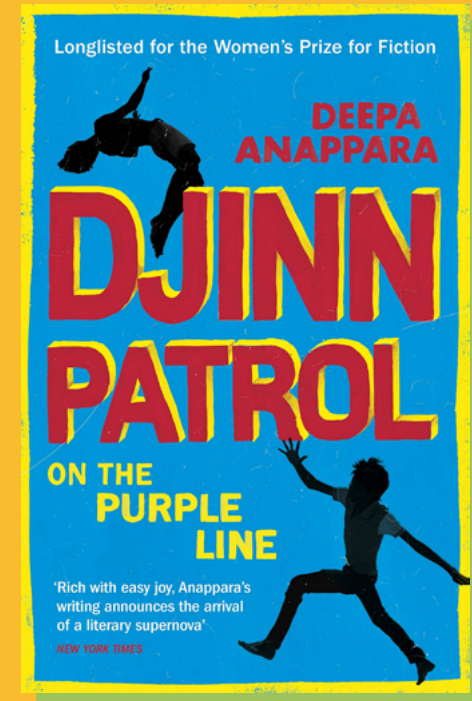
**Publisher:** John Murray

**Year:** 2023

**Themes:** Myths and legends

## Djinn Patrol on the Purple Line

Deepa Anappara



Nine-year-old Jai loves watching reality cop shows. When children start going missing from his community, Jai, along with best friends Pari and Faiz, decides to channel his favourite shows and investigate, as the real police don't seem to care. As more and more children disappear, the trio venture deeper into the city in their search, encountering threats and violence.

Anappara's novel, which was longlisted for the Women's Prize for Fiction, blends contemporary fiction with myth, and is a story about poverty, community and power.

*Djinn Patrol on the Purple Line* is Anappara's debut novel; it was inspired by her time working as a journalist in cities including Mumbai and Delhi.

**Publisher:** Vintage

**Year:** 2020

**Themes:** Child labour, Poverty, Inequality, Myths and legends, Religion



## Letters to a Writer of Colour

Edited by Deepa Anappara  
and Taymour Soomro



Writers Deepa Anappara and Taymour Soomro bring together a number of their contemporaries for a look at how we tell stories and our assumptions about what fiction is and should be.

Among contributors to the book are Madeleine Thien on how writing builds the room in which it can exist, Tahmima Anam on giving herself permission to be funny, and Kiese Laymon on hearing that no one wants to read the story that you want to write.

Other writers with essays in the book include Xiaolu Guo, Femi Kayode, and Nadifa Mohamed in conversation with Leila Aboulela.

**Publisher:** Vintage

**Year:** 2023

**Themes:** Writing, Art, Creativity, Ethnicity

## Good for Nothing

Mariam Ansar



Mariam Ansar's debut novel is the story of three different teenagers given a community service order after an incident involving a spray can and an inconveniently timed patrol car.

Amir is the angry boy who won't talk about the brother he lost but won't let his name be forgotten either. Eman is awkward and her favourite evenings are spent at home watching television with her Nani, while determined athlete Kemi knows she deserves as good a shot as anyone else. Over a summer they learn about each other and themselves, and uncover the true story of Amir's brother's death.

Ansar is a Bradford-born writer and secondary English teacher. She has written for publications including *NME*, *VICE* and *Teen Vogue*.

**Publisher:** Penguin

**Year:** 2023

**Themes:** Friendship, Death, Justice

## Soul of the Deep

Natasha Bowen



Natasha Bowen continues the story of Simi, which started in *Skin of the Sea*.

Simi has sacrificed everything - her freedom, her life as a Mami Wata (a mermaid duty-bound to collect the souls of those who die at sea and bless their journeys back home to the Supreme Creator), and the boy she loves - and now watches over the Land of the Dead at the bottom of the ocean. When Simi discovers demons have entered the human realm bent on destruction, she must break her vow and return to the world above the water.

Librarian, author and critic Alex Brown in *Locus Magazine* said: "Bowen has a lot to say about the world, about power and oppression, about doing what's right even when it's hard, about protecting your people no matter what."

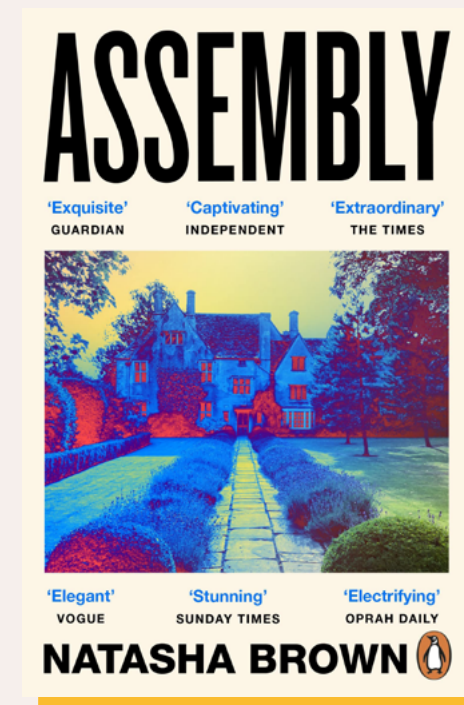
**Publisher:** Penguin

**Year:** 2022

**Themes:** Slavery, Mythology, Romance

## Assembly

Natasha Brown



Narrated by a Black British woman, Natasha Brown's debut novel is the story of how a person assembles themselves. As she prepares to attend a lavish garden party at her boyfriend's family estate deep in the English countryside, the narrator considers what she is made up of.

This slim yet powerful novel is about doing all the right things, keeping your head above water, and coming of age in a world that has been shaped by the credit crunch and the hostile environment.

*Assembly* was shortlisted for a number of awards, including the Folio Prize, the Goldsmiths Prize and the Orwell Prize for Political Fiction.

**Publisher:** Penguin

**Year:** 2021

**Themes:** Inequality, Wealth, Power



# Author Focus

## NoViolet Bulawayo

Born: 1981, Zimbabwe

Born in Zimbabwe, NoViolet Bulawayo is the pen name of Elizabeth Zandile Tshele – the surname is taken from her home city of Bulawayo, while NoViolet is derived from the Ndebele word for 'with' and the name of her late mother. Aged 18, Bulawayo moved to America, where she earned her degrees.

Bulawayo's first novel *We Need New Names*, about a group of friends living in a shantytown in Zimbabwe called Paradise, was shortlisted for the Booker Prize in 2013. Reviewing the book in the [Independent](#), Leyla Sanai said: "How does a writer tell the story of a traumatised nation without being unremittingly bleak? NoViolet Bulawayo manages it by forming a cast of characters so delightful and joyous that the reader is seduced by their antics at the same time as finding out about the country's troubles."

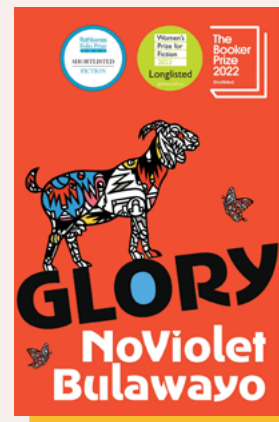
Bulawayo's second novel *Glory*, inspired by George Orwell's *Animal Farm* and shortlisted for the Booker Prize, continues her fascination with telling stories about Zimbabwe and its political and social landscape. Set in the animal kingdom of Jidada, *Glory* follows what happens after Old Horse is ousted in a coup after a 40-year rule; initially the kingdom is happy, but hope soon disappears as greed and corruption remain rampant. *Glory* satirises the rule of Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe and the 2017 coup in the country.

The [Booker Prize](#) judges said *Glory* was "a magical crossing of the African continent with its political excesses and its wacky characters".

### Key texts:

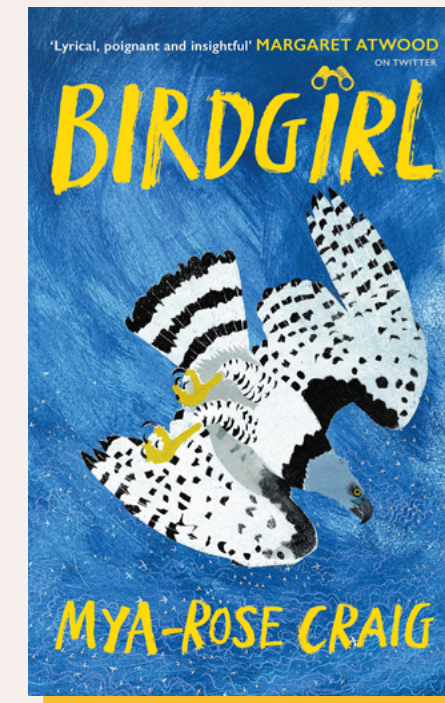
[We Need New Names](#)

[Glory](#)



## Birdgirl

Mya Rose-Craig



Known as Birdgirl on social media, Mya Rose-Craig is a birder, environmentalist and diversity activist. To date, she has seen more than 5,000 different types of birds, around half the world's species – and she's only in her early 20s.

In her book *Birdgirl*, Craig tells the story of how she came to be a birder, and impresses upon the reader the extraordinary nature of birds of all kinds. *Birdgirl* won the Somerset Maugham Award.

[Kirkus Reviews](#) said the book was "an excellent mix of travelogue, memoir, and advocacy".

Publisher: Jonathan Cape

Year: 2022

Themes: Nature, Environment, Activism

## It's Not Ok to Feel Blue (and Other Lies)

Edited by Scarlett Curtis



More than 60 people from all walks of life are brought together in this volume to speak about what mental health means to them.

Contributors include novelist and screenwriter Candice Carty-Williams, writer and podcast host Chidera Eggerue, and poet Hussain Manawer.

The collection is edited by activist and writer Scarlett Curtis.

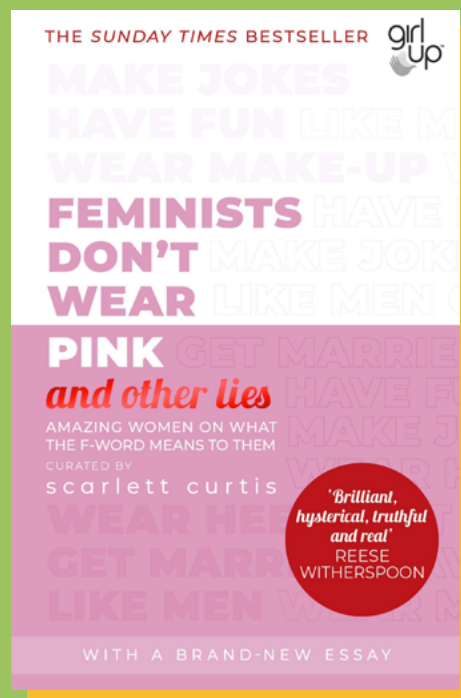
Publisher: Penguin

Year: 2019

Themes: Mental health, Activism

## Feminists Don't Wear Pink (and Other Lies)

Edited by Scarlett Curtis



A *Sunday Times* bestseller, *Feminists Don't Wear Pink* is a collection of essays by women who were asked what feminism means to them.

Contributors include novelist Liv Little, Black Lives Matter co-founder Alicia Garza, actor Jameela Jamil and comedian Lolly Adefope.

Actor Reese Witherspoon called the book "brilliant, hysterical, truthful and real".

The collection is edited by activist and writer Scarlett Curtis, and the book was published in partnership with Girl Up, the UN women's foundation.

**Publisher:** Penguin  
**Year:** 2018  
**Themes:** Feminism, Equality

## Friday I'm in Love

Camryn Garrett



Mahalia Harris wants a big Sweet Sixteen party, the cute new girl Siobhan to like her back, and a break from worrying about money, snide classmates and more. It's too late for the birthday party, but Mahalia decides on a coming-out party, where she can celebrate queerness on her own terms. As she tries to save money and flirt awkwardly with Siobhan, Mahalia finds herself overwhelmed with schoolwork and responsibilities, putting her perfect party at risk.

Garrett was selected as a *TIME* for Kids reporter when she was 13, and in 2015 was named as one of MTV's 8 Inspiring Teens Using Social Media to Change the World. *Friday I'm in Love* is her third novel.

**Publisher:** Penguin  
**Year:** 2023  
**Themes:** Coming-of-age, Friendship, Love, LGBTQ+

## These Are the Words

Nikita Gill



Poet Nikita Gill's debut collection for a YA audience focuses on the things she wished she'd been told when she was a teenager. Gill writes about healing from a first breakup, celebrating finding family, understanding first love, expressing anger and joy, and more.

The collection is illustrated by Gill herself, and is a warm and fearless set of poems.

Gill is a British-Indian poet, playwright, writer and illustrator whose books include *Greek Goddesses*, a retelling of Greek myths, and *The Girl and the Goddess*, a poetic tale about a girl called Paro. She also edited the poetry anthology *SLAM!*, a collection of poems by established and up-and-coming performance poets.

**Publisher:** Pan Macmillan  
**Year:** 2022  
**Themes:** Coming-of-age, Love, Family, Friendship, Relationships

## This Book Kills

Ravena Guron



Jess Choudhary is a pupil at an exclusive school, needing to keep her record clean because she's on a scholarship. When Hugh Henry Van Boren – one of the most popular and richest students at the school – is found dead, it seems at first to have nothing to do with Jess.

But suspicion turns on Jess when it's revealed that Hugh died in the same way a character in a short story she wrote. And an anonymous text thanking Jess for the inspiration doesn't help her feel any better. Determined to get to the bottom of the mystery – before she's blamed and before someone else is killed – Jess embarks on a search for the killer.

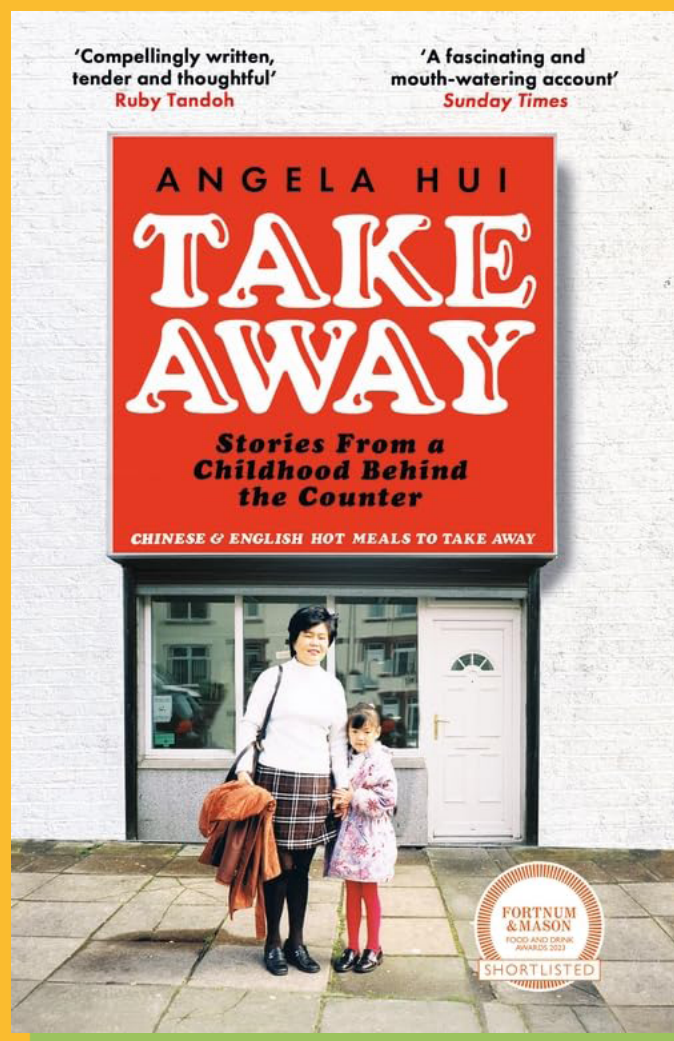
Guron is a lawyer with a degree in biochemistry, and *This Book Kills* is her debut novel.

**Publisher:** Usborne  
**Year:** 2023  
**Themes:** Death, Friendship, Mystery



## Takeaway

Angela Hui



**Publisher:** Trapeze

**Year:** 2022

**Themes:** Family, Food, Community, Racism

Shortlisted for the Jhalak Prize for Book of the Year by a Writer of Colour and the Fortnum & Mason Debut Food Book Award, Angela Hui's memoir *Takeaway* is about growing up in a Chinese takeaway in rural Wales.

From a young age, Hui was made aware of just how different she and her family were seen by her local community, via attacks on their shop (and by extension, their home), verbal abuse from customers and confrontations that ended with her dad wielding a meat cleaver. But Hui's story is also one about being surrounded by the food and love of her home culture, and by a close family relationship.

This memoir offers a heartwarming, honest and raw look at life on the other side of the counter. Fans include chef Ruby Tandoh, who called it "compellingly written, tender and thoughtful". The [Asian Review of Books](#) said: "*Takeaway* is a heartfelt tribute to the strength of immigrants, interwoven with deeply personal recollections, disarming humour, and an unabashed love for the takeaway shop, despite its many challenges."

"*Takeaway* is a deeply generous memoir, with Hui offering up personal anecdotes and covert family recipes to nourish the reader – not unlike how Lucky Star fed her, and an entire Welsh village."

Katie Goh, [inews](#)

## When Our Worlds Collided

Danielle Jawando



Danielle Jawando's second novel is about what happens when 14-year-old Shaq is stabbed outside of a busy shopping centre in Manchester. In the aftermath, three teenagers find themselves unexpectedly brought together, and their worlds flipped upside down. As they deal with the consequences of what happened, Chantelle, Jackson and Marc question the deep-rooted prejudice and racism that exists within the police, the media, and the rest of society.

*When Our Worlds Collided* won the Jhalak Children's and YA Prize. Prize judge Maisie Chan said the book was "one that speaks to many young people today that have been vilified or who go unheard".

Jawando's debut YA novel, *And the Stars Were Burning Brightly*, won best senior novel in the Great Reads Award and was shortlisted for the Waterstones Children's Book Prize and the YA Book Prize, among others.

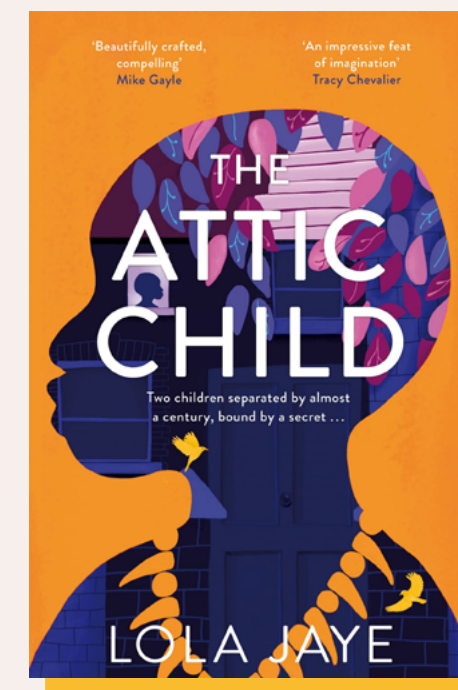
**Publisher:** Simon & Schuster

**Year:** 2022

**Themes:** Coming-of-age, Justice, Racism, Police

## The Attic Child

Lola Jay



Lola Jaye's novel is a dual narrative about two children trapped in the same attic, almost a century apart. In 1907, 12-year-old Celestine is locked in an attic after being taken from his homeland and treated as an unpaid servant.

Decades later, Lowra, a young orphan girl born into wealth and privilege, is banished to the same attic. Under the floorboards she finds an old porcelain doll, an unusual beaded claw necklace and a sentence etched on the wall behind an old cupboard, written in an unidentifiable language.

Novelist Mike Gayle said it was "an incredibly important book...which will undoubtedly break your heart but also make it sing". It was longlisted for the Jhalak Prize for Book of the Year by a Writer of Colour.

**Publisher:** Pan Macmillan

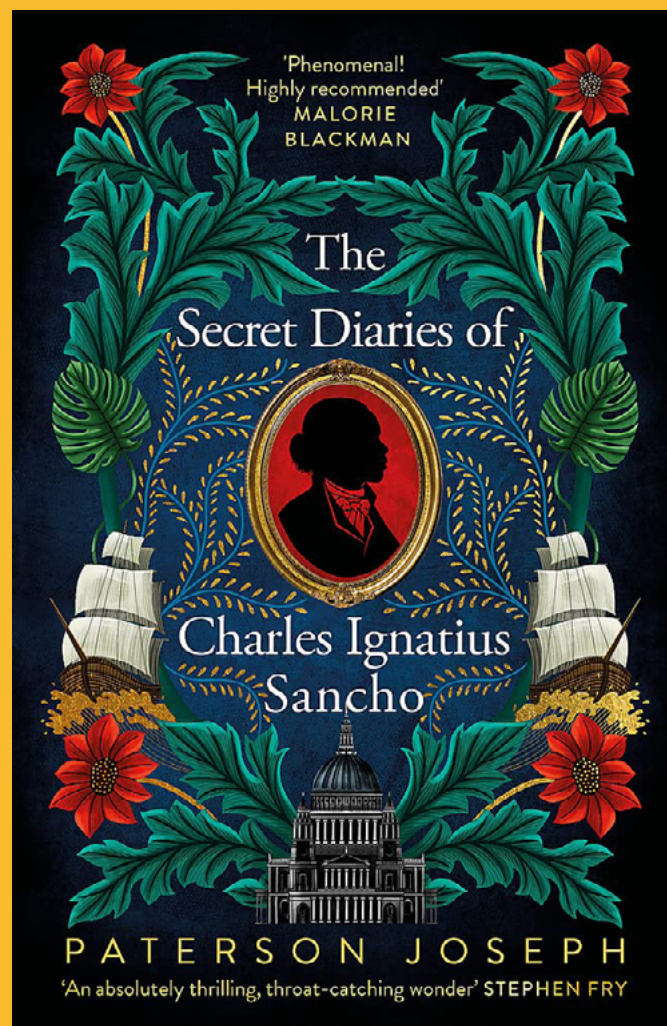
**Year:** 2022

**Themes:** Black British history, Family, History



## The Secret Diaries of Charles Ignatius Sancho

Paterson Joseph



**Publisher:** Dialogue Books

**Year:** 2022

**Themes:** Real life stories, History, British history, Black British history

“This fictional account of a real man’s life resonates with compassion and offers a welcome insight into the presence of Black people in Georgian England.”

Lucy Popescu, the [Observer](#)

Actor Paterson Joseph's *The Secret Diaries of Charles Ignatius Sancho* initially began life as a one-man play written and performed by Joseph himself. The title character, Charles Ignatius Sancho, really existed, and his achievements include leading the fight to end slavery, being a highly acclaimed musician and composer, and becoming the first Black person to vote in Britain.

Joseph's novel is a fictionalised version of Sancho's story, from his escape from slavery as a young man to his rise in Georgian Britain, and illuminates the life of a little known but significant figure in British history.

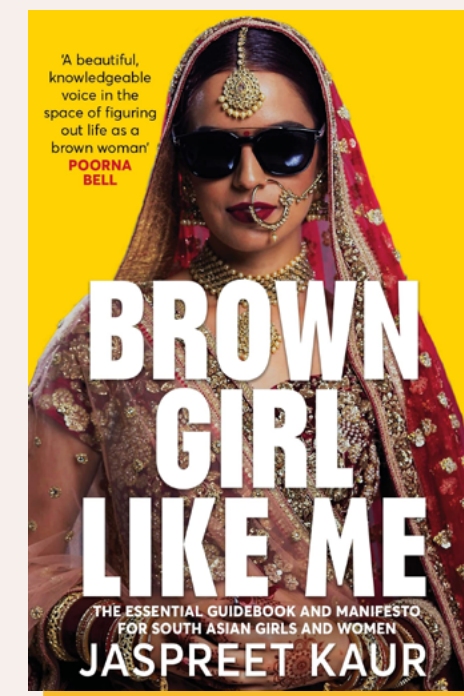
In an interview with [The Bookseller](#), Joseph said he was keen to bring Sancho's story to a wider audience. “When you think about the fact that we don't have a lot of Black British heroes, he is one,” he told the magazine. “Flawed as he is. He should be as well-known as Fielding, as Garrick – he was part of their circle and they treated him as an equal. He was a superstar in his day, but now forgotten.”

The book is perfect for fans of *Bridgerton* and the musical *Hamilton*. [The New York Times](#) said Joseph had made Sancho “become fully rounded in fiction, a memorable character and voice, whose adventures are harrowing, comedic and inspirational by turn”.

Joseph is an actor whose recent work includes the BBC series *Noughts & Crosses*, based on Malorie Blackman's bestselling novels. He is also chancellor of Oxford Brookes University.

## Brown Girl Like Me

Jaspreet Kaur



A memoir-cum-manifesto, Jaspreet Kaur's *Brown Girl Like Me* covers issues including the workplace, home, culture, mental health and more.

Each chapter takes a different topic, with Kaur sharing her own stories and memories pertaining to the issue, from microaggressions she's suffered and the politics of hair removal to cultural appropriation and menstruation. Kaur also weaves in research and interviews with South Asian women from all walks of life to give readers the confidence and tools they need to navigate the difficulties that come with an intersectional identity.

Kaur, also known by her online handle Behind the Netra, is an award-winning spoken word artist, history teacher and writer from London.

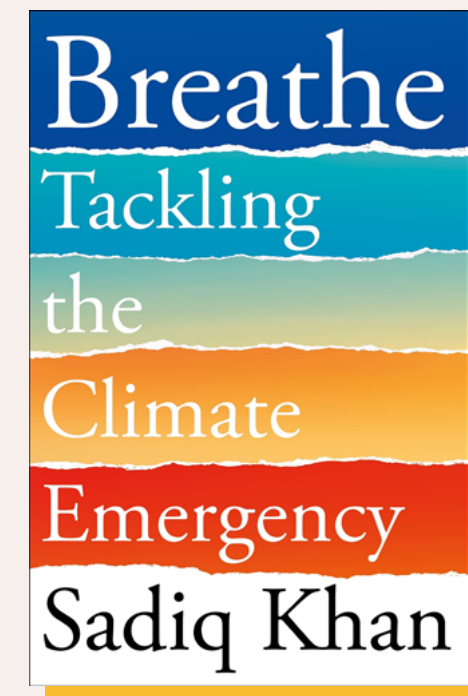
**Publisher:** Bluebird

**Year:** 2022

**Themes:** Coming-of-age, Feminism, Beauty standards, Relationships, Family, Friendship

## Breathe

Sadiq Khan



London mayor Sadiq Khan's first book is a call to action and a playbook on how to win the argument on the environment.

When the politician was unexpectedly diagnosed with asthma aged 43, brought on by the polluted London air he had been breathing for decades, it was a wake-up call for a man who previously hadn't considered the dangers of pollution or its connection with climate change.

Khan draws on his personal and political experiences for *Breathe*, looking at seven ways that environmental action is derailed, and how to get it back on track.

Khan became Mayor of London in 2016, and is currently serving his second term in the role.

**Publisher:** Cornerstone

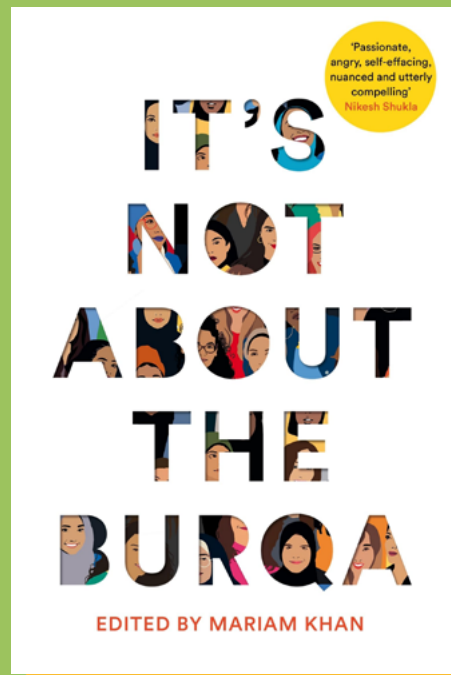
**Year:** 2023

**Themes:** Environment, Health, Climate change, Politics, Activism



## It's Not About the Burqa

Edited by Mariam Khan



Encompassing a wide range of voices, *It's Not About the Burqa* is a collection of essays about the contemporary Muslim female experience.

The book's editor Mariam Khan was inspired in 2016 after she read that David Cameron had linked the radicalisation of Muslim men to the "traditional submissiveness" of Muslim women. Unable to see this in the Muslim women around her, she decided that it was time to give Muslim women the space to speak for themselves.

Contributors include activist Mona Eltahawy writing about revolution, journalist and broadcaster Saima Mir telling the story of her experience of arranged marriage, author Sufiya Ahmed on her Islamic feminist icon, and playwright Afshan D'souza-Lodhi on her relationship with her hijab.

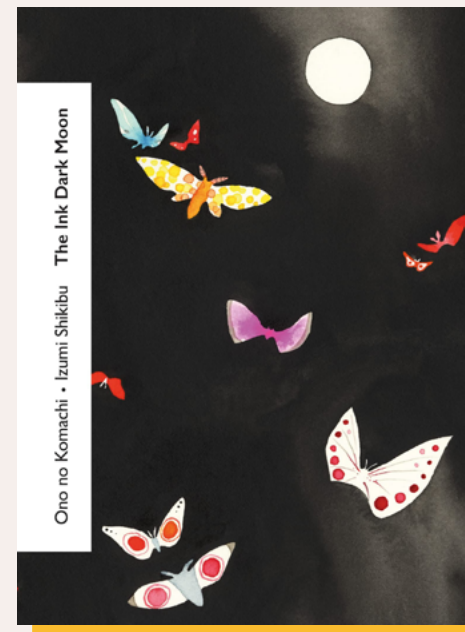
**Publisher:** Picador

**Year:** 2019

**Themes:** Islam, Religion, Feminism

## The Ink Dark Moon

Ono no Komachi and Izumi Shikibu



Izumi Shikibu, born around 974, was the daughter of a lord who came to the Heian court to serve a former empress. During her time there she had two prominent love affairs with men who both died, was embroiled in scandal, and was married and divorced. She is now regarded as one of the outstanding poets of Japanese literature.

Little is known about the life of Ono no Komachi, but historians believe she served the Heian court in the middle of the 9th century. It is thought she was the outstanding poet of her time, but she ended her days in poverty and obscurity.

This collection of poems by the two women are about love, lust and longing, and are translated by Jane Hirshfield with Mariko Aratani. The collection is introduced by poet Nikita Gill.

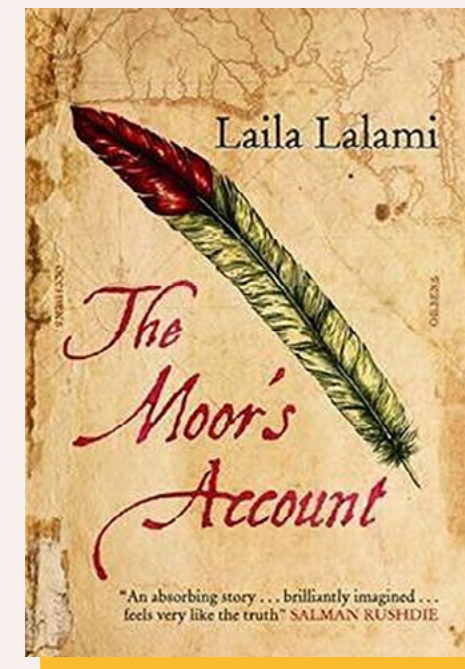
**Publisher:** Vintage Classics

**Year:** 2023

**Themes:** Love, Poetry, Japan

## The Moor's Account

Laila Lalami



Laila Lalami's Booker Prize-longlisted novel takes its inspiration from real historical events: in 1527, the Narváez expedition saw hundreds of settlers arrive on the coast of modern-day Florida to claim the region for Spain. Within a year, only four remained alive; three were noblemen and the fourth was Estebanico, a Moorish slave.

Lalami takes Estebanico – thought to be the first African explorer of North America by many – and in *The Moor's Account* has him tell his story.

Sarah Crown in the [Guardian](#) said: "*The Moor's Account* is more than a good story, it's a great one: rich, vivid and gripping; a thoughtful investigation into how we frame the narratives of our own lives."

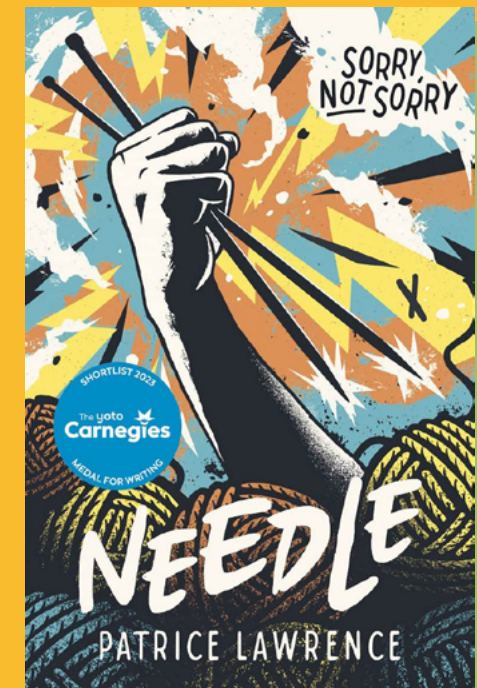
**Publisher:** Bloomsbury

**Year:** 2015

**Themes:** Adventure, History, Slavery

## Needle

Patrice Lawrence



*Needle* is about Charlene, a young girl in foster care who loves knitting and her sister Kandi, who she hasn't seen since their mum died. When a blanket Charlene is knitting for Kandi is destroyed by her foster mum's son, Charlene loses it and stabs him in the hand with her knitting needles. Finding herself in a police cell, Charlene has to decide how to say sorry when her future and freedom are at stake.

The book won the Little Rebels Award, which celebrates radical fiction for children. Judge Farrah Serroukh said *Needle* offers "a really important representation of a child in care and the complex challenges of being part of the British care system".

*Needle* is published by Barrington Stoke, a publisher focused on books for dyslexic and reluctant readers. The book has a dyslexia-friendly layout, typeface and paperstock.

**Publisher:** Barrington Stoke

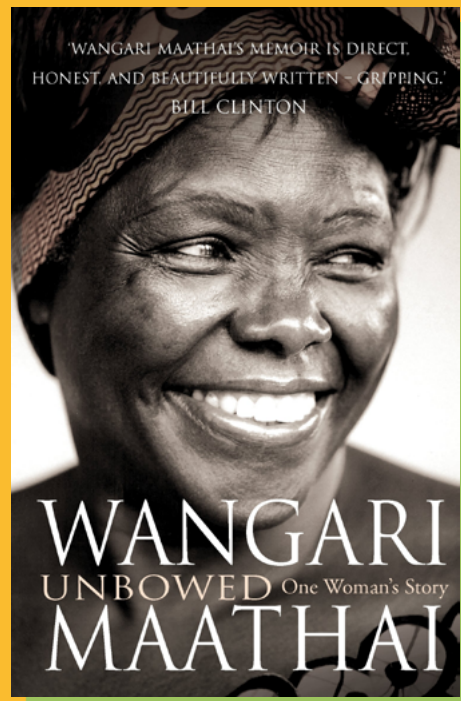
**Year:** 2022

**Themes:** Foster care, Siblings, Family, Justice



## Unbowed: My Autobiography

Wangari Maathai



The first African woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize, Wangari Maathai was born in a rural Kenyan village in 1940. As she grew up, she was determined to get an education even though most Kenyan girls at the time did not go to school.

In her memoir, she tells of studying with Catholic missionaries, earning degrees in America, and becoming the first woman both to earn a PhD and to head a university department in Kenya.

Maathai also recounts the establishment of what is her most well-known achievement: the Green Belt Movement, which helps restore indigenous forests while assisting rural women by paying them to plant trees in their villages.

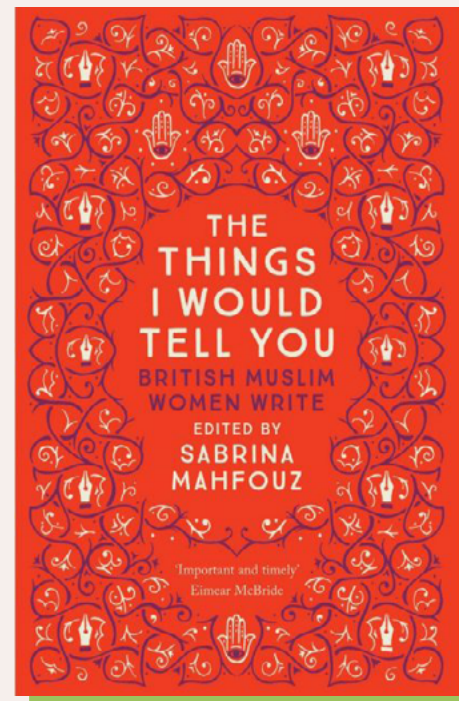
**Publisher:** Arrow

**Year:** 2006

**Themes:** Memoir, Education, Environment, Politics

## The Things I Would Tell You

Edited by Sabrina Mahfouz



Poet and writer Sabrina Mahfouz has gathered together a group of artists, literary heavyweights and more in a collection about what it means to be a Muslim woman.

*The Things I Would Tell You* consists of poetry, fiction, essays and more, with contributors including Kamila Shamsie, Ahdaf Soueif and Chimène Suleyman.

The [Guardian](#) described the book as a “lively, varied anthology”, while actor Emma Watson chose it for her feminist book club Our Shared Shelf.

Mahfouz is a British Egyptian playwright, poet and screenwriter. She is the editor of *Smashing It: Working Class Artists on Life, Art and Making It Happen* and has also published eight works of drama, as well as the memoir-cum-history *These Bodies of Water*.

**Publisher:** Saqi

**Year:** 2017

**Themes:** Islam, Feminism

## The Davenports

Krystal Marquis



Set in the early 1900s, Krystal Marquis' story of the wealthy Davenport family – one of the few Black families of immense wealth and status in a changing United States – is inspired by the real-life Patterson family.

A book for fans of *Bridgerton* and regency romances, the novel follows the lives and loves of four passionate Black women, including Olivia, the eldest Davenport daughter, who finds herself attracted to charismatic civil rights leader Washington DeWight, and Amy-Rose, a childhood-friend-turned-maid to the Davenport sisters, who dreams of opening her own business and marrying Olivia and Helen's brother, John.

**Publisher:** Penguin

**Year:** 2023

**Themes:** Love, Family, Friendship

## When Dimple Met Rishi

Sandhya Menon



A *New York Times* bestseller, *When Dimple Met Rishi* is a fresh and funny take on the arranged marriage trope, focusing on two young American Indian teenagers.

Dimple's main aim in life is to escape her traditional parents, go to university, and to dominate the tech world. Her parents think she's a perfect match for rich, good-looking Rishi, who also happens to be a hopeless romantic, and Rishi's parents agree.

When the teenagers meet at a summer tech camp, they immediately clash. But love has other plans in mind, and the two soon find themselves growing closer.

*When Dimple Met Rishi* inspired the Netflix series *Mismatched*, and is the perfect read for fans of Jenny Han's *To All the Boys I've Loved Before*.

**Publisher:** Hodder & Stoughton

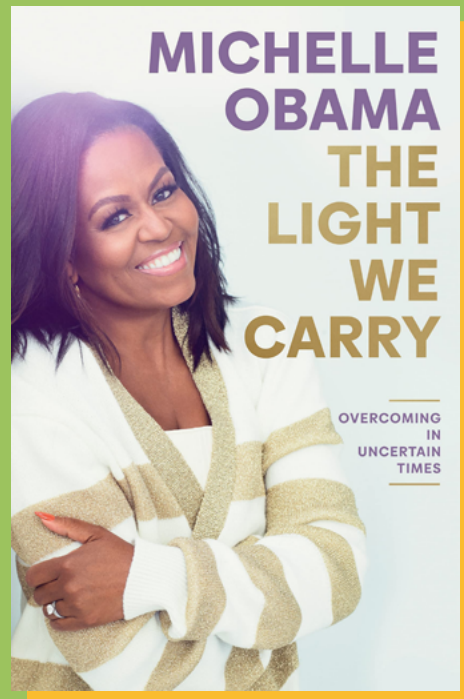
**Year:** 2017

**Themes:** Love, Friendship, Family



## The Light We Carry

Michelle Obama



Former First Lady Michelle Obama's second book is a toolkit on how to live boldly and with light in our lives. Written after a period in which she felt "out of balance" and "vulnerable" due to uncertainty in society and politics, the book offers practical wisdom and strategies for staying hopeful.

Obama shares stories from her personal and professional life, as well as candid confessions about her own insecurities and the challenges she has faced.

The book is the follow-up to Obama's bestselling memoir *Becoming*.

**Publisher:** Penguin

**Year:** 2023

**Themes:** Self-care, Mental health, Community, Society

## Ellie Pillai is Brown

Christine Pillainayagam



Ellie Pillai is usually mostly invisible and not very cool, but something is about to change. Whether it's the new boy at school catching her attention – even though he's going out with her best friend – or her new drama teacher, Ellie finds that her misfit style, her skin colour and the music in her head are all good things.

The book won the 2023 Branford Boase Award for the year's outstanding debut novel. [BookTrust](#) called it a "warm hearted read that really perfectly captures what it feels like to be a teenager: it's a real whirlwind of emotions and complexity".

Pillainayagam has also written a sequel, *Ellie Pillai is (Almost) in Love*.

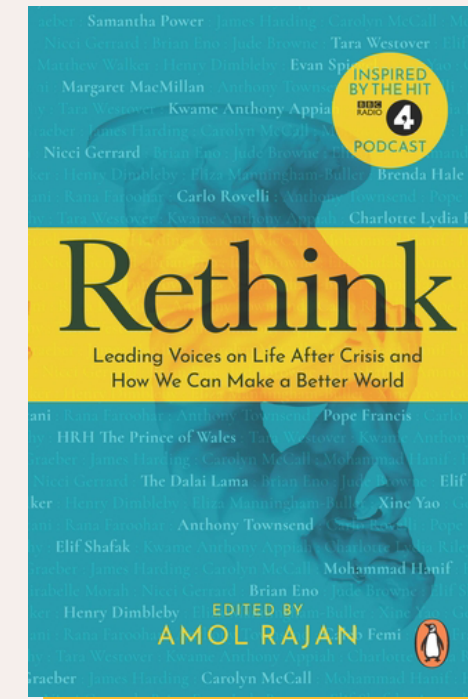
**Publisher:** Faber & Faber

**Year:** 2022

**Themes:** Coming-of-age, Friendship, Love, Music

## Rethink

Amol Rajan



Journalist Amol Rajan's *Rethink* is based on his hit BBC podcast of the same name, in which he speaks to experts about new ways to tackle challenges. The book brings together contributors including Pope Francis, who looks at poverty, the Dalai Lama, looking at the role of ancient wisdom, and Elif Shafak examining uncertainty.

Others who feature in the book include poet Caleb Femi, on rethinking education; philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah on the power of small actions; and chef Nisha Katona taking a look at hospitality.

**Publisher:** BBC Books

**Year:** 2021

**Themes:** Society, Culture, Politics, Education, Activism

## The Haunting of Tyrese Walker

J P Rose



When a shocking event leaves Tyrese struggling with grief, he's taken to visit family in Jamaica. But once there, strange things start happening, from impossible visions to blackouts, swarms of insects and the discovery of a grave hidden deep in the forest. Scared, Tyrese thinks he might be losing his grip on reality.

Then he's warned that he's being hunted by the mysterious Shadow Man, so with friends sets out on a terrifying journey across the island to try and uncover the Shadow Man's sinister history.

**Publisher:** Andersen Press

**Year:** 2022

**Themes:** Mental health, Grief, Mystery, Supernatural



## Influential

Amara Sage



Amara Sage's debut novel is an honest and unsettling look at life under the social media microscope. It follows Almond Brown, who has 3.5 million followers online, but in real life struggles to make friends and has a challenging home life.

Forced into the spotlight as a child by her mother, Amara doesn't quite know what it means to live a regular life, especially one that's devoid of competition. Already anxious and insecure, things become worse when the darkest side of the internet begins to haunt her.

*Influential* is a cautionary tale about the internet and how it affects our mental health.

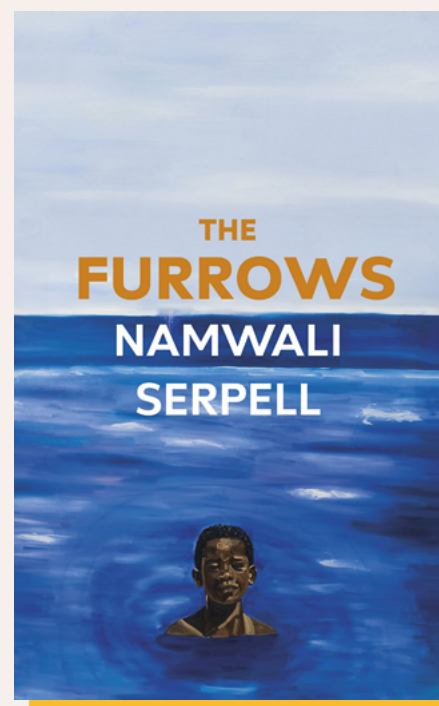
**Publisher:** Faber & Faber

**Year:** 2023

**Themes:** Social media, Friendship, Mental health

## The Furrows

Namwali Serpell



Prize-winning author Namwali Serpell's *The Furrows* focuses on siblings Cassandra and Wayne. When Cassandra is 12, and Wayne seven, he is lost forever in an accident. As she grows older, Cassandra sees her brother everywhere: in cafes, aeroplane aisles, subway cars. One day, there's another accident, and Cassandra meets a man who shares her brother's name and who is also searching for someone.

*The Furrows* was chosen by Barack Obama as one of his books of the year in 2022 and was also a *New York Times* book of the year. Serpell won a number of prizes for her first novel *The Old Drift*, including the Arthur C. Clarke Award.

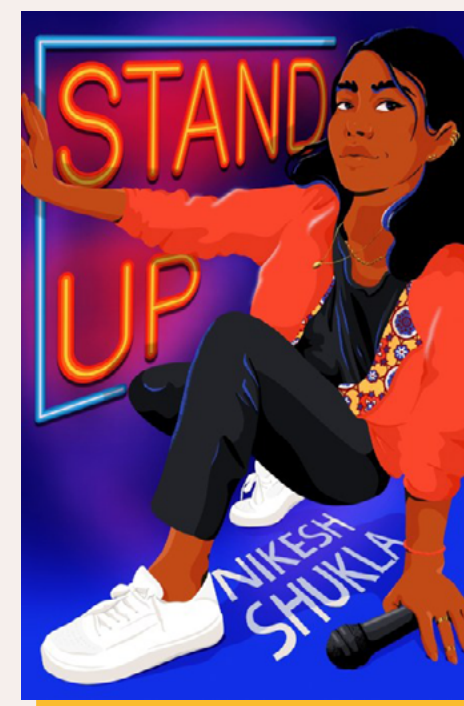
**Publisher:** Hogarth Press

**Year:** 2022

**Themes:** Grief, Family, Loss

## Stand Up

Nikesh Shukla



Seventeen-year-old Madhu is under pressure to apply to university, and she misses her estranged sister who she's not allowed to contact. Most of all though, she wants to be a world-famous stand-up comedian.

When a tongue-lashing she gives a friend's ex goes viral, Madhu finds herself on her way to the kind of stardom she's always dreamed of. But at what cost? *Stand Up* is perfect for fans of comedians including Lilly Singh and Hasan Minhaj.

Shukla is a novelist and screenwriter whose debut novel *Coconut Unlimited* was shortlisted for the Costa First Novel Award. He is the editor of the bestselling essay collection *The Good Immigrant*, the author of YA novels *Run, Riot* and *The Boxer* and wrote the memoir *Brown Baby*.

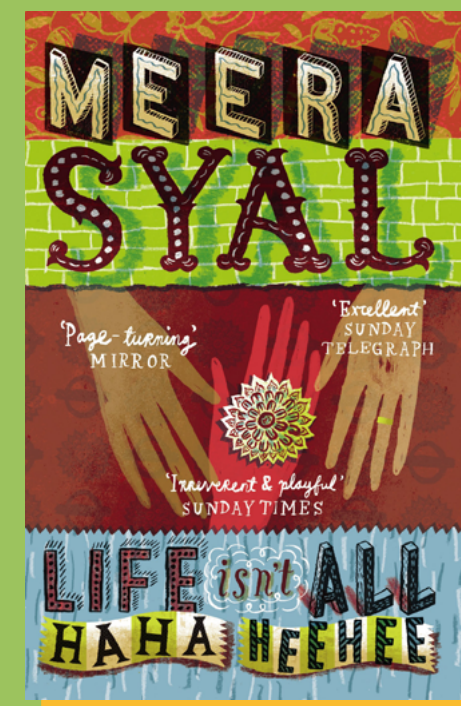
**Publisher:** Hodder Children's Fiction

**Year:** 2023

**Themes:** Coming-of-age, Comedy, Family, Siblings, Friendship

## Life Isn't All Ha Ha, Hee Hee

Meera Syal



Comedian and writer Meera Syal's novel *Life Isn't All Ha Ha, Hee Hee* is the story of three friends: Sunita, Chila and Tania.

Sunita is a perfect housewife, but is her marriage to Akash what it seems? Chila has married entrepreneur Deepak with a lot of fanfare, but are they really in love? And Tania has rejected her traditional upbringing for a top television career, but is she really as tough as she says?

When Tania uncovers a devastating truth, the three friends find themselves on the verge of learning the hardest life lesson of all.

Syal starred in the hit series *The Kumars at No. 42*.

**Publisher:** Doubleday

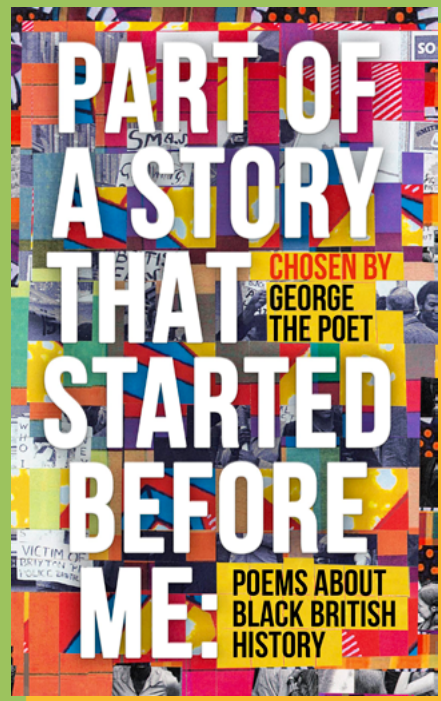
**Year:** 1999

**Themes:** Friendship, Family, Love



## Part of a Story That Started Before Me

Edited by George the Poet



Acclaimed spoken-word performer and social commentator George the Poet has compiled a collection of poems that take readers on a poetical journey through Black British history.

The anthology brings together poets, writers and lyricists including Irenosen Okojie, Jeffrey Boakye, Vanessa Kisuule, Wretch 32 and more to examine the unsung people and events that have had an impact on Britain today.

The book includes era-by-era notes from historian Dr Christienna Fryar.

**Publisher:** Penguin

**Year:** 2023

**Themes:** Poetry, British history, Black British history, Music, Art, Culture

## Four Treasures of the Sky

Jenny Tinghui Zhang



*Four Treasures of the Sky* follows Daiyu, who is named after a ghost and whose parents disappear when she is 12. Running away and disguising herself as a boy, she ends up sweeping the steps of Master Wang's calligraphy school in Zhifu, the first step in a journey that sends her across an ocean to San Francisco and the lawless American west. Fearing her name is a curse on her life, Daiyu comes to learn it could set her free.

Zhang's debut novel is set against the backdrop of the Chinese Exclusion Act, a law which prohibited all immigration of Chinese labourers to the US for 10 years in the late 1800s.

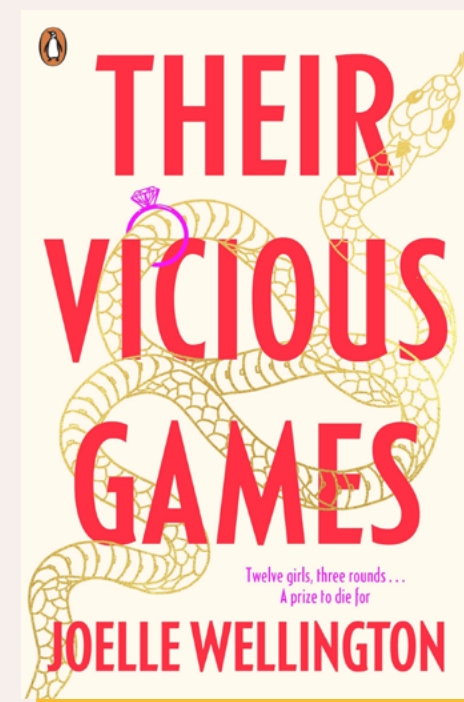
**Publisher:** Penguin

**Year:** 2023

**Themes:** History, Feminism, Chinese history, American history, Racism

## Their Vicious Games

Joelle Wellington



Joelle Wellington's *Their Vicious Games* is a twisty YA thriller set in a school for the very rich and powerful. Adina Walker, who is neither of those things, finds her scholarship to the school revoked when she gets in a fight with a fellow student.

But an invitation to The Finish, a sinister game hosted by the powerful Remington family, could be her salvation. That is, until the contestants start to die one by one.

*Their Vicious Games* is a sharp commentary on race and class, for fans of *Squid Game* and Faridah àbíké-íyímídé's *Ace of Spades*.

**Publisher:** Penguin

**Year:** 2023

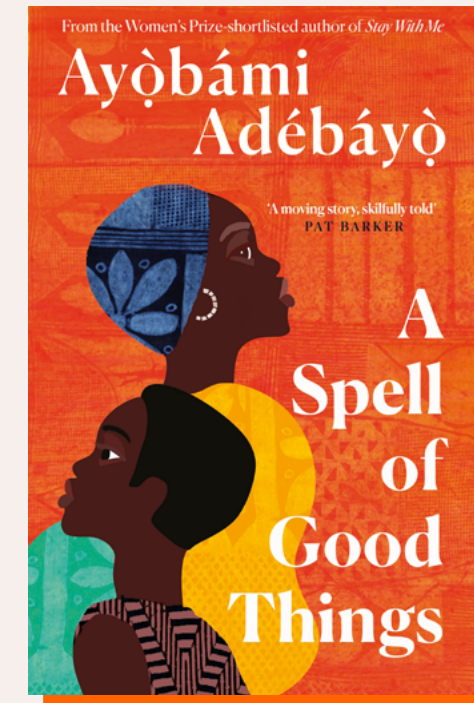
**Themes:** Privilege, Power, Friendship, Wealth, Inequality



Years  
16-11

## A Spell of Good Things

Ayòbámi Adébáyò



Set in Nigeria, Ayòbámi Adébáyò's second novel, longlisted for the Booker Prize, centres on two characters from vastly different families. Eniola's father has lost his job, so he spends his days running errands for the local tailor. Wuraola, a doctor, is from a wealthy family and is engaged to Kunle, the volatile son of family friends.

When a local politician takes an interest in Eniola and sudden violence shatters a family party, Wuraola and Eniola's lives become intertwined.

Ife Olatona in the [Chicago Review of Books](#) said: "A *Spell of Good Things* is irrefutably expansive and yet so domestic that its characters linger.... it is a testament to Adébáyò's ability to weave multiple narratives amidst a poignant sense of Nigeria's political landscape."

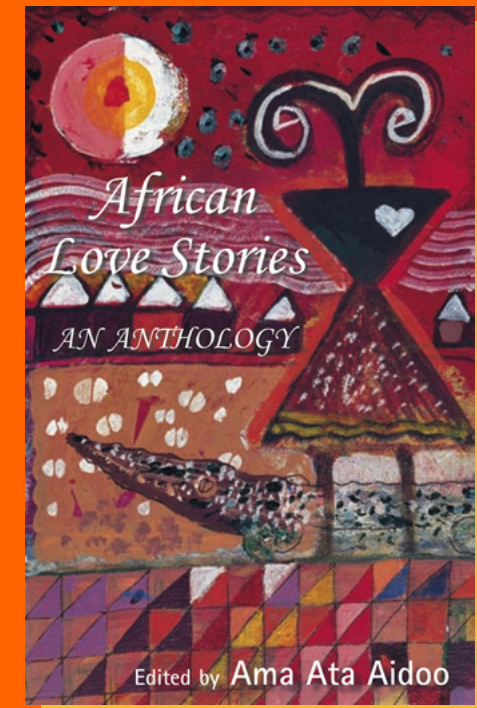
**Publisher:** Canongate

**Year:** 2023

**Themes:** Politics, Power, Wealth inequality

## African Love Stories

Edited by Ama Ata Aidoo



This collection of short stories is by authors from Africa and the African Diaspora and aims to debunk myths about African women, love and relationships.

Editor Ama Ata Aidoo was a Ghanaian writer and academic whose work focused on the modern African woman. Her first novel was the semi-autobiographical *Our Sister Killjoy* and was about a Ghanaian girl travelling through Europe. As well as being a writer and university professor, Aidoo also had a stint as Ghana's education minister in the early 1980s but resigned when she was not able to make education free.

**Publisher:** Ayebia Clarke Publishing

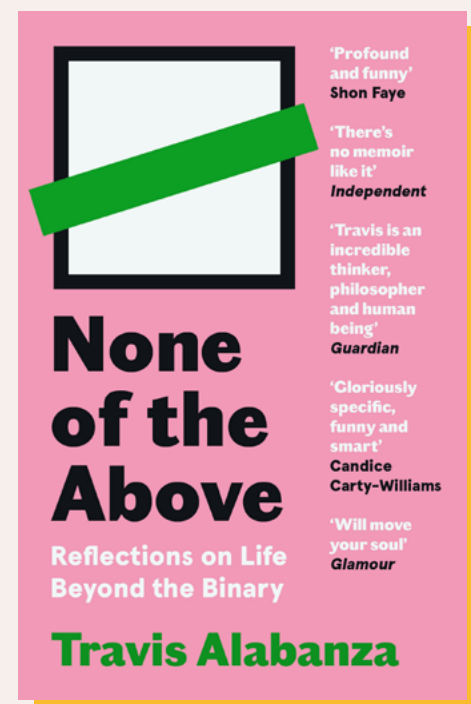
**Year:** 2006

**Themes:** Love, Relationships



## None of the Above

Travis Alabanza



Performance artist, writer and theatre maker Travis Alabanza takes seven phrases people have directed at them as a Black, mixed race, non-binary person, and examines each of these over the course of *None of the Above*.

From the innocuous to the celebratory, the offensive to the deliberately loaded, all of these phrases have had an impact on Alabanza's life, and speak to broader issues in society.

*None of the Above* won the Jhalak Prize for Book of the Year by a Writer of Colour and the Somerset Maugham Award. [Buzz Mag](#) said the book is "not only an empowering and enriching read for those that are treated like outsiders on this confusing and cluttered planet but a book that leaves readers with a far better understanding of issues that are faced".

**Publisher:** Canongate

**Year:** 2022

**Themes:** Gender, Identity, Sexuality, Race

## Tail of the Blue Bird

Nii Ayikwei Parkes



Set in a village in the Ghanaian hinterland, Nii Ayikwei Parkes' story is a mystery that takes place in Sonokrom, a place which has not changed for hundreds of years.

When sinister remains are discovered in the village and a local man goes missing, a young forensic pathologist called Kayo arrives from the city to try and work out what's happening. As old and new worlds clash, Kayo and his sidekick Constable Garba are drawn into a case that leaves scientific explanations far behind.

Joanthan Gibbs in the [Independent](#) said the novel was a "delightful book that combines the basic tug of the whodunit with the more elegant pleasures of the literary novel".

As well as being a poet and writer, Ayikwei Parkes is also director of small press Flipped Eye Publishing.

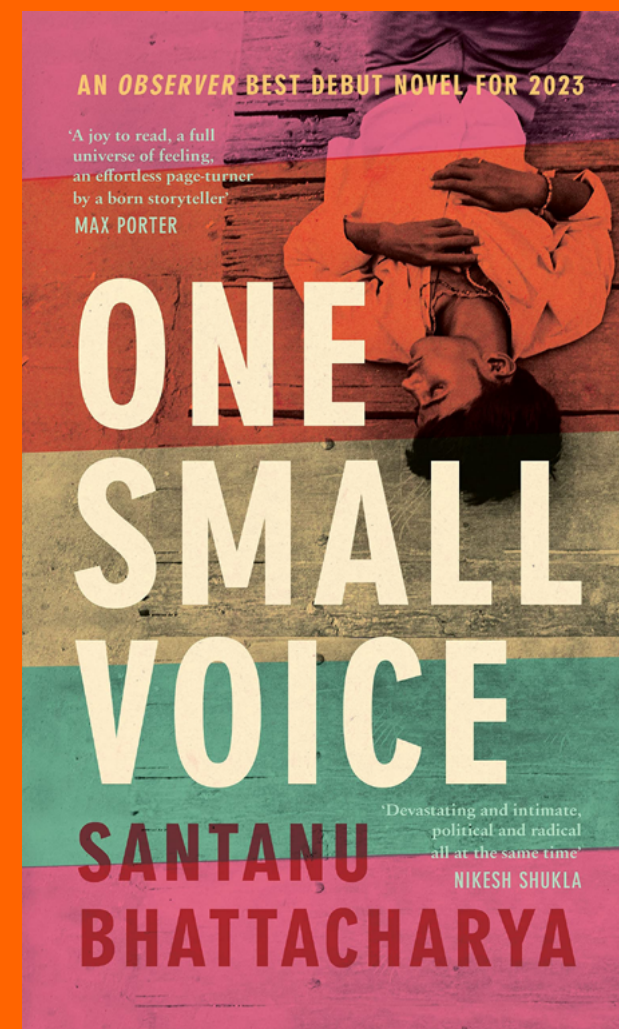
**Publisher:** Vintage

**Year:** 2009

**Themes:** Mystery, Crime

## One Small Voice

Santanu Bhattacharya



In Lucknow in India in 1992, 10-year-old Shubhankar witnesses a terrible act of mob violence that will alter the course of his life. It's one to which his family turns a blind eye, and continues to haunt him as approaches adulthood.

Living in Mumbai in his 20s, he believes the only path that offers escape is one that involves a good school, good degree, good job and a good car. But soon he and his friends Syed and Shruti are questioning whether there is another way forward, and a route to writing their own stories.

As a rising tide of nationalism sweeps across the country, and their friendship becomes more crucial than ever, their exciting new lives seem fragile. To move on, Shubankar must reckon with the ghosts of his past.

Bhattacharya was named by the [Observer](#) as one of the debut novelists to watch out for in 2023. Reviewing the book for the [Observer](#), Rahul Raina said Bhattacharya's writing was "unshowy, clinical, instinctively humane", and added: "A portrait of both intolerance and forgiveness, growth and letting go, *One Small Voice* will be one of the best debuts this year."

**Publisher:** Fig Tree

**Year:** 2023

**Themes:** Coming-of-age, Religion, Violence, Nationalism, Politics

**"Devastating and intimate, and political and radical all at the same time. Bhattacharya's storytelling talents are limitless."**

Nikesh Shukla



## Bestiary

K-Ming Chan



After Mother tells Daughter a story about a tiger spirit who lived in a woman's body, Daughter awakes with a tiger's tail. It's not the only strange thing happening; from holes in the garden to an aunt who leaves red on everything she touches, there's something going on.

At the same time, Daughter is falling for a neighbourhood girl named Ben, who has mysterious stories of her own. As the two young lovers translate the grandmother's letters, Daughter begins to understand that each woman in her family embodies an old Taiwanese myth, and fears the power of the tiger spirit bristling within her to cause pain. To derail her destiny, her family's secrets need to be brought into the light.

*Bestiary* is a story about three generations of Taiwanese-American women haunted by the myths of their homeland.

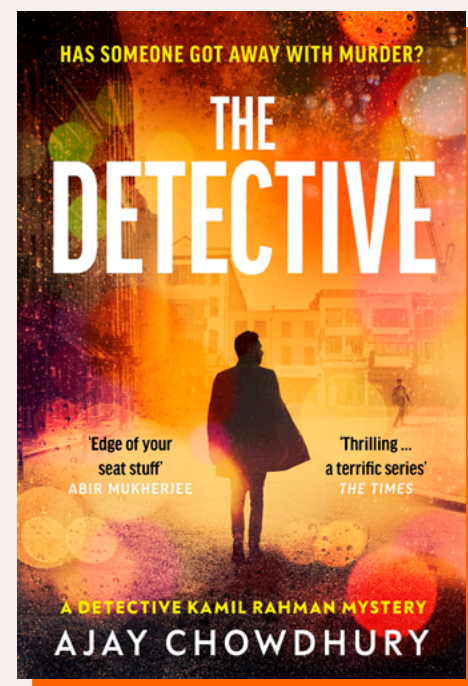
**Publisher:** Vintage

**Year:** 2020

**Themes:** Myths and legends, Family, Love

## The Detective

Ajay Chowdhury



The third book in Ajay Chowdhury's Kamil Rahman series finds the detective from India investigating the murder of a tech entrepreneur from Shoreditch, who is found dead on a construction site on the eve of a four-billion-dollar deal. When three skeletons turn up at the site, and then more murders are committed, Kamil and his friend Anjoli must work as fast as they can to prevent more deaths.

Chowdhury won the BAME Harvill Secker Crime Writing Prize in association with Bloody Scotland; he entered with his then unpublished novel *The Waiter*, the first in the Kamil Rahman series. The series is currently in TV development.

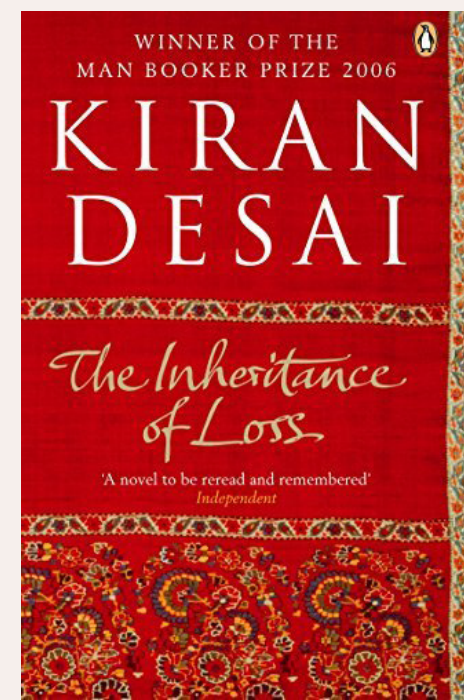
**Publisher:** Harvill Secker

**Year:** 2023

**Themes:** Crime fiction, Murder, Mystery

## The Inheritance of Loss

Kiran Desai



High in the Himalayas, three people live in a dilapidated mansion. The judge is haunted by his past. His orphan granddaughter has fallen in love with her handsome tutor. And the cook's heart is with his son, who is working in a New York restaurant and trying to stay one step ahead of US immigration.

Forces of revolution and change are swirling around the house, as civil unrest makes itself felt, stirring up inner and outer conflicts.

The novel won the Booker Prize in 2006. Judge Hermione Lee said it was a "magnificent novel of humane breadth and wisdom, comic tenderness and political acuteness".

**Publisher:** Penguin

**Year:** 2006

**Themes:** Politics, Family, Love

## Standing Heavy

GauZ', trans by Frank Wynne



*Standing Heavy*, shortlisted for the International Booker Prize, focuses on immigrant security guards in three different decades in Paris. In the 1960s Ferdinand arrives from Côte d'Ivoire, ready to take on the world. In the 1990s, Ossiri and Kassoum work in a Paris on the brink of momentous change, while in the 2010s a security guard in beauty emporium Sephora observes the habits of those who come to worship at this church to consumerism.

GauZ' is the pen name of Ivorian-born Patrick Armand-Gbaka Brede, who studied biochemistry before moving to Paris. He became an undocumented student and worked as a security guard before returning to Côte d'Ivoire, where he is a screenwriter and editor-in-chief of a satirical economic newspaper.

**Publisher:** MacLehose Press

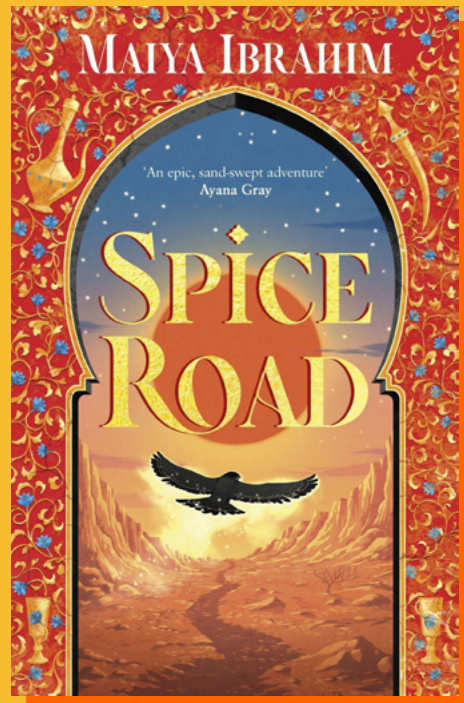
**Year:** 2022

**Themes:** Immigration, Wealth, Politics



## Spice Road

Maiya Ibrahim



Set in an Arabian-inspired land, Maiya Ibrahim's *Spice Road* is about 17-year-old Imani, who has an affinity for iron and can wield a dagger so well she's been named the next greatest Shield, battling djinn, ghouls and other monsters.

But Imani's reputation has been in tatters since her brother was discovered stealing their nation's supply of a precious spice that allows people to tap into their powers, and then disappeared. When Imani discovers her brother might be alive, she joins the mission to track him down, and becomes caught between her duty to her nation and her love for her brother.

This book is for fans of Sabaa Tahir's *Ember in the Ashes* series and Hafsah Faizal's *We Hunt the Flame*.

**Publisher:** Hodder & Stoughton

**Year:** 2023

**Themes:** Fantasy, Magic, Family, Siblings, Love

## People Change

Sara Jafari



In Sara Jafari's second novel, Shirin bumps into Kian at a house party in Brixton, and finds her feelings for him resurfacing. They last saw each other as 16-year-olds at school in Hull, and now that they're back together, they're finding it hard to run from the past.

Sara Jafari's debut novel was *The Mismatch*.

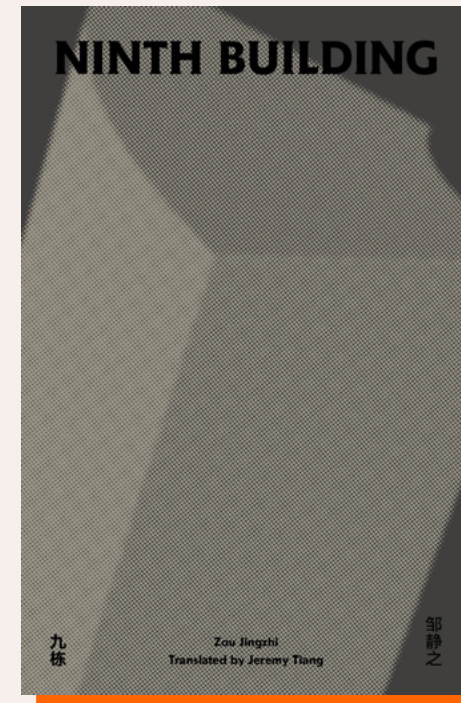
**Publisher:** Penguin

**Year:** 2023

**Themes:** Love, Family, Romance

## Ninth Building

Zou Jingzhi, trans by Jeremy Tiang



Zou Jingzhi's collection of short stories is drawn from his experience growing up during China's Cultural Revolution, first as a boy in Beijing and then as a teenager exiled to the countryside.

The book, translated by Jeremy Tiang, was longlisted for the International Booker Prize.

Jingzhi is highly regarded in China as a fiction writer, poet, essayist, screenwriter and playwright, and is a founding member of the Chinese theatre collective Longmashe. His plays and operas have been performed in China as well as internationally.

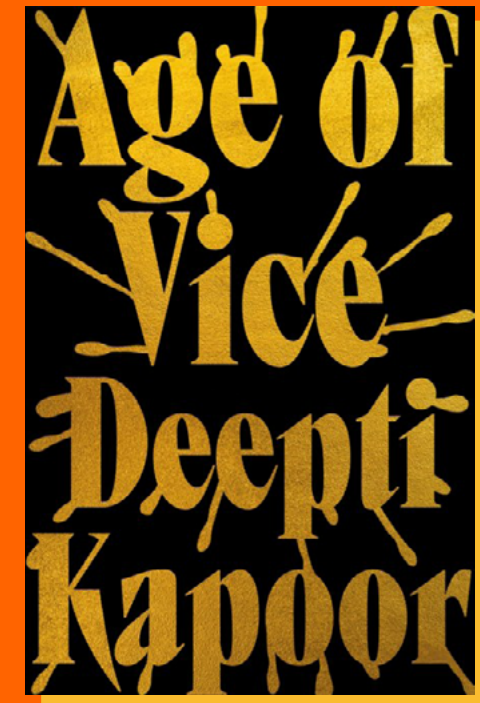
**Publisher:** Honford Star

**Year:** 2022

**Themes:** Short stories, Fiction in translation

## Age of Vice

Deepti Kapoor



Part crime thriller and part family saga, Deepti Kapoor's debut novel is set in contemporary India, and is a story about the wealthy, bloodthirsty and corrupt Wadia family.

In New Delhi at 3am one day, a speeding Mercedes jumps the kerb and kills five people. When the dust settles, all that's left is a shell-shocked servant who cannot explain the strange series of events that led to this crime or foresee the dark drama that is about to unfold.

Moving between past and present, and from the country to the city, *Age of Vice* shows how three lives – that of watchful servant Ajay, playboy heir Sunny, and curious journalist Neda – become dangerously intertwined.

**Publisher:** Fleet

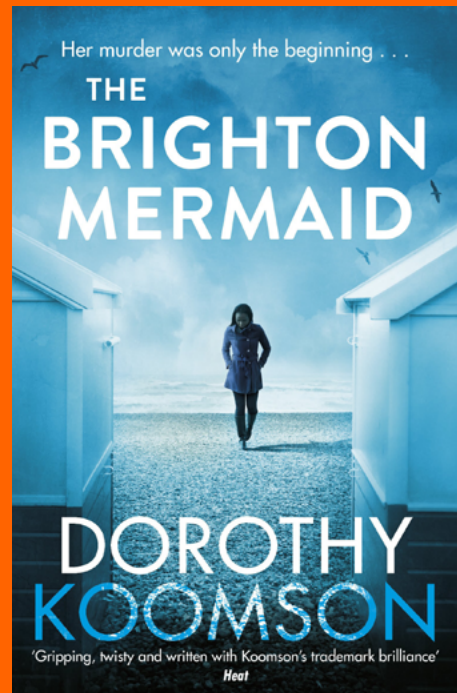
**Year:** 2023

**Themes:** Crime, Wealth, Poverty, India



## The Brighton Mermaid

Dorothy Koomson



In 1993, teenagers Nell and Jude find the body of a young woman on Brighton Beach; the woman becomes known as the Brighton Mermaid. Nell is still struggling to move on when Jude disappears three weeks later.

Twenty-five years on, Nell is forced to quit her job to find out who the Brighton Mermaid really was, and what happened to her best friend that summer.

Dorothy Koomson is an award-winning, bestselling author who has been translated into more than 30 languages. Her third book, *My Best Friend's Girl*, was selected for the Richard & Judy Summer Read promotion and her novels *The Ice Cream Girls* and *The Rose Petal Beach* were shortlisted for the British Book Awards.

**Publisher:** Cornerstone  
**Year:** 2018  
**Themes:** Friendship, Grief, Mystery

## Stars and Smoke

Marie Lu



Winter Young is a kpop idol who is known the world over, making him the perfect person to go undercover for a top secret government organisation. He's tasked with bringing down business tycoon Eli Morrison with expert spy Sydney Cossette, who is sure Winter isn't up to the job. But as the stakes get higher, Sydney and Winter find their best chance to catch Eli, and to survive, is each other.

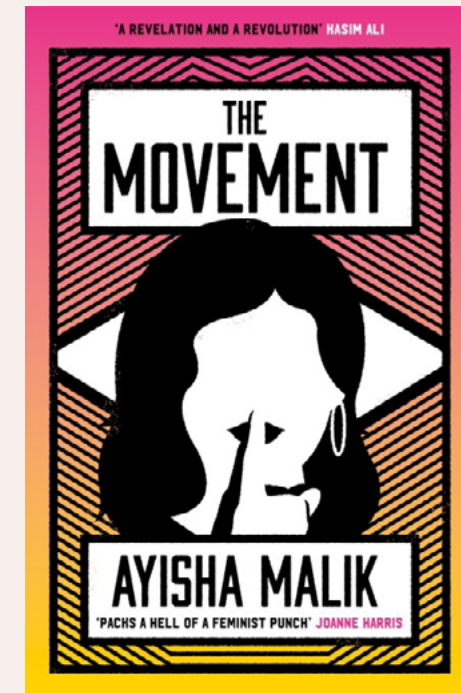
[Kirkus Reviews](#) said of the book: "Lu vividly sketches a high-stakes world in which the glitz of money and power forms a nicely juxtaposed background for curmudgeonly Sydney, whose traumatic background provides ample character motivation, and likable Winter, whose kind decency is of as much import as the sometimes-gushing descriptions of his beauty and grace."

*Stars and Smoke* is perfect for lovers of kpop and spy stories. Lu is the internationally bestselling author of the Legend series.

**Publisher:** Penguin  
**Year:** 2023  
**Themes:** Mystery, Music

## The Movement

Ayisha Malik



Sara Javed is tired of people always shouting about something, whether she's online or in the offline world. Wanting them all to shut up, she one day decides to take her own advice.

At first, people don't understand her silence and are politely confused at best. But then she becomes the figurehead of a global movement that splits society in two.

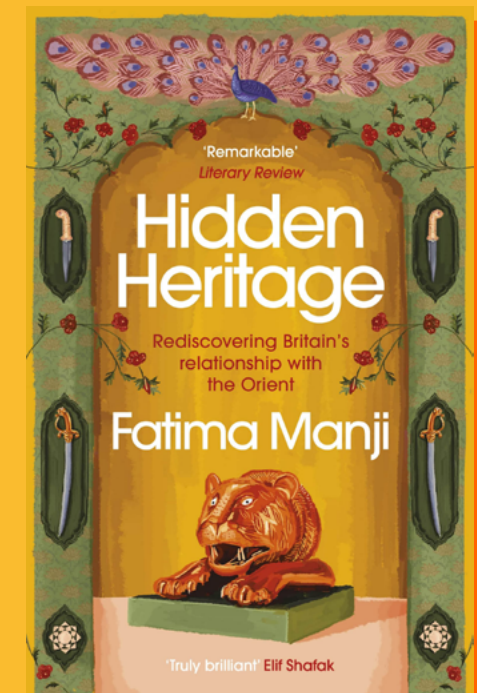
The Silent Movement sparks outrage and admiration, and as global structures start to shift, the lives of those closest to Sara begin to unravel.

*The Movement* has been optioned for a TV series. It is Malik's fourth novel after *Sofia Khan is not Obligated*, *The Other Half of Happiness* and *This Green and Pleasant Land*.

**Publisher:** Headline  
**Year:** 2022  
**Themes:** Activism, Feminism, Social media, Politics

## Hidden Heritage

Fatima Manji



*Channel 4 News* presenter Fatima Manji's *Hidden Heritage* is a look at the landmarks and artefacts – from paintings to statues and buildings – that illuminate Britain's relationship with the East.

Looking at relics in Britain's museums, civic buildings and stately homes, Manji investigates what they can tell society about the diversity of pre-twentieth-century Britain, exposing the misconceptions around modern immigration narratives.

Manji is an award-winning broadcaster and journalist who anchors *Channel 4 News*.

**Publisher:** Chatto & Windus  
**Year:** 2022  
**Themes:** British empire, History, Colonialism, Migration



## The God of Good Looks

Breanne Mc Ivor



Bianca Bridge has had her career prospects and hopes of becoming a writer ruined by an affair with a married government minister, and now works for tyrannical new boss Obadiah Cortland, a make-up artist and legend in Trinidad's beauty scene. He has perfected the art of slipping through Trinidad's rigid class barriers, and knows how the smallest smudge can ruin a reputation.

When Bianca's ex threatens both her future and Obadiah's, the pair have to work together to save what they care about, and find themselves bringing out the best in each other.

Breanne Mc Ivor is an award-winning writer whose short story collection, *Where There Are Monsters*, was published in 2019. *The God of Good Looks* is her debut novel.

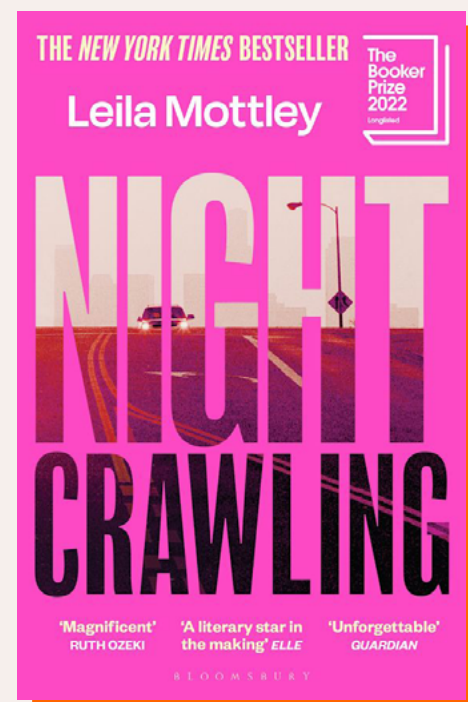
**Publisher:** Fig Tree

**Year:** 2023

**Themes:** Politics, Work, Power

## Nightcrawling

Leila Mottley



Leila Mottley's debut novel focuses on Kiara, who is fending for herself while her mother is in a halfway house. Also caring for neighbour Trevor, whose own mother keeps disappearing for days at a time, Kiara is struggling to keep her head above water.

As the pressures of rent to pay and mouths to feed increase, Kiara finds herself walking the streets after dark, and encounters corruption and abuse in the world of the police. Fighting for her own survival, she must also decide whether to speak up against a system that refuses to protect people like her.

Mottley was longlisted for the Booker Prize for *Nightcrawling*, making her the youngest ever nominee for the award.

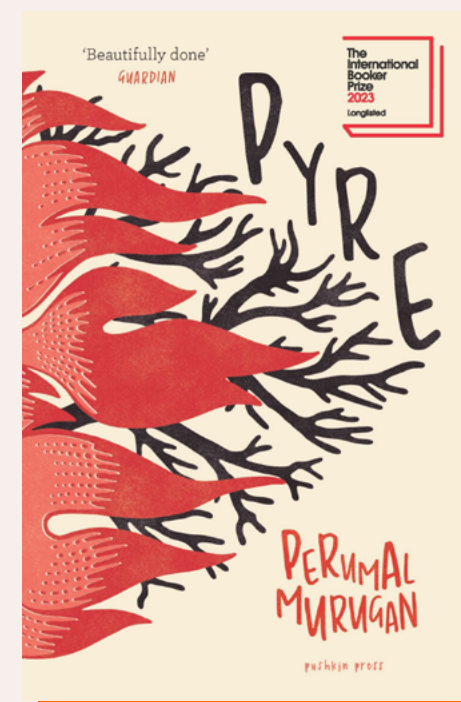
**Publisher:** Bloomsbury

**Year:** 2022

**Themes:** Justice, Racism, Police brutality, Poverty, Family

## Pyre

Perumal Murugan,  
trans by Aniruddhan Vasudevan



Saroja and Kumaresan meet in a small southern Indian town, where Kumaresan works at a soda bottling shop. Falling in love, they quickly marry before returning to Kumaresan's family village to build a new life together.

But the pair are hiding something: Saroja is from a different caste than Kumaresan, and if the villagers find out, they will both be in grave peril.

[Kirkus Reviews](#) said the book was a "haunting story of forbidden love set in Southern India that illustrates the cruel consequences of societal intolerance".

*Pyre* was longlisted for the International Booker Prize, becoming the first novel originally written in Tamil to be nominated for the award.

**Publisher:** Pushkin Press

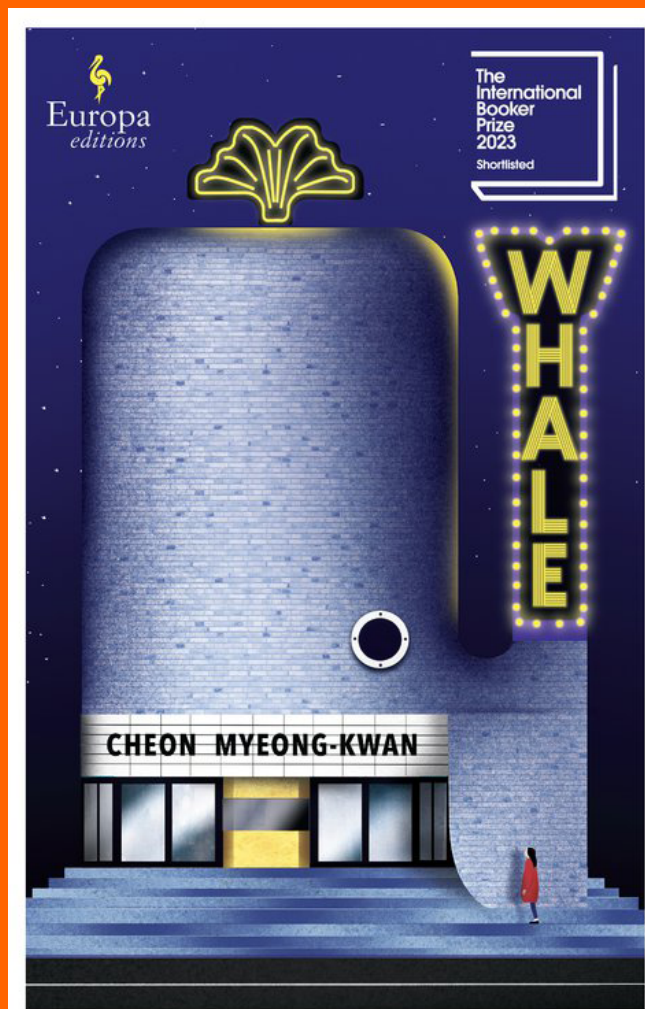
**Year:** 2022

**Themes:** Intolerance, Caste, Love, Family



## Whale

Cheon Myeong-kwan, trans by Chi-Young Kim



Set in a remote village in South Korea, *Whale* follows the lives of a number of linked characters. Among them are Geumbok, who has been chasing an indescribable thrill ever since she first saw a whale crest in the ocean, her mute daughter Chunhui, who communicates with elephants, and a one-eyed woman who controls honeybees with a whistle.

*Whale* was shortlisted for the International Booker Prize. The judges said the book was “a carnivalesque fairy tale that celebrates independence and enterprise, a picaresque quest through Korea’s landscapes and history, *Whale* is a riot of a book”.

Patrick McShane in the [Asian Review of Books](#) said: “Cheong Myeong-Kwan’s writing is funny and light while also deeply philosophical and sensual. The story often contains a twinge of wistful sadness and nostalgia that is far more common in Latin Boom literature but feels equally at home when mixed with the deeply Korean concept of Han, a feeling of deep sorrow that is often claimed to be an integral part of Korean identity.”

Cheon Myeong-kwan is a South Korean novelist and screenwriter. *Whale* was originally published in South Korea in 2004, but only published in the UK in 2023.

**Publisher:** Europa Editions

**Year:** 2023

**Themes:** Motherhood, Family

**“Told in an omniscient and playful narrative voice, smoothly translated by Chi-Young, this is a distinctly Korean take on *Great Expectations*, a tale of aspiration and folly punctuated with artisanal bricks and dried fish.”**

Christian House, [Financial Times](#)

## Here Again Now

Okechukwu Nzelu



*Here Again Now* is the story of three men: aspiring actor Achike Okoro, his father Chibuike, and Achike’s best friend of 20 years, Ekene.

Achike’s life is coming together at last; he’s about to get his big break as an actor, and he’s persuaded his father, who brought him up alone, to move in with him.

Between filming trips, Achike shares a magical night with Ekene, with both almost admitting their feelings for each other. But a devastating event rips all three men apart, and in the aftermath, it is Ekene and Chibuike who must try to rebuild.

Jeremy Atherton Lin in the [Guardian](#) said that “Nzelu brings verve and radiant detail while still mastering the skills to construct a high-stakes obstacle course”.

**Publisher:** Dialogue Books

**Year:** 2023

**Themes:** Love, Family, Addiction

## Another Way to Split Water

Alycia Pirmohamed



In Alycia Pirmohamed’s debut poetry collection a woman’s body is expanding and contracting across the page, fog uncoils at the fringes of a forest, and water in all its forms cascades into metaphors of longing and separation just as often as it signals inheritance, revival, and recuperation.

*Another Way to Split Water* was shortlisted for the Raymond Souster Award and longlisted for the Jhalak Prize for Book of the Year by a Writer of Colour.

Pirmohamed is a Canadian-born poet based in Scotland. She is the co-founder of the Scottish BPOC Writers Network and a co-organiser of the Ledbury Poetry Critics Program.

**Publisher:** Polygon

**Year:** 2022

**Themes:** Poetry, Language



# Author Focus

## Salman Rushdie

Born: 1947, India

One of Britain's most famous living novelists, Salman Rushdie has won some of the biggest prizes in literature, and fought protests against his work which threatened his life.

Born in India in 1947, Rushdie grew up in what is now Mumbai, and was educated at various schools in England before attending the University of Cambridge.

Rushdie released his first novel, *Grimus*, in 1975, but it was his second, *Midnight's Children*, that garnered him literary fame upon its 1981 release. It won him the 1981 Booker Prize, and would go on to win two special Booker prizes in 1993 and 2008, awarded for the best novel to have received the prize in its first 25 and 40 years respectively. The novel follows the life of a child born at the stroke of midnight as India gained independence, and is one of a number of his works that has a hint of mysticism and magical realism.

*The Satanic Verses*, Rushdie's most controversial work, was published in 1988 and shortlisted for the Booker Prize that same year. Many Muslims considered it blasphemous and it was banned in Pakistan, and a fatwa was issued by Iran; this led to Rushdie having to live under police protection and in hiding.

Rushdie has continued to write novels, as well as short stories and non-fiction. His most recent novel is 2023's *Victory City*; the book was released around six months after Rushdie was attacked and seriously injured on stage at an event in Chautauqua, New York. He is currently recovering, and has said he is working on a book about what happened to him.

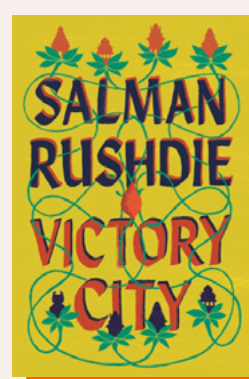
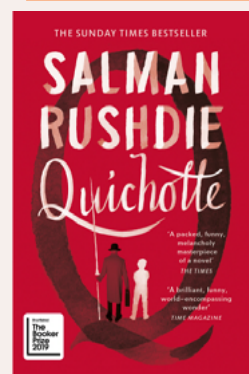
## Key works:

[\*Midnight's Children\*](#)

[\*The Satanic Verses\*](#)

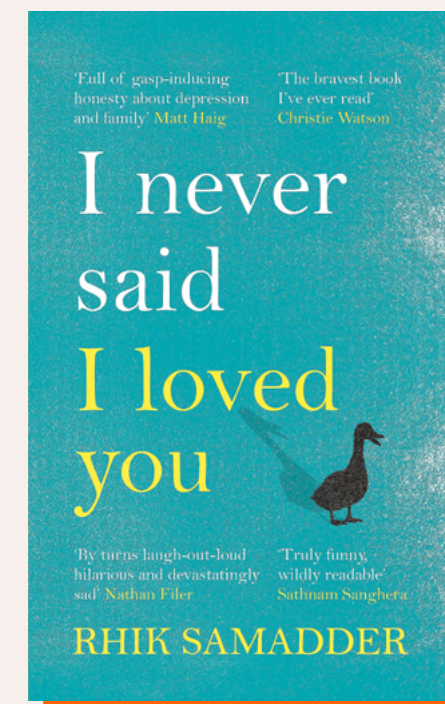
[\*Quichotte\*](#)

[\*Victory City\*](#)



## I Never Said I Loved You

Rhik Samadder



On an unlikely backpacking trip, Rhik Samadder found himself speaking openly with his mother for the first time in years. Afterwards, the depression that had weighed him down began to loosen its grip, and Samadder took the opportunity to try and understand its origins.

In *I Never Said I Loved You*, Samadder shares his journey of investigation, healing and recovery, including discovering some shocking truths about his family, and realising that he will also need to confront the secrets he has long buried.

Chloe Walker in [Culturefly](#) said the book was "warm and wise, funny and sad, full of painful truths and heartfelt encouragement".

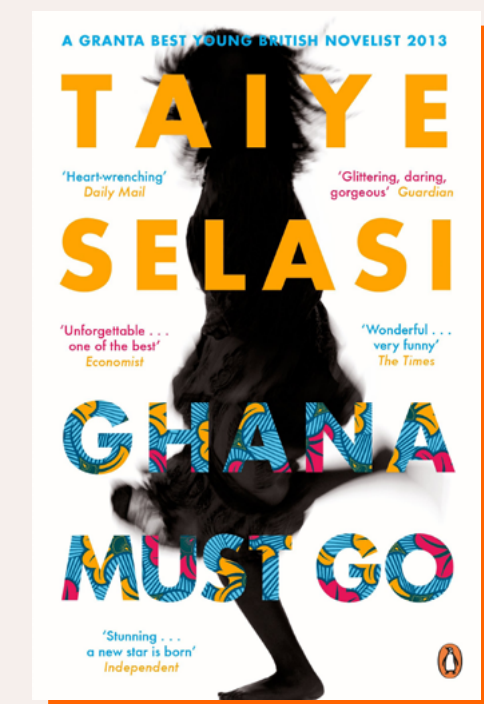
**Publisher:** Headline Review

**Year:** 2019

**Themes:** Mental health, Depression, Family

## Ghana Must Go

Taiye Selasi



The Sais are a Nigerian-Ghanaian family living in America, prospering until father and surgeon Kweku Sai is the victim of a grave injustice. Ashamed, he abandons his wife Fola and their children, causing the family to fracture and spread out across New York, London, West Africa and New England on uncertain, troubled journeys.

Many years later a tragedy unites them, and the broken family has a chance to heal.

Margaret Busby in the [Independent](#) said that Selasi "puts together a moving story of a fragmented family, salvaging resolution from the secrets and lies of the past".

Selasi's short story "The Sex Lives of African Girls" appeared in *Best American Short Stories 2012*.

**Publisher:** Penguin

**Year:** 2013

**Themes:** Family, Grief, Love



## The Late Americans

Brandon Taylor



In a university town in the American Midwest, friends Seamus, Fyodor, Ivan, Noah and Fatima are trying to figure out their futures and what love and true connection look like in the modern world.

Reviewing the book, Alim Kheraj in [iNews](#) said Taylor “has a tight grasp on the millennial psyche, the cruel, slippery and tender nature of human interaction, and the fragility of modern existence”.

Brandon Taylor’s novel *Real Life* was shortlisted for the Booker Prize and the National Book Critics Circle John Leonard Prize. His short story collection *Filthy Animals* was shortlisted for the Dylan Thomas Prize.

**Publisher:** Jonathan Cape

**Year:** 2023

**Themes:** Friendship, Love, Coming-of-age

## Time is a Mother

Ocean Vuong



Ocean Vuong’s second poetry collection is an exploration of life after the shock of losing his mother, and of sitting within grief yet being determined to survive beyond it.

Reviewing the collection in the [Los Angeles Review of Books](#), Donnelle McGee said:

“The poems in *Time Is a Mother* give us a path to examine the complexities of what it means to lose a mother, and what it means to embrace family and the self even when we want to look away. In Vuong’s tender yet unflinching words, we are reminded that only a mother can carry a beating heart within her body.”

Vuong is the author of the critically acclaimed poetry collection *Night Sky with Exit Wounds* and the *New York Times* bestselling novel *On Earth We’re Briefly Gorgeous*.

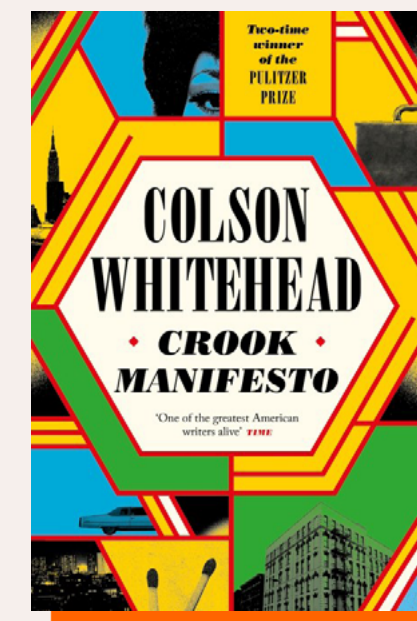
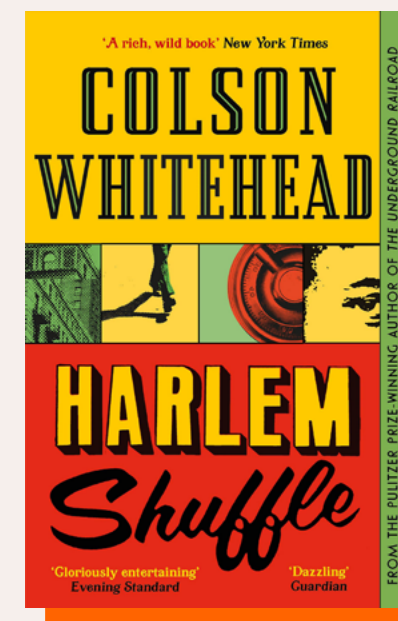
**Publisher:** Jonathan Cape

**Year:** 2022

**Themes:** Poetry, Grief, Family, Belonging

## Harlem Shuffle and Crook Manifesto

Colson Whitehead



Colson Whitehead’s *Harlem Shuffle* and *Crook Manifesto* are about Ray Carney, who seems to be an upstanding salesman of reasonably-priced furniture.

But Ray is actually descended from a line of uptown hoods and crooks, and the books each take a different decade of Ray’s life, as he struggles to make ends meet and keep his family together.

In the 1960s, in *Harlem Shuffle*, Ray’s cousin Freddie falls in with a crew who plan to rob the Hotel Theresa, and Freddie volunteers Ray as the fence. When the heist doesn’t go as planned, Ray has to cater to a new clientele of shady cops on the take, vicious minions of the local crime lord, and numerous other Harlem lowlifes.

*Crook Manifesto* takes place in the 1970s, beginning when Ray’s daughter wants tickets to see the Jackson 5; he reunites with an old police contact, who wants favours in return.

**Publisher:** Fleet

**Year:** 2021 and 2023

**Themes:** Family, Crime, Justice

In 1973, Pepper, Ray’s enduringly violent partner in crime, takes on a side gig doing security on a Blaxploitation shoot in Harlem, finding himself in a world of Hollywood stars and celebrity drug dealers.

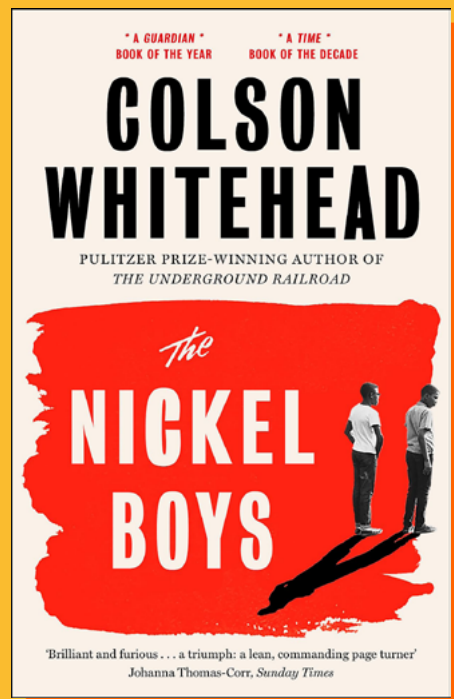
In 1976, Harlem is burning, while the country gears up for the Bicentennial, and Ray is trying to come up with a celebratory July 4th advertisement he can actually live with, while his wife Elizabeth is campaigning for her childhood friend, rising politician Alexander Oakes.

*Harlem Shuffle* and *Crook Manifesto* combine the family saga with a crime novel, and are a love letter to Harlem.



## The Nickel Boys

Colson Whitehead



*The Nickel Boys*, which won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction and the Orwell Prize for Political Fiction, is based on the history of a real reform school in Florida that operated for 111 years.

Colson Whitehead's novel follows Elwood Curtis, who is about to go to college when an innocent mistake lands him at The Nickel Academy, a place which claims to provide "physical, intellectual and moral training" to young men. The Nickel Academy is, in reality, a place where physical, emotional and sexual abuse is rife, and corrupt officials harm those they are meant to look after. Elwood and his fellow inmate and friend Turner must do all they can to survive.

*The Nickel Boys* also won the Library of Congress Prize for American Fiction and was named by *Time* as its novel of the year.

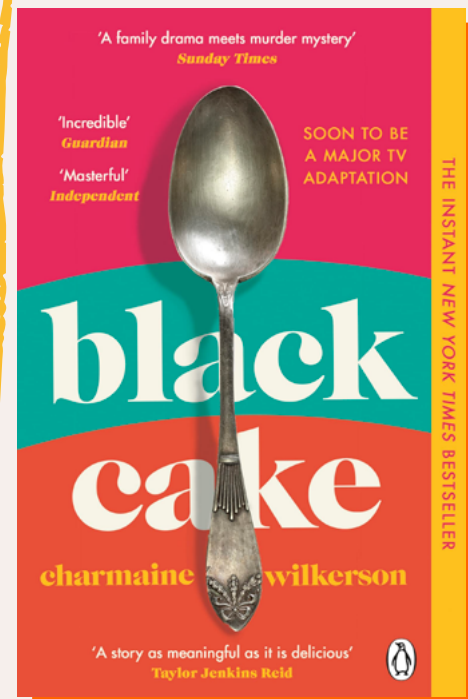
**Publisher:** Fleet

**Year:** 2019

**Themes:** Coming-of-age, Justice, Abuse, Friendship, Grief

## Black Cake

Charmaine Wilkerson



When Eleanor Bennett's estranged children Benny and Byron reunite for her funeral, they receive an unexpected inheritance. First is a traditional Caribbean black cake, to remind them of their roots, and second is the story of a decades-old murder that shatters everything they thought they knew about their mother.

President Obama chose *Black Cake* as one of his summer reads for 2022, and the book is being adapted for a television series by Oprah Winfrey, Aaron Kaplan and Marissa Jo Cerar.

Charmaine Wilkerson is a former television news reporter and journalist and *Black Cake* is her debut novel.

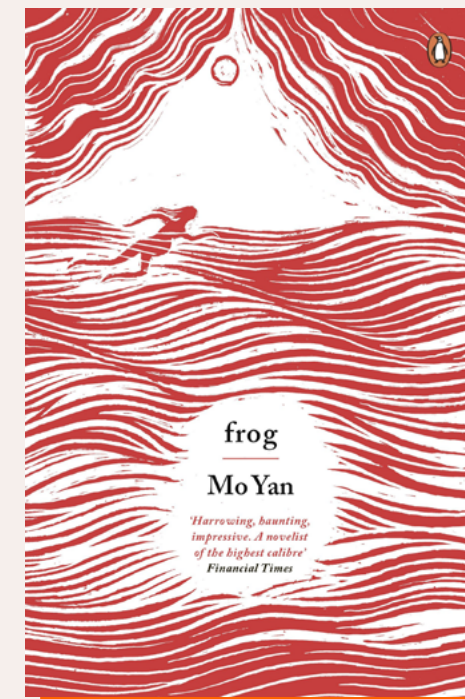
**Publisher:** Penguin

**Year:** 2022

**Themes:** Family, Siblings, Mystery, Grief

## Frog

Mo Yan



In *Frog*, Gugu is a respected midwife who combines modern medical knowledge with a healer's touch to save the lives of village women and their babies. After a disastrous love affair leaves her reeling, she throws herself zealously into enforcing China's one-child policy by any means necessary, be it forced sterilisations or late-term abortions. Her devotion to the Party line spares no one, and she soon becomes reviled.

Mo Yan's novel, translated by Howard Goldblatt, spans the pre-revolutionary era and China's modern-day consumer society. The author won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2012, with his citation saying he "with hallucinatory realism merges folk tales, history and the contemporary".

**Publisher:** Penguin

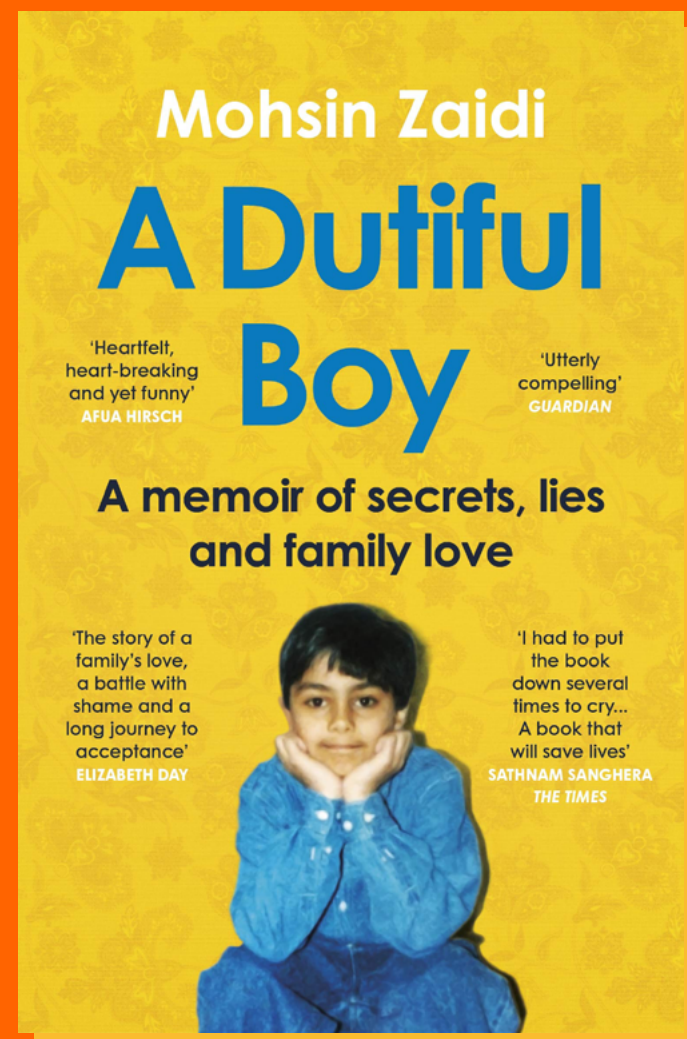
**Year:** 2009

**Themes:** China, Politics, Grief, Motherhood, Love



## A Dutiful Boy

Mohsin Zaidi



Publisher: Vintage

Year: 2020

Themes: Memoir, LGBTQ+, Family, Love

Mohsin Zaidi grew up in a devout Muslim household, where it was impossible for him to be openly gay. Unable to be honest with his family and facing difficulties at school, against the odds he became the first person from his school to attend Oxford University. There, new experiences and encounters helped him to discover who he truly wanted to be.

*A Dutiful Boy* is about Zaidi's personal journey from denial to acceptance and is a memoir about the power of love, belonging, and living every part of your identity. It was chosen as a book of the year by the *Guardian*, *GQ* and the *New Statesman*.

Ashish Ghadiali in the *Guardian* said the book was "a profound meditation on the power of the human heart to transcend the contradictions of diverse cultures and create something new".

*A Dutiful Boy* won the Polari First Book Prize and the LAMBDA 2021 Literary Award for Best Gay Memoir/Biography.

Zaidi is a criminal barrister and previously worked at a UN war crimes tribunal in the Hague and at the UK's Supreme Court. He is on the board of Stonewall and is a governor of his former secondary school.

"This is a story that needs to be read by everyone at a time when queerness, race, religion, and nationality are all being used as identifiers of being an 'other'."

Ibtisam Ahmed, *Bad Form Review*

## Key works:

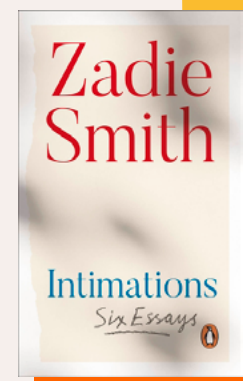
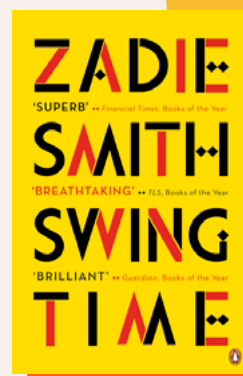
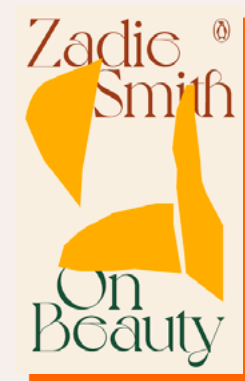
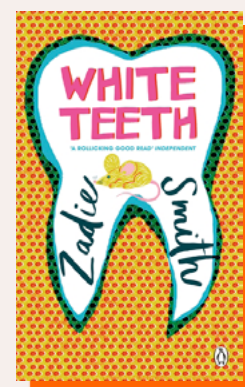
[\*White Teeth\*](#)

[\*NW\*](#)

[\*On Beauty\*](#)

[\*Swing Time\*](#)

[\*Intimations\*](#)



## Author Focus

**Zadie Smith**

Born: 1975, England

Zadie Smith's entry into the world of books is the stuff of legend; she wrote her debut novel *White Teeth* during her final year at the University of Cambridge, and it was sold to Hamish Hamilton, now her long-time publisher, even before she'd finished it. The book is the story of two wartime friends in London, and their families.

Published in 2000, *White Teeth* was a bestseller and received critical acclaim, with the *New York Times* saying the book's various elements were held "together with a raucous energy and confidence that couldn't be a fluke" and the *Telegraph* saying it had "energy, pace, humour and fully formed characters". It won awards including the James Tait Black Memorial Prize and the Betty Trask Award, and was adapted for television in 2002.

In 2003 and 2013, Smith was included on Granta's list of Best of Young British Novelists.

Smith has gone on to write a number of novels, including *On Beauty*, which was shortlisted for the 2005 Booker Prize and won what is now the Women's Prize for Fiction, and *NW*, which was shortlisted for the Women's Prize for Fiction.

As well as writing fiction, Smith is also well-known for her criticism and essays on everything from Jay-Z to Karl Ove Knausgaard and social media, as well as her short stories. She has also ventured into children's books with *Weirdo*, a picture book written in collaboration with Nick Laird and illustrated by Magenta Fox.



Years  
12-13

## The Three of Us

Ore Agbaje-Williams



Told from three points of view – the wife, the husband and the friend – Ore Agbaje-Williams' debut novel takes place over the course of one day. At its centre is an exploration of what happens when the two people you love most hate each other.

Agbaje-Williams splits the book into three parts, one for each half of the married couple and one for best friend Temi, and weaves back and forth between the past and the present to paint a portrait of a trio's friendship, love, compromise and betrayal.

[Kirkus Reviews](#) said the book was "an original and potent comedy of manners with an ingenious final twist".

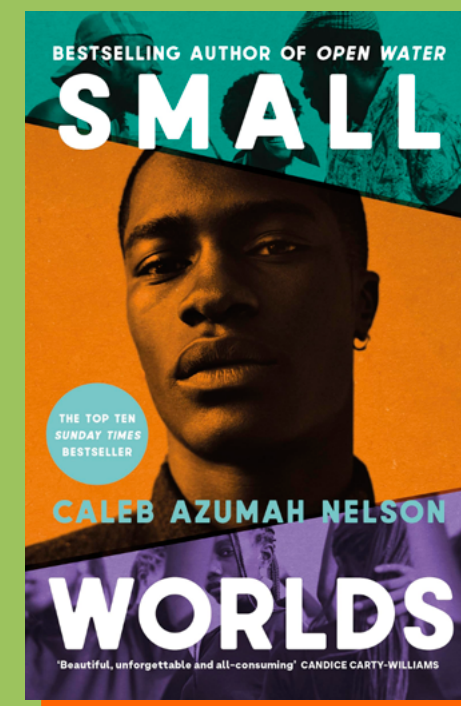
**Publisher:** Jonathan Cape

**Year:** 2023

**Themes:** Friendship, Love, Relationships

## Small Worlds

Caleb Azumah Nelson



Stephen loves to dance, whether it's to let off steam, solve his problems, or just to experience joy with his friends and family. But music and dance aren't where his father thinks the answers to success in life lie.

Told over the course of three summers in Stephen's life, and set mostly in Peckham in London, *Small Worlds* explores the ups and downs in Stephen's life, from lost love to dealing with grief.

Reviewing the book for [The Arts Desk](#), India Lewis said *Small Worlds* was "a beautifully observed picture of the twists and turns of life and of love."

Azumah's debut novel *Open Water* was a bestseller.

**Publisher:** Viking

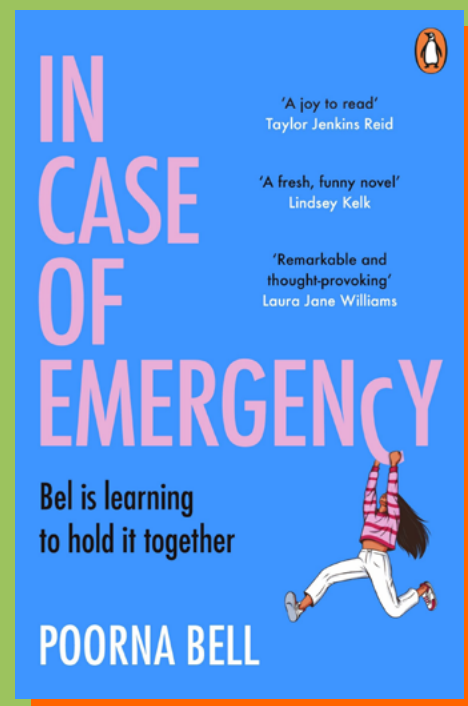
**Year:** 2023

**Themes:** Love, Romance, Family, Music, Dance, Grief



## In Case of Emergency

Poorna Bell



Journalist and writer Poorna Bell's debut novel is about Bel Kumar, who leaves for work one morning and hours later finds herself waking up in a hospital, with her ex from four years ago by the bed, after a near-death accident outside work.

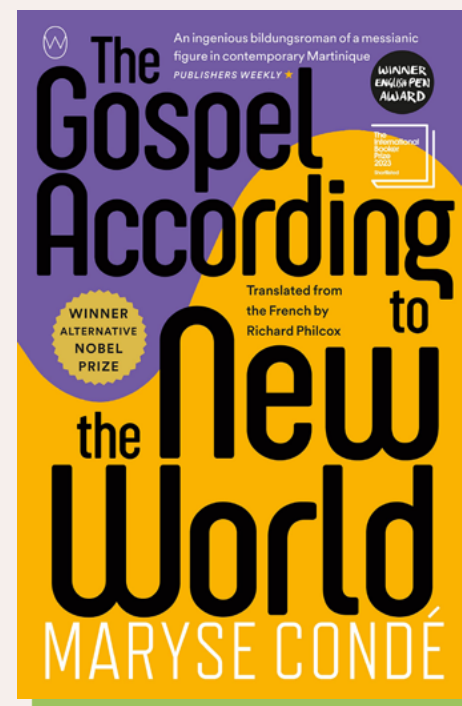
Not sure who she can rely on in a crisis, Bel begins reconnecting with the most important people from her past, navigating complex family history, school friendship and romantic encounters.

Bell is the author of three non-fiction books, including *Stronger*, which is part memoir and part manifesto about women's strength and fitness.

**Publisher:** Penguin  
**Year:** 2022  
**Themes:** Family, Love, Friendship

## The Gospel According to the New World

Maryse Condé, trans by Richard Philcox



When Pascal is born, he is declared a miracle, with rumours swirling that he is the child of God. As he sets off in search of his origins, Pascal moves from community to community to try and understand the meaning of his mission.

Maryse Condé's novel, which was translated into English by her husband Richard Philcox, was shortlisted for the International Booker Prize, making her the oldest author ever – at 89 – to be nominated for the award. Condé, who is considered the Queen of Caribbean fiction, has said that *The Gospel According to the New World* will be her final novel.

**Publisher:** World Editions  
**Year:** 2023  
**Themes:** Community, Religion, Faith

## Ordinary People and A House for Alice

Diana Evans



Set in London, Diana Evans' novels examine the lives of a series of characters as they navigate romance, family and friendship in the city.

In *Ordinary People*, Evans looks at two couples at a moment of reckoning. Melissa has a new baby and is determined not to let it change her, while Michael is still in love with Melissa but can't quite stay faithful to her. Meanwhile, Damian has lost his father, while Stephanie wants to live a happy life with him and their three children, but finds his bereavement might be getting in the way.

*Ordinary People* is an intimate study of identity and parenthood, and a look at friendship, sex and grief. Hannah Beckerman in the [Observer](#) said it was a "thoughtful and intelligently observed novel". The book was chosen for BBC Radio 4's [Bookclub](#).

**Publisher:** Vintage  
**Year:** 2018 and 2023  
**Themes:** Parenthood, Grief, Love, Marriage

*A House for Alice* picks up with a number of characters from *Ordinary People* as Alice, who has lived for 50 years in London, decides she wants to live out the rest of her days in the land of her birth. Meanwhile, Melissa has still not let go of the love she lost, and Michael, now married to Nicole, is haunted by the failed perfection of the past.

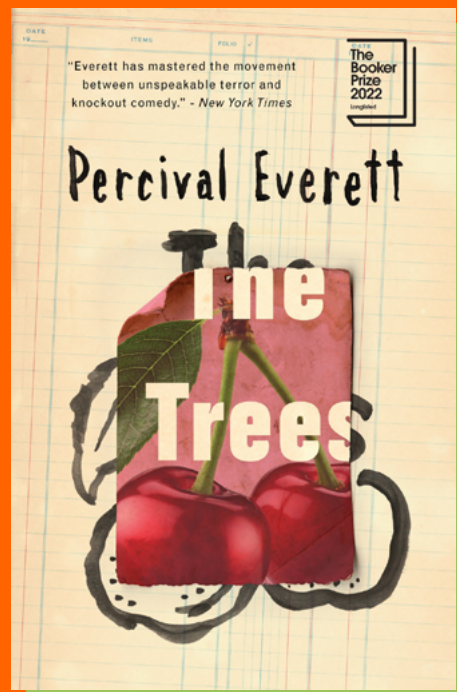
In the background of the novel, the repercussions of the Grenfell disaster are felt by a community and a city, as Evans asks how parents should raise children, how children should do right by their parents, and how people can satisfy themselves.

*A House for Alice* was shortlisted for the Orwell Prize for Political Fiction.



## The Trees

Percival Everett



Percival Everett's novel opens with a series of brutal murders in the rural town of Money, Mississippi, and invokes the real-life tragedy of Emmett Till, a young Black boy who was lynched in 1955.

When a pair of detectives from the Mississippi Bureau of Investigation arrive to look into the murders, they meet resistance. At each murder scene is a second dead body, that of a man who resembles Emmett Till, and the detectives suspect that these are killings of retribution.

Everett's novel is a satire about racism in America, and the author takes direct aim at the police through his dark humour and astute observations.

*The Trees* was shortlisted for the Booker Prize, and won the Bollinger Everyman Wodehouse Prize, which is awarded to funny books.

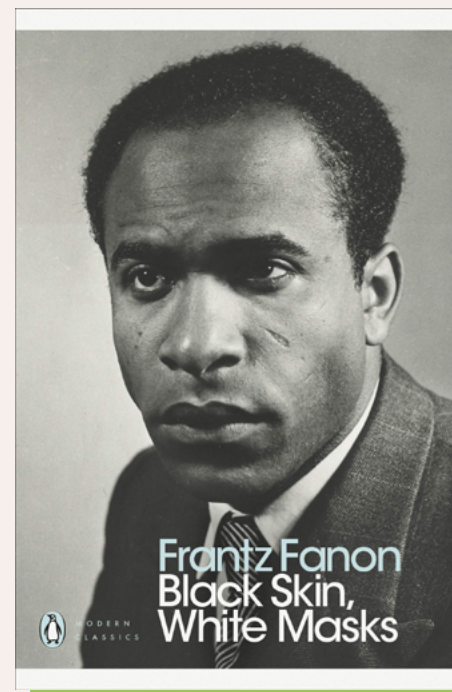
**Publisher:** Influx Press

**Year:** 2022

**Themes:** Racism, Justice, American politics

## Black Skin, White Masks

Frantz Fanon



In his seminal text, Frantz Fanon draws on his own life and his work as a psychoanalyst to explore how colonialism's subjects internalise its prejudices, eventually emulating the 'white masks' of their oppressors. First published in 1952, this book established Fanon as a revolutionary anti-colonialist thinker.

Fanon was born in Martinique and studied medicine in France, specialising in psychiatry. Sent to a hospital in Algeria, he found his sympathies turning towards the Algerian Nationalist Movement, which he later joined. He is considered one of the most important theorists of the psychology of race.

**Publisher:** Penguin Modern Classics

**Year:** 1952

**Themes:** Colonialism, Racism, History, Psychology

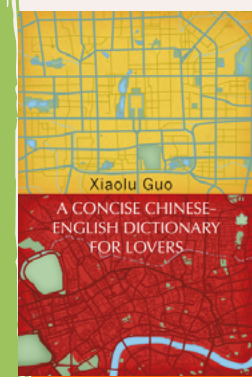
## Key works:

[Village of Stone](#)

[A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers](#)

[20 Fragments of a Ravenous Youth](#)

[Once Upon a Time in the East](#)  
[Radical](#)



## Author Focus

**Xiaolu Guo**

Born: 1972, China

Xiaolu Guo published six books in her native China before she moved to Britain in 2002. A novelist, essayist, screenwriter and filmmaker, she has turned her hand to multiple genres and forms, but themes of language and belonging go across her fiction.

Guo's first novel in English translation was 2004's *Village of Stone*, which was shortlisted for the 2005 Independent Foreign Fiction Prize and the 2006 International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award.

Her first novel written in English was *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers*, published in 2007, which tells the story of a Chinese student's encounters in London; it was shortlisted for what is now the Women's Prize for Fiction.

Her novel about a film extra, *20 Fragments of a Ravenous Youth*, was longlisted for the Man Asian Literary Prize, and in 2013 she was named one of the Best of Young British Novelists by *Granta Magazine*.

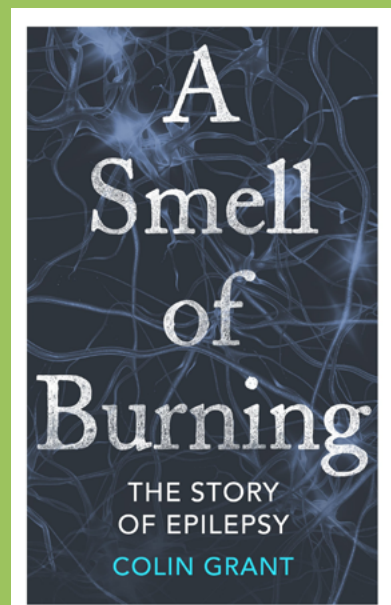
Guo's first memoir *Once Upon a Time in the East* covers her childhood and move to Britain. She was given by her parents to a childless peasant couple in the mountains, and then went to live with her illiterate grandparents in a fishing village on the East China Sea. The book won the National Book Critics Circle Award, and was shortlisted for the Jhalak Prize for Book of the Year by a Writer of Colour and the Rathbones Folio Prize 2018.

*Radical*, Guo's second memoir, is about when she moved to New York for work, leaving her child and partner in London, and focuses on separation, language, being an outsider, and a longing to connect.



## A Smell of Burning: A Memoir of Epilepsy

Colin Grant



As a teenager, Colin Grant's brother was diagnosed with epilepsy, changing the life of the family forever.

In *A Smell of Burning*, Grant tells the story of epilepsy, introducing the famous people who had it – including Julius Caesar, Joan of Arc and Vincent van Gogh – and the pioneering doctors whose extraordinary breakthroughs finally helped gain an understanding of how the brain works.

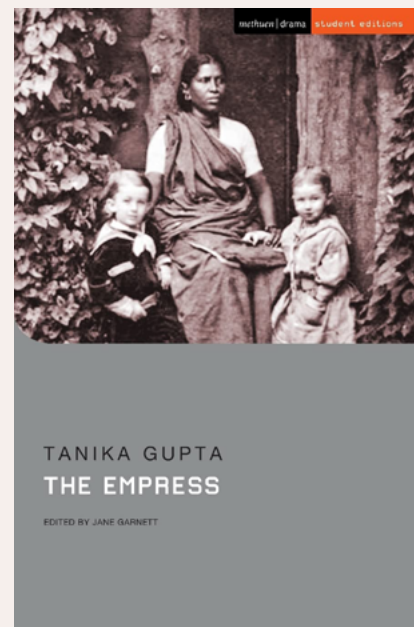
And, through the tragic tale of his brother, Grant considers the effect of epilepsy on his own life.

Grant is an author, historian and critic who has written acclaimed biographies of the Wailers and of Marcus Garvey, as well as a memoir (*Bageye at the Wheel*) and a book about Windrush, *Homecoming: Voices of the Windrush Generation*.

**Publisher:** Jonathan Cape  
**Year:** 2016  
**Themes:** Medicine, Illness, Family, Siblings, History

## The Empress

Tanika Gupta



Tanika Gupta's play *The Empress* takes place over 13 years of Queen Victoria's reign. It follows a cast of characters, including Rani Das and Abdul Karim, who step ashore onto London's Tilbury Docks after a long voyage from India in 1887.

The story blends the experiences of Indian ayahs and lascars who worked on the ships carrying trade goods, the first Indian politician to be elected as a Member of Parliament, and the true story of Queen Victoria's relationship with her servant and 'Munshi' (teacher) Abdul Karim.

*The Empress* premiered in 2013 at the Swan Theatre in Stratford-Upon-Avon. A revised edition of the play was published in 2023 to coincide with its revival at the Royal Shakespeare Company.

Gupta has written more than 25 stage plays that have been produced in major theatres across the UK. She has also written radio plays, original television dramas, and scripts for shows including *EastEnders*.

**Publisher:** Methuen Drama  
**Year:** 2021  
**Themes:** Empire, British history, Colonialism, Friendship, Royalty

## All About Love

bell hooks



Renowned scholar, cultural critic, and feminist bell hooks skewers the view of love as romance in *All About Love*. In 13 chapters, she examines what love is through her own search for emotional connection and society's failure to provide a model for learning to love.

hooks, born Gloria Jean Watkins, was an author, professor and activist who published more than 30 books covering topics including race, feminism, capitalism and intersectionality.

She is regarded as one of the 20th century's great cultural critics and writers.

**Publisher:** HarperCollins  
**Year:** 1999  
**Themes:** Love, Feminism

## Moon Witch, Spider King

Marlon James



*Moon Witch, Spider King* is the second novel in Booker Prize-winning author Marlon James' Dark Star trilogy, following *Black Leopard, Red Wolf*.

In *Moon Witch, Spider King*, James chronicles the antagonist-turned-antihero's journey from an ostracised no-name girl, hated by her brothers and made to live in a termite hill, to a woman with fully developed powers engaged in a long-standing feud with the Aesi, chancellor to the king.

The book offers a version of the events of *Black Leopard, Red Wolf*, this time from the point of view of Sogolon, who appears in the first book as a member of the expedition that sets out to find a mysterious boy who has been abducted.

**Publisher:** Hamish Hamilton  
**Year:** 2022  
**Themes:** Adventure, Magic, Fantasy



## Greek Lessons

Han Kang, trans by Deborah Smith and Emily Yae Won



In *Greek Lessons*, which is set in Seoul, two people connect over a deep pain. One is a young woman who has lost both her mother and the custody battle for her nine-year-old son in the span of just a few months, and finds she has lost her voice. The other is a Greek language teacher who has grown up between Korea and Germany, torn between two cultures and languages, and is losing his sight.

Reviewing *Greek Lessons*, translated by Deborah Smith and Emily Yae Won, Leland Cheuk in [NPR](#) said reading the book was like “watching a quiet indie film that tugs little by little at your heartstrings until you’re rendered speechless with both sadness and hope by the final pages”.

**Publisher:** Hamish Hamilton  
**Year:** 2023  
**Themes:** Grief, Loss, Language

## The Seven Moons of Maali Almeida

Shehan Karunatilaka



Set in Colombo in 1990, Shehan Karunatilaka’s second novel explores the devastating effects of the Sri Lankan Civil War, which took place from 1983 to 2009.

The book’s title character, Maali Almeida, is a war photographer who has woken up dead in what seems like a celestial visa office. With no idea who killed him, he has seven moons to contact the man and woman he loves most and lead them to a cache of photos that will rock Sri Lanka.

A satirical novel, *The Seven Moons of Maali Almeida* won the Booker Prize, and was described by [Neil MacGregor](#), chair of the prize judges, as a “metaphysical thriller, an afterlife noir that dissolves the boundaries not just of different genres, but of life and death, body and spirit, east and west”.

**Publisher:** Sort Of Books  
**Year:** 2022  
**Themes:** Death, Grief, War, Love

## Beasts of a Little Land

Juheha Kim



*Beasts of a Little Land* begins in 1917, as Korea is under Japanese occupation. As famine looms, 10-year-old Jade is sold by her desperate family to a courtesan school in Pyongyang. Fleeing to Seoul as the Japanese army tears through the country, she meets an orphan named JungHo, an encounter that will lead to a life-changing friendship.

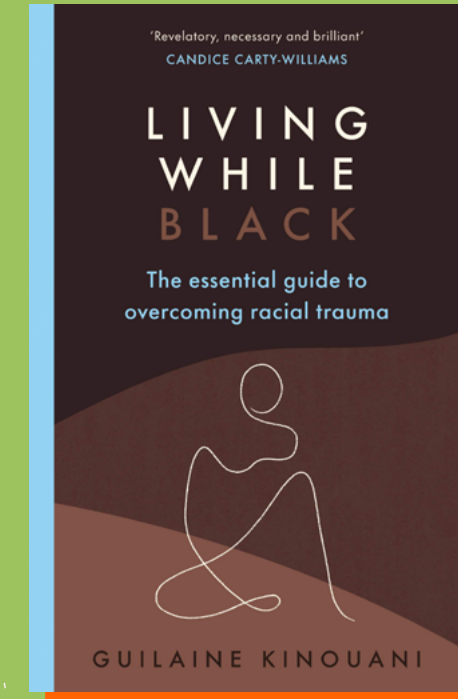
But when JungHo is pulled into the revolutionary fight for independence, Jade must decide between following her own ambitions and risking everything for the one she loves.

Sweeping through five decades of Korean history, Juheha Kim’s debut novel was longlisted for the HWA Debut Crown and the Nota Bene Prize.

**Publisher:** Oneworld  
**Year:** 2022  
**Themes:** War, Asian history

## Living While Black: The Essential Guide to Overcoming Racial Trauma

Guilane Kinouani



Over 15 years, radical psychologist and therapist Guilane Kinouani has helped hundreds of Black people to protect their mental and physical health from the harm of white supremacy.

In *Living While Black*, she brings together case studies with research and effective coping techniques from her anti-racist academy and award-nominated blog, Race Reflections.

*Living While Black* empowers Black readers to adopt radical self-care tools that improve day-to-day wellness and is an essential anti-racist resource for allies who want to do better.

**Publisher:** Ebury Press  
**Year:** 2021  
**Themes:** Racism, Mental health, Self-care



## Yellowface

Rebecca F. Kuang



Athena Liu is a literary darling, while June Hayward has struggled to make her way as a novelist. The two university friends have kept in touch sporadically, with June jealously watching Athena's success from near and far.

When Athena dies in a freak accident, June steals her unpublished manuscript and publishes it as her own under the ambiguous name Juniper Song. It's a hit, soon there are questions about the book's authorship and who has the right to write such a novel, all while June struggles to pen a follow-up.

Kuang's novel is a darkly humorous and razor-sharp look at the publishing industry, creativity and originality, as well as race and politics.

*Yellowface* is Kuang's contemporary literary debut. She also writes as RF Kuang.

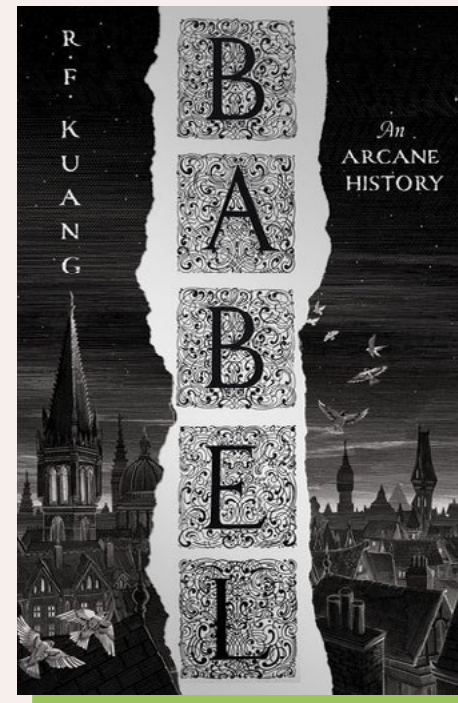
**Publisher:** HarperCollins

**Year:** 2023

**Themes:** Identity, Culture, Writing, History

## Babel

RF Kuang



RF Kuang's novel is set in an alternative Oxford in 1836, where Babel, the Royal Institute of Translation, is located. It is the tower from which all the power of the British Empire flows.

Into this world comes Robin Swift, orphaned in Canton and brought to England by a mysterious guardian. Initially, the place seems like paradise, but it soon becomes a prison, and Robin faces the challenge of standing against an empire.

[Kirkus Reviews](#) said the book was "an expansive, sympathetic, and nevertheless scathing critique of Western imperialism and how individuals are forced to make their peace with the system and survive or to fight back and face the consequences".

Kuang is the author of the fantasy series *The Poppy Wars*, and the contemporary novel *Yellowface*.

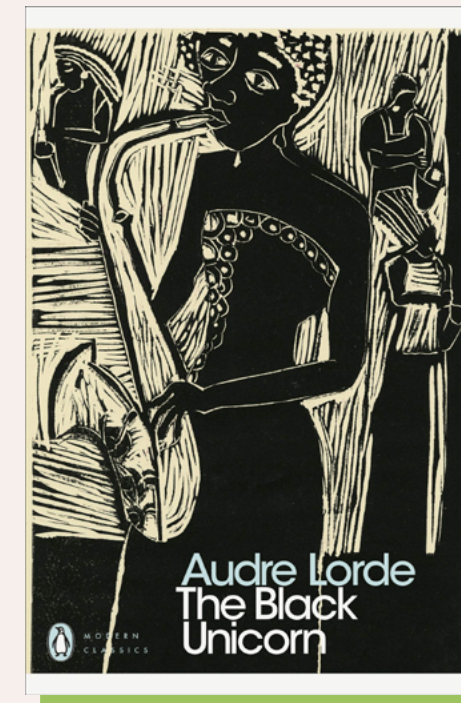
**Publisher:** HarperVoyager

**Year:** 2022

**Themes:** Language, Colonialism, British Empire, Fantasy

## The Black Unicorn

Audre Lorde



Audre Lorde's *The Black Unicorn* is a poetry collection about women, from mothers and children to goddesses and warriors.

Lorde was a writer, feminist and civil rights activist. She worked as a factory worker, ghost writer, social worker, X-ray technician, medical clerk, and arts and crafts supervisor before becoming a librarian in Manhattan in New York, and rising to prominence as a poet, essayist and speaker.

She was made Poet Laureate of New York State in 1991.

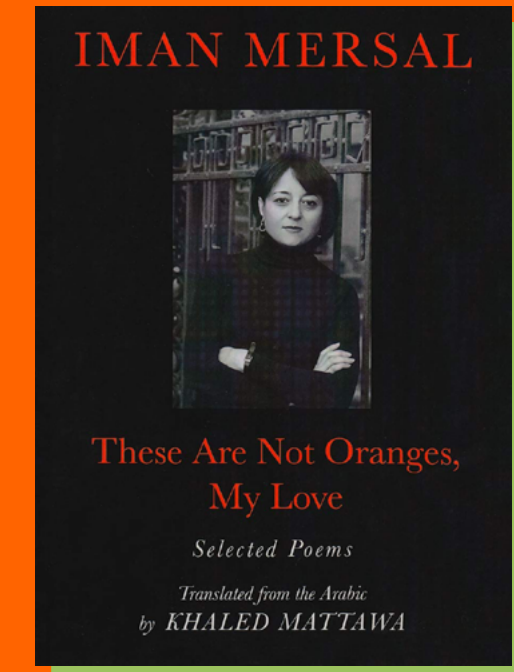
**Publisher:** Penguin

**Year:** 1987

**Themes:** Poetry, Feminism, Motherhood, Love

## These Are Not Oranges, My Love

Iman Mersal, trans by Khaled Mattawa



*These Are Not Oranges, My Love* is a selection of poems by Egyptian-Canadian poet Iman Mersal.

Mersal is the author of a number of books of poems in Arabic. As well as being a poet, she is also an essayist, translator and literary scholar. In English translation, her poems have appeared in *The New York Review of Books*, *Paris Review*, *The Nation*, and others.

**Publisher:** Sheep Meadow Press

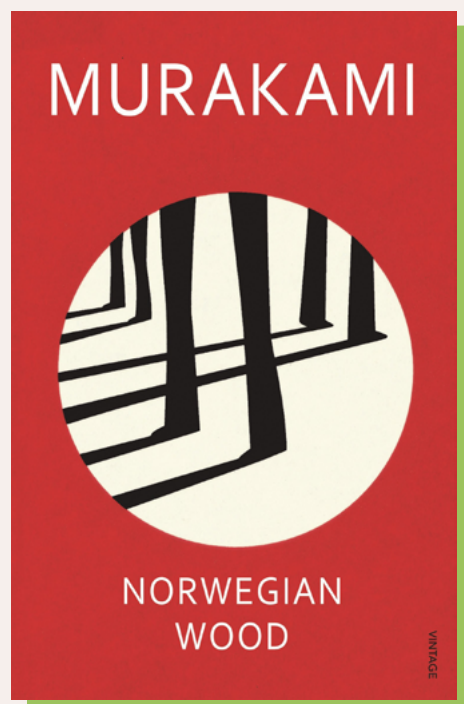
**Year:** 2008

**Themes:** Identity, Love, Relationships



## Norwegian Wood

Haruki Murakami, trans by Jay Rubin



Haruki Murakami's 1987 novel is a story of loss as Toru Watanabe looks back on his student years and recalls his first love Naoko and an impetuous young woman called Midori, who marched into his life when he was a young man.

[Kirkus Reviews](#) said the book was a "solid building-block in one of contemporary fiction's most energetic and impressive bodies of work".

Murakami's other books include *1Q84*, a trilogy of novels, and *Novelist as Vocation*, a non-fiction book about the craft of writing.

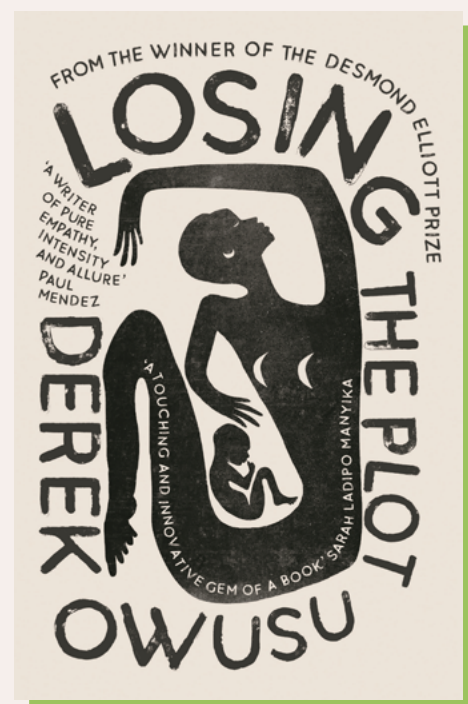
**Publisher:** Vintage

**Year:** 1987

**Themes:** Love, Grief, Mental health, Romance, Friendship

## Losing the Plot

Derek Owusu



Derek Owusu's second novel is a fictional reimagining of his mother's journey from Ghana to the UK, and her time spent navigating parenthood in a new environment. The story is told through the eyes of the narrator and his mother, with Owusu playing with form to piece together a look at the immigrant experience.

Percy Zvomuya in the [Guardian](#) said the book "isn't just a concise history of an African woman in London" but a "love letter...written by a son to his mother". "And by extension it is a living memorial to the millions of people labouring in care, cleaning and other low-paid work," he continued.

Owusu was named one of Granta's Best of Young British Novelists in its 2023 list.

**Publisher:** Canongate

**Year:** 2022

**Themes:** Immigration, Parenthood

## I'm a Fan

Sheena Patel



In *I'm a Fan*, an unnamed narrator tells the story of their seemingly unequal romantic relationship. Sheena Patel makes connections between power struggles at the heart of human relationships to those in the wider world, offering a critique of social media, access and patriarchal systems.

Susannah Butter in the [Evening Standard](#) said the book was a "disturbing, direct and skilfully observed look at race, class and envy", while in the [Guardian](#) Bidisha said it was a "fast, fizzing cherry bomb of a debut".

*I'm a Fan* was named by the *Observer* as one of the best debut novels of 2022, was Foyles' fiction book of the year for 2022, and was shortlisted for the Jhalak Prize for Book of the Year by a Writer of Colour and the Dylan Thomas Prize. It won the Discover Book of the Year award at the British Book Awards 2023 and was longlisted for the Women's Prize for Fiction.

Patel is a writer and assistant director for the film and TV industry and is part of the 4 Brown Girls Who Write collective.

**Publisher:** Granta Books

**Year:** 2022

**Themes:** Obsession, Love, Race, Class, Feminism

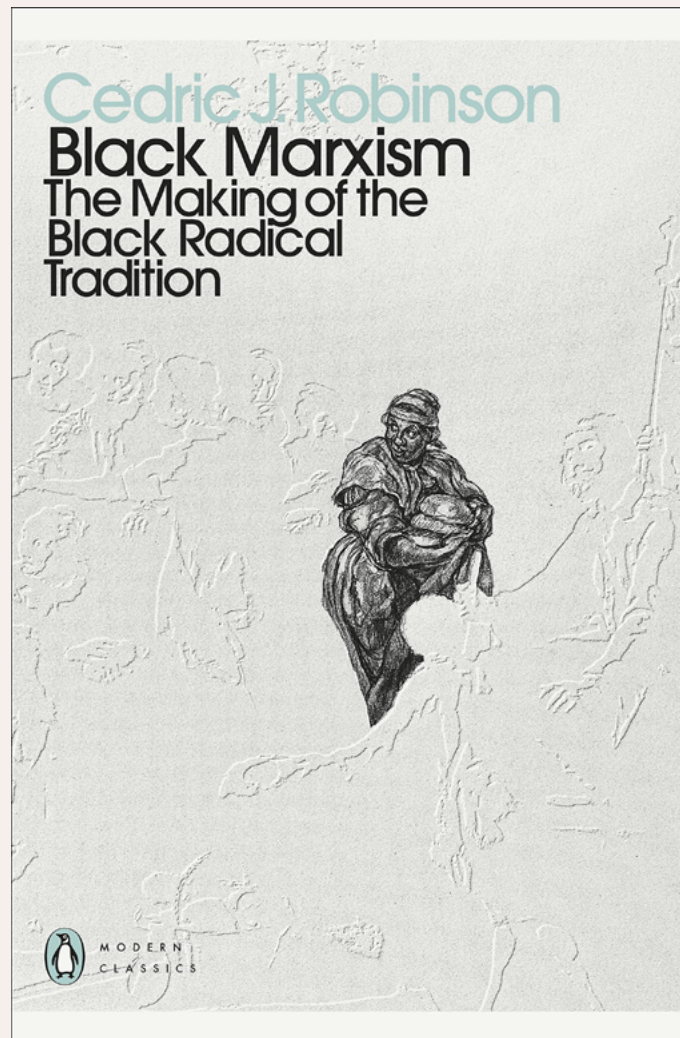
**"What makes reading this book such a satisfying experience is how it provokes readers to examine our own 'private, most secret self' through the way we respond to the narrator's thoughts and actions."**

Vartika Rastogi, [The Cardiff Review](#)



## Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition

Cedric J Robinson



**Publisher:** Penguin Classics

**Year:** 1983

**Themes:** Politics, Race

Cedric Robinson's landmark account of Black radicalism argues that any struggle must be fought on people's own terms.

Robinson traces the emergence of European radicalism, the history of Black African resistance and the influence of these on key thinkers including W. E. B. Du Bois, C. L. R. James and Richard Wright.

Robinson was a professor at the Department of Black Studies and the Department of Political Science at the University of California, Santa Barbara.

**Key works:**

Gitanjali

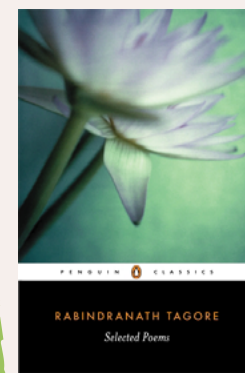
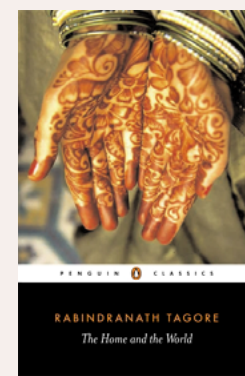
My Boyhood Days

[Nationalism](#)

Sandhya Sangit

[The Home and The World](#)

[Selected Poems](#)



## Author Focus

**Rabindranath Tagore**

Born: 1861, India

Poet, social reformer, activist: Rabindranath Tagore was one of India's greatest writers, and his work continues to be admired today.

Born in 1861, he was the youngest son of Debendranath Tagore, a leader of the Brahmo Samaj, which was a new religious sect in nineteenth-century Bengal and which attempted a revival of the ultimate monistic basis of Hinduism as laid down in the Upanishads.

He was initially educated at home, before being sent to England for formal schooling, although he never actually finished his studies.

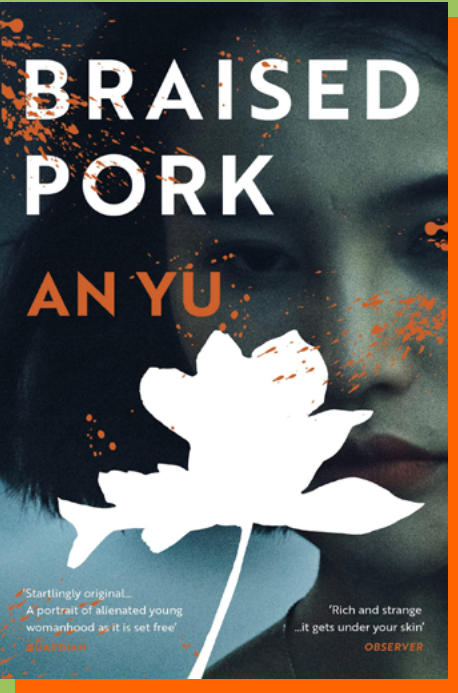
As an adult, Tagore managed his family estates, where he came into close contact with a variety of people, increasing his interest in social reforms. He started an experimental school, occasionally participated in the Indian nationalist movement, and was a friend of Gandhi's. He was knighted by the British government in 1915, but resigned the honour a few years later as a protest against British policies in India.

Tagore, who was awarded the [Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913](#), becoming the first non-European to take the award, wrote across a variety of genres, but was best known, and is still best remembered, as a poet. Tagore's Nobel Prize citation said he was awarded "because of his profoundly sensitive, fresh and beautiful verse, by which, with consummate skill, he has made his poetic thought, expressed in his own English words, a part of the literature of the West".



Braised Pork

An Yu



Set in contemporary Beijing, *Braised Pork* is the story of Jia Jia, who one morning finds her husband dead in the bathtub of their Beijing apartment. Next to him is a sketch of a strange creature from his dream.

Young, alone, and with many unanswered questions, Jia Jia sets out on a journey that takes her deep into the past, where she begins to have a sense of her future.

Reviewing the book in the *Guardian*, Shahidha Bari said it was a “sensitive portrait of alienated young womanhood as it is set free from the suffocating constraints of marriage and comes up for air”.

**Publisher:** Harvill Secker  
**Year:** 2020  
**Themes:** Love, Independence

Index

LGBTQ +

Books featuring characters from the LGBTQ+ communities.

Friday I’m in Love by Camryn Garrett 10

None of the Above by Travis Alabanza 28

Time is a Mother by Ocean Vuong 42

A Dutiful Boy by Mohsin Zaidi 46

History

Books that examine histories – national, international, personal, political – from a variety of viewpoints.

Part of a Story That Started Before Me edited by George the Poet 24

Hidden Heritage by Fatima Manji 35

Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition by Cedric J Robinson 62

Love

Stories about all kinds of love, from familial and friendship to romantic.

Friday I’m in Love by Camryn Garrett 10

The Davenports by Krystal Marquis 19

When Dimple Met Rishi by Sandhya Menon 19

People Change by Sara Jafari 32

The Three of Us by Ore Agbaje-Williams 49

Small Worlds by Caleb Azumah Nelson 49

All About Love by bell hooks 55



**Nature and the environment**

Books about climate change, the environment and more.

**Birdgirl** by Mya Rose-Craig [9](#)

**Breathe** by Sadiq Khan [15](#)

**Unbowed: My Autobiography** by Wangari Maathai [18](#)

**New ideas**

Books that present a new way of thinking, or challenge stereotypes.

**It's Not Ok to Feel Blue (and Other Lies)**  
edited by Scarlett Curtis [9](#)

**Feminists Don't Wear Pink (and Other Lies)**  
edited by Scarlett Curtis [10](#)

**It's Not About the Burqa** edited by Mariam Khan [16](#)

**Rethink** by Amol Rajan [21](#)

**Hidden Heritage** by Fatima Manji [35](#)

**Race**

Books that examine race and racism throughout history

**Letters to a Writer of Colour**  
by Deepa Anappara and Taymour Soomro [6](#)

**Black Skin, White Masks** by Frantz Fanon [52](#)

**Living While Black: The Essential Guide to Overcoming Racial Trauma** by Guilane Kinouani [57](#)

**Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition**  
by Cedric J Robinson [62](#)

**Real-life figures**

Memoirs, biographies and stories about people from history and contemporary times.

**Birdgirl** by Mya Rose-Craig [9](#)

**Breathe** by Sadiq Khan [15](#)

**Takeaway** by Angela Hui [12](#)

**Unbowed: My Autobiography** by Wangari Maathai [18](#)

**The Light We Carry** by Michelle Obama [20](#)

**None of the Above** by Travis Alabanza [28](#)

**I Never Said I Loved You** by Rhik Samadder [41](#)

**A Dutiful Boy** by Mohsin Zaidi [46](#)

**A Smell of Burning: A Memoir of Epilepsy** by Colin Grant [54](#)

**Once Upon a Time in the East** by Ziaolu Guo [53](#)

**Radical** by Ziaolu Guo [53](#)