

"Reading is the sole means by which we slip, involuntarily, often helplessly, into another's skin, another's voice, another's soul."

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BOOK STUFF

Joyce Carol Oates

The Booker Prize

It's the UK's most prestigious literary prize. This year's shortlist has novels set all over the world. Look out for the winner announcement on November 19.

The New Wilderness, Diane Cook

A daring, passionate and terrifying novel about a mother's battle to save her daughter in a world ravaged by climate change

This Mournable Body, Tsitsi Dangarembga

A tense and psychologically charged novel about the dashed hopes of one young girl and a fledgling Zimbabwe

Burnt Sugar, Avni Doshi

This is a love story and it is a story about betrayal. But not between lovers – between mother and daughter.

The Shadow King, Maaza Mengiste

Ethiopia 1935. With the threat of Mussolini looming, Hidane, Haile Selassie's army rushes to mobilise before the Italians invade. But the focus of the novel is on the Eritrean women who fought to protect their homeland.

Shuggie Bain, Douglas Stuart

1981 Glasgow. The city is dying. Poverty is on the rise. People watch the lives they had hoped for disappear from view. As their mother turns to alcohol for comfort, three children try their best to save her.

Real Life, Brandon Taylor

Wallace is at university, a world away from his childhood in Alabama. But after his father dies he is forced to grapple with the trauma of the past and the question of the future.

Poem of the week

One for dog lovers – or maybe not?

THE REVENANT

by **Billy Collins**

I am the dog you put to sleep,
as you like to call the needle of oblivion,
come back to tell you this simple thing:
I never liked you.
When I licked your face,
I thought of biting off your nose.
When I watched you toweling yourself dry,
I wanted to leap and unman you with a snap.
I resented the way you moved,
your lack of animal grace,
the way you would sit in a chair to eat,
a napkin on your lap, knife in your hand.
I would have run away,
but I was too weak, a trick you taught me
while I was learning to sit and heel,
and--greatest of insults--shake hands without a hand.
I admit the sight of the leash
would excite me
but only because it meant I was about
to smell things you had never touched.
You do not want to believe this,
but I have no reason to lie.
I hated the car, the rubber toys,
disliked your friends and, worse, your relatives.
The jingling of my tags drove me mad.
You always scratched me in the wrong place.
All I ever wanted from you
was food and fresh water in my metal bowls.
While you slept, I watched you breathe
as the moon rose in the sky.
It took all of my strength
not to raise my head and howl.
Now I am free of the collar,
the yellow raincoat, monogrammed sweater,
the absurdity of your lawn,
and that is all you need to know about this place
except what you already supposed
and are glad it did not happen sooner--
that everyone here can read and write,
the dogs in poetry, the cats and all the others in prose.

Advice to writers

In the planning stage of a book, don't plan the ending. It has to be earned by all that will go before it.

Rose Tremain

If you don't have time to read, you don't have the time – or the tools – to write.

Simple as that.

Stephen King

Never use a long word where a short one will do.

George Orwell

You can't wait for inspiration. You have to go after it with a club.

Jack London

This is how you do it: you sit down ... and you put one word after another until it's done. It's that easy and that hard.

Neil Gaiman

If it sounds like writing, rewrite it.

Elmore Leonard

Make them laugh, make them cry, make them wait.

Charles Dickens

Sideshow

The sideshow's latest attraction is Brad, a darkly handsome electrician, and his chocolate poodle Rex. They sleep in a feather bed and snore in perfect rhythm. Last summer Brad's wife kicked him out because of his snoring and Brad's grief was so immense it inspired Rex to synchronise his snores. It was only a matter of time before a talent scout heard them through an open window and the show was packed. Sometimes Brad's ex-wife sneaks in. She trembles with the brilliant thunder of each snore, ignores the rapt, adoring women. I heard this first, she whispers to the popcorn-scented dark.

Thaisa Frank

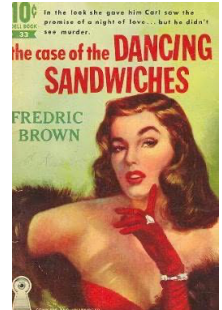
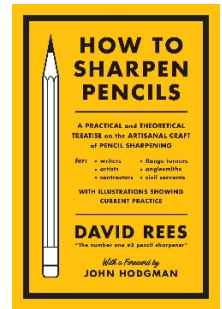
What's in a name?

A book needs a good title to stand out among the thousands of others in libraries and bookshops. Titles can let you know exactly what you get, or they can make you wonder – but they have to catch your eye.

Match these blurbs with their books below. And while you're at it, decide which of them work best and why.

1. It's an ordinary Yorkshire morning, cold and miserable. A body has been found, elaborately and painstakingly positioned to send a message. But what message and to who? It's DCI Harry Virdee's job to find out. But Harry doesn't know that the killer is watching him, that the killer is coming for him.
2. Ranging over Harlem in the 1940s, movies, novels, his preacher father and his experiences of Paris, these capture the complexity of black life at the dawn of the civil rights movement.
3. A decorated World War II veteran shoots and kills a pastor inside a Mississippi church.
4. A memoir about growing up biracial in apartheid South Africa.
5. England, May 1536. Anne Boleyn is dead, decapitated in the space of a heartbeat by a hired French executioner. As her remains are bundled into oblivion, Thomas Cromwell breakfasts with the victors. The blacksmith's son from Putney emerges from the spring's bloodbath to continue his climb to power and wealth, while his formidable master, Henry VIII, settles to short-lived happiness with his third queen, Jane Seymour.

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- a. *Notes of a Native Son*, James Baldwin
 - b. *The Mirror and the Light*, Hilary Mantel
 - c. *City of Sinners*, A A Dhand
 - d. *The Reckoning*, John Grisham
 - e. *Born a Crime*, Trevor Noah



ANSWERS – BLURBS

- 1) c 2) a 3) d 4) e 5) b

