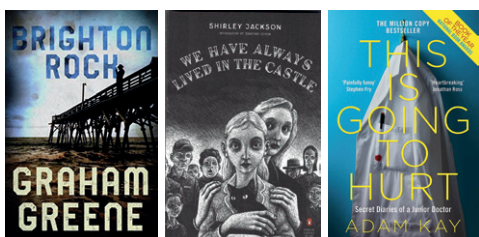




Reading Group Round-Up

Promoting reading and reading groups in prisons

Finding a good read in the library



Remote reading groups are going well in many prisons but this month we have some tips for ALL readers in prisons with a request and delivery service.

Libraries are great places to browse - catching sight of book covers, reading the blurb on the back and then maybe checking out the first paragraph. But with most libraries still closed it can be hard to know what to ask for. One librarian suggests using key words and phrases: 'self-help', 'books about the Roman Empire', 'sports biographies', 'graphic novels', 'true crime' and so on. Here are a few more starting points and paths to books you might like. Enjoy the journey!

Finding your way

Start with the opening lines below that intrigue you most and then follow where they take you.

1. 'My name is Mary Katherine Blackwood. I am eighteen years-old and I live with my sister Constance. I have often thought that with any luck at all I could have been born a werewolf, because the two middle fingers on both my hands are the same length, but I have had to be content with what I had. I dislike washing myself, and dogs, and noise. I like my sister Constance, and Richard Plantagenet, and Amanita phalloides, the death-cup mushroom. Everyone else in our family is dead.'
Shirley Jackson, We Have Always Lived in the Castle

If you like this, GO TO SECTION A

2. 'Hale knew, before he had been in Brighton three hours, that they meant to murder him. With his inky fingers and bitten nails, his manner cynical and nervous, anybody could tell he didn't belong - belong to the early summer sun, the cool Whitsun wind off the sea, the holiday crowd.'

Graham Greene, Brighton Rock

If you like this, GO TO SECTION B

3. 'Tuesday, 3 August 2004. Day one. My partner H has made me a packed lunch. I have a bag full of brand-new doctor's equipment, a new shirt and a new email address. The person who set it up has spelled my name wrong. It is atom.kay@nhs.net. It's good to know that no matter what happens today no one can say I'm the most useless person in the hospital. I can blame everything on Atom, whoever he is.'

Adam Kay, This is Going to Hurt (Quick Read)

If you like this, GO TO SECTION C

Section A: Horror

Shirley Jackson's books are a unique breed of scary, the kind that slowly creeps up on you instead of darting out of the shadows. It was made into a film in 2019 while another of her novels, *The Haunting of Hill House* inspired a Netflix series. But there are lots of ways to send chills down your spine, from Edgar Allan Poe to Stephen King and lots more in between: Bram Stoker (*Dracula*), Thomas Harris (*The Silence of the Lambs*), William Peter Blatty (*The Exorcist*), James Herbert, Clive Barker, Dean Koontz, Neil Gaiman.

Section B: Thrillers and Detective Stories

It's got to be a crime thriller but *Brighton Rock* is lot more than that and worth checking out. And there are loads of other detective and thriller writers to choose from. Some older classics: Arthur Conan Doyle (*Sherlock Holmes*), Agatha Christie, Dorothy L Sayers, Raymond Chandler, Dashiell Hammett. More modern ones: Walter Mosley, Patricia Highsmith, James Lee Burke, John Grisham, Dan Brown. If you want British, try Ruth Rendall, P D James, Ian Rankin, A A Dhand, Val McDermid, Lee Child. Less obvious choices include Daphne du Maurier's classic *Rebecca*, which starts off as a love story but turns into something much darker, or Gillian Flynn's *Gone Girl*. Look out too for authors in translation, especially Scandi writers like Stieg Larsson (Swedish), Jo Nesbo (Norwegian) and Yrsa Sigurdardottir (Icelandic).

Section C: Quick Reads

Quick Reads are great, especially if you're looking for something that's not too demanding and won't take too long. And your library should have a good stock of them. Other shortish books that might be in your library: George Orwell, *Animal Farm*, John Steinbeck, *Of Mice and Men*, Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*. And there are lots of very different books written in diary form: *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*, *Bridget Jones's Diary*, *The Diary of Adrian Mole*.

Book or film?

You've maybe seen the film or the tv series. Now check out if your library has the book and then decide which is better and why.

- Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale*
- Suzanne Collins, *The Hunger Games*
- George R R Martin, *Game of Thrones*
- Cormac McCarthy, *The Road*
- Thomas Harris, *The Silence of the Lambs*
- Stephen King, *It*
- A J Finn, *The Woman in the Window*
- Ernest Cline, *Ready Player One*
- Angie Thomas, *The Hate U Give*
- Billy Moore, *A Prayer before Dawn: A Nightmare in Thailand*
- R J Palacio, *Wonder*
- Charles Martin, *The Mountain Between Us*
- David Grann, *The Lost City of Z*

If your prison doesn't have a reading group, encourage your librarian to have a look at www.prisonreadinggroups.org.uk and email admin@prg.org.uk if they would like to receive updates and resources from us.



BARS



If you've got ambitions in the music industry, make sure you listen to National Prison Radio on Thursdays at 5pm to our brand new show called Bars.

Long-time listeners of the Free Flow show will be familiar with Lady Unchained, who will present Bars each Thursday for the next twelve weeks. Each week, she'll be speaking to artists and

producers about how they create music, what it takes to succeed, as well as giving advice on writing and creating music. Bars will also feature original instrumentals and performances.

Working side by side with Free Flow, Bars is the place to learn the art of writing your own bars, lyrics and verses.

It's a chance to hear from some of the most exciting rappers, poets and spoken word artists on how they create, how they express themselves, and how they share their experiences.

Alongside a guest each week, Lady Unchained will have a selection of new beats to put what you've heard into

practice straight away.

In the first show, Lady Unchained will be speaking to Sheffield UK hip-hop artists and poet Otis Mensah. A former poet laureate of Sheffield, Otis uses jazz-inspired hip-hop beats to share his stream of consciousness, documenting journeys of thought.

If you've ever wanted to learn how to put your thoughts into words and share your story, this is the show for you.

With education and activities still on hold due to coronavirus, Bars will help you flex your creative muscles and vent some of your lockdown frustration.

You can expect to hear original instrumentals for you to perform along to in your cells as well as fresh inspiration and advice on how to put pen to paper.

As well as this, there will be weekly interviews with hip-hop, grime, drill and spoken word artists.

As always, if you would like tips, advice or to share your thoughts about writing lyrics and verses, please contact us on: 0808 123 1234 or write to National Prison Radio, HMP Brixton, London SW2 5XF.

BARS begins on National Prison Radio on Thursday 3rd of March at 5pm (repeated at 1pm Sunday).



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