

Prison Reading Groups (PRG) was created in 1999 to set up, support and fund informal reading groups in prisons. We now support more than 60 groups in over 45 prisons nationwide. PRG is part of Give a Book.



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## Finding a Good Read: London

A regular column to help you find a good read even if you can't get to the library yet

*'Sir, when a man is tired of London he is tired of life; for there is in London all that life can afford.'* Samuel Johnson

London fascinates writers and it is often as much a character as a setting. Here are some suggested books. Your library may not have all or even any of the titles but it's bound to have other books by some of the authors so you can include 'or anything else by ...' in your ask.

### SERIES

**Arthur Conan Doyle**, Sherlock Holmes stories: perhaps London's most famous detective. Any collection of his short stories will get you walking around the city.

**C J Sansom**, Shardlake books: historical crime novels set in 1500s London with a hunchbacked lawyer as the main character and featuring real people from Thomas Cromwell to Elizabeth I. Titles include *Dissolution*, *Dark Fire*, *Sovereign*, *Revelation*.

**Mick Herron**, the Jackson Lamb books: a set of failed secret agents banished from the sleek MI5 HQ in Regent's Park to a grubby backstreet, overseen by the farting, belching, boorish but whipsmart Jackson Lamb. Titles include, *Slow Horses*, *Dead Lions*, *Real Tigers*

**Oliver Harris**, the Nick Belsey: *'the coolest cop you'll come across in ages'*. Titles include *The Hollow Man*, *Deep Shelter*, *The House of Fame*

**Tony Parsons**, the Max Wolfe books: gritty, gripping police procedurals. Titles include *The Murder Bag*, *The Slaughter Man*, *The Hanging Club*, *Die Last*

**Ben Aaronovitch**, the Rivers of London series: fantasy novels in a London where the Met police have a branch that deals with magic and the supernatural



### CLASSICS

**Dickens** was a Londoner who sometimes walked its streets all night. He also wrote brilliant books set in the city, including *Oliver Twist* and *Bleak House* which opens with an unforgettable description of the city:

*LONDON. Michaelmas Term lately over, and the Lord Chancellor sitting in Lincolns Inn Hall. Implacable November weather. As much mud in the streets as if the waters had but newly retired from the face of the earth, and it would not be wonderful to meet a Megalosaurus, forty feet long or so, waddling like an elephantine lizard up Holborn Hill. Smoke lowering down from chimney-pots, making a soft black drizzle, with flakes of soot in it as big as full-grown snow-flakes gone into mourning, one might imagine, for the death of the sun.*

**Robert Louis Stevenson** set his classic *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* in London but it often feels much more like Edinburgh, Stevenson's hometown.

*'In London everyone is different and that means anyone can fit in.'* Paddington Bear

#### MORE LONDON NOVELS

**Alex Wheatle**, *Brixton Rock*

**Andrea Levy**, *Small Island*

**Nick Hornby**, *About a Boy*

**Iain Banks**, *Dead Air*

**Paula Hawkins**, *The Girl on the Train*

**Helen Fielding**, *Bridget Jones's Diary*

**Laura Shepherd Robinson**, *Blood and Sugar*

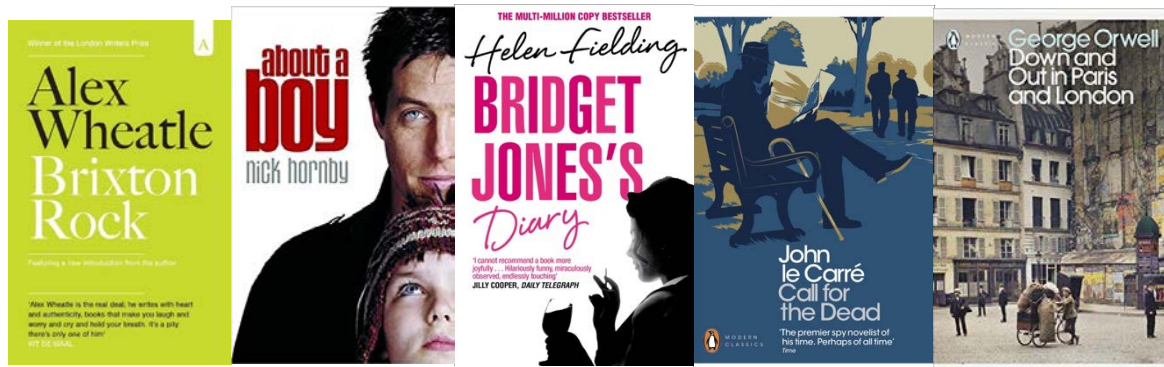
**Sarah Waters**, *The Nightwatch*, *Affinity*

**Barbara Vine**, *King Solomon's Carpet*

**John Le Carré**, *Call for the Dead*



*'There's a hole in the world like a great black pit and the vermin of the world inhabit it and it's filled with people who are filled with s\*\*t and it goes by the name of London.'* Stephen Sondheim



#### NON-FICTION

**Jack London**, *The People of the Abyss*: the author's 1903 account of the slums of East London. The book draws on earlier work including Friedrich Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England* and Henry Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor*.

**George Orwell**, *Down and Out in Paris and London*: Orwell's gripping account of living on the margins in both cities

**Stephen Halliday**, *The Great Stink of London*: an account of cholera-infested Victorian London and the building of the sewer system that cleaned up the Thames.

**Sandi Toksvig**, *Between the Stops*: very funny reflections on her life and career sparked by her journeys on the No. 12 bus from Dulwich to Broadcasting House at Oxford Circus.

*If you've read a good book recently send a review in no more than 100 words and mark it 'Finding a Good Read'. We'll print the best ones. And if you have suggestions for other city settings, let us know and we'll search out some titles.*