

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: Books in Translation

A regular column to help you find a good read.

Books are a gateway to tuning into a culture besides our own. However, the art of translation is not straightforward. It is difficult to reflect the style of the author, and translators must often compromise between capturing meaning and emotion, and maintaining the lyricism of the prose. What is conveyed in one language may not be conceived the same in another. Reading translated books connects us to a wider range of people, different cultures and the history of distant lands.

If you want to dive straight into the classics, look no further than **Madame Bovary** by Gustave Flaubert. In *Madame Bovary*, where language is as important as plot, the art of translation proves even more difficult. Published in 1856 after 5 years of writing, the novel is about a woman's desire to escape the banality of life in the French countryside. It's controversial (for its time), beautifully written and considered one of the greatest novels of all time.

If it's adventure you're after, **Around the World in 80 Days** by Jules Verne is perfect whether young or old. **The Silence of the Sea** by Vercors brings us into the early 20th century telling the story of a German officer staying with a French man and his niece. They refuse to speak to him and their silence is symbolic of the French resistance to Nazi occupation.



Moving forward, here are a few modern fiction titles from authors stretching from Sweden to Italy. **The Elegance of the Hedgehog** by Muriel Barbery explores the friendships between a young middle-class girl in Paris, her concierge and a Japanese business man. Lots of nods towards art, literature, good food and films.

Kiffe Kiffe Tomorrow by Faïza Guène spans a year in the life of a teenage girl living with her Moroccan mother who emigrated to France, written as a series of diary entries. **The Mystery of Henri Pick** by David Foenkinos, a favourite of our reading groups, takes us to a library which houses all rejected manuscripts. Whilst on holiday, Delphine discovers a novel in this one-of-a-kind library she feels she must bring back to Paris to publish.

The Lost Daughter by Elena Ferrante is about a woman who makes choices many would question and explores the question of career/work vs children.

The Witcher by Andrzej Sapkowski, now a hit Netflix show, is a series of 6 fantasy novels about a man, purposely mutated by those who raised him, who hunts monsters for money. He is shunned by society and suddenly burdened with his destiny.

As we leave mainland Europe for now and head to Scandinavia, **The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo** by Stieg Larsson is the first in a trilogy of psychological thrillers. Lisbeth Salander is a surveillance agent with a troubled past and a brilliant mind for cracking cases. Published posthumously, the first novel was made into a film in 2011 starring Daniel Craig.

For a quick burst of foreign fiction, **The Waiter** by Matias Faldbakken is perfect if you like witnessing events unfolding like a fly on the wall. Set against the backdrop of Oslo's most prestigious restaurant, this microcosm permits the waiter to observe and judge his clientele on the world's stage. The Japanese author Haruki Murakami brings us a bit of magical realism in his novel, **The Wind-up Bird Chronical**. It is slightly weird but not barmy, great storytelling and the world he creates is believable



Plays are a welcome alternative to novels. **A Doll's House** by Henrik Ibsen and **The House of Bernarda Alba** by Federico García Lorca initially sparked outrage in the late 19th and early 20th century. Ibsen's play concerns the fate of a woman in a male dominated world as does Lorca's drama about a mother and her five daughters. Both are short and sweet but gripping, nonetheless.

Children's Books

Pippi Longstocking by Astrid Lindgren is about an unpredictable young girl who lives with no parents, just her pet monkey and loves adventure. **The Little Prince** by Antoine de Saint- Exupéry is about a young prince who visits various planets. Although in the style of a children's book, it addresses deep themes of life, loneliness, and human nature. **The Little Ghost** by Otfried Preußler is one of the most famous German children's books, think The Very Hungry Caterpillar or Harry Potter to an English child, about a friendly ghost who wishes he could see the world in daylight.

Note: your library may not have all of these titles or even any of them, but it's sure to have some of the authors mentioned. So if you like the sound of any of the books mentioned, just include 'or any other books by ...' on your request app.

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