



# Finding a Good Read

A column to help you find intriguing books

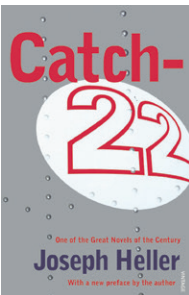
*This month the column comes from AL Kennedy, award-winning writer, who shares some favourite books with Inside Time readers.*



Credit: Robin Niedojadlo

## AL Kennedy

I look back on my time with a prison writing group with great fondness. Members of the group had done various things wrong, from trusting a relative who gave them a parcel, to robbing banks and causing other people serious bodily harm. Around that table, we were all readers and writers and treated each other with respect, although this had less to do with me and much more to do with the authority of one particular participant who liked keeping things polite. I didn't disagree. Courtesy is never unwelcome. Reading – and talking about what we were reading – certainly seemed to help us, as it can in all tough periods we pass through.

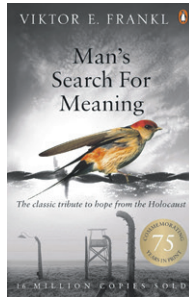


### Catch 22 – Joseph Heller

This is a great companion if you're trying to deal with the craziness of the world, those in authority and the operation of institutions. I found a friend in Yossarian when I was in my late teens and he still crosses my mind whenever a 'system' has a way of doing something that seems only to involve not doing that exact same thing. He's stuck flying more and more missions in a war he doesn't understand with an enemy that's trying to kill him, which he takes very personally. The humour here is enjoyable, as is the satirical edge, but you'll find that Heller is also a stylist.

### Man's Search for Meaning – Viktor Frankl

Frankl was a Holocaust survivor, and he came out of that hellish experience with an astonishing depth of learning and a desire to help



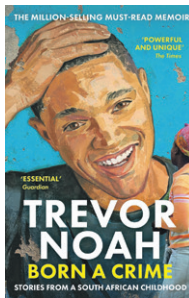
others. Trapped in hunger, exhaustion and danger in a number of concentration camps, his loved ones dead, Frankl dug into his experience as a therapist working with patients who were in despair. This allowed him to meet horror and darkness with a degree of dignity and light. Given time to sit with this book and think about its wisdom, anyone will feel themselves more able to access and sustain hope.



### One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest – Ken Kesey

Randle McMurphy arrives as a new wise-cracking patient on a psychiatric ward. He thinks he's playing the system and expects he'll have an easy life here among the other inmates

and have some fun while he avoids a prison sentence. But all his initial assumptions are turned on their head while our narrator quietly watches and mops the floor. This is a moving, funny and tender book about the ways strangers can come together and fall apart.



### Born A Crime – Trevor Noah

When Noah was born a mixed-race kid in South Africa, his very existence was proof of a crime. A natural comedian, but also a widely admired civil rights activist, Noah charts his growth from a

family's dirty secret into a young man in a dangerous and complicated country finally seeing the end of Apartheid. Noah writes with a comedian's bounce and rhythm and the love between a mother and a son burns through, no matter what. If you want to read about resilience and love, this is for you.

I hope you enjoy at least one or two of these. I have found them all to be good friends over the years.

*A.L. Kennedy is an award-winning writer. She has written nine novels, six short story collections, three books of non-fiction and three books for children.*

*She also writes for the stage, screen, TV and radio. She also performs occasionally in one-person shows and as a stand-up comic. She has taught writing workshops in various contexts including in prisons.*



Prison Reading Groups (PRG) was created in 1999 to set up, support and fund informal reading groups in prisons. We now support more than 110 groups in over 80 prisons nationwide. PRG is part of Give a Book.