



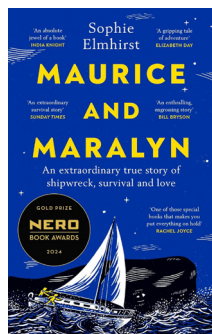
Finding a Good Read

A column to help you find intriguing books

This month the column comes from Tracy Chevalier, a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature, who shares some favourite books with Inside Time readers



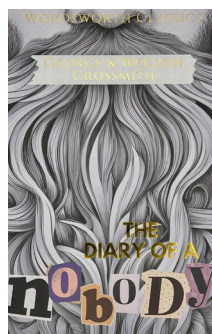
Tracy Chevalier



Maurice and Maralyn by Sophie Elmhirst

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to be stranded at sea in a lifeboat for 118 days, with no food, no water and only your partner for company? How would you cope? This book will tell you, because it really hap-

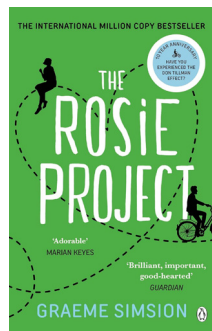
pened. In 1973 a couple built a boat and set sail from the UK to New Zealand. In a freak accident with a whale, their boat was wrecked off the coast of Central America. Incredibly, they – and their relationship – survived. (Hint: sea turtles, rainwater, perseverance and hope.) It's a riveting read.



The Diary of a Nobody by George and Weedon Grossmith

Although this novel was written over 100 years ago, readers today still find it very funny. It follows the everyday life of the ordinary Mr Pooter, a clerk who lives off the Holloway Road in London with his family.

Pooter is wonderfully unself-aware, always saying or doing the wrong thing, never reading the room. His relationship with his son Lupin is particularly hilarious, with Lupin usually besting his dad. As one critic described the Pooters, they are “warm, living, breathing, futile, half-baked, incredibly alive and endearing boneheads.”

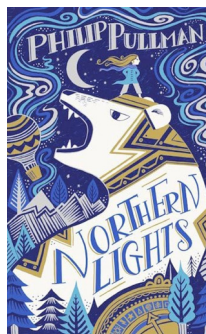


The Rosie Project by Graeme Simsion

These days a lot of people label themselves and others as being ‘on the spectrum’. Don Tillman is one of the most endearing ‘spectrum’ characters you will meet. A genetics professor, he lives a very orderly life, but he can't find

the right woman to love. So he creates a questionnaire to help him find a suitable partner, leading to some very cringe first dates. Even-

tually he meets Rosie, his polar opposite to whom he is inevitably attracted to. Can two such different people fall for each other? You will be utterly charmed and amused by Don and Rosie and their rocky path to love.



Northern Lights by Philip Pullman

Fierce, spirited young Lyra Belacqua lives in a parallel universe to ours, in which the Church has begun to control people's lives. When Lyra's best friend is kidnapped, she goes all the way to the Arctic to rescue him, on the

way joining forces with those battling the Church for freedom. The novel is an intoxicating mix of adventure and philosophy, complete with armoured polar bears, gun-toting balloonists, and the baddest husband-and-wife duo you'll meet in literature. The good news: if you love it, there are five more books that follow Lyra in her travels.



Master and Commander by Patrick O'Brian

Master and Commander is the first in a long series of naval adventures involving Captain Jack Aubrey, set mainly during the Napoleonic Wars in the early 19th century. Although there is plenty of action on board, including big set-piece

battles, at its heart the book (and series) is about the friendship between Aubrey and the ship's naval surgeon, Stephen Maturin, who may or may not also be a spy for His Majesty's Government. It's a pleasure to see these two friends grow and mature throughout the series.

Tracy Chevalier is the author of 11 novels, including *A Single Thread*, *The Glassmaker* and *Girl with a Pearl Earring*, an international bestseller that has sold five million copies, been translated into 43 languages, and been made into a film, a play and an opera. Her 12th novel, *My Name Is Agnes*, is about an unsolved murder in 19th-century Northumberland, and will be published in 2027. Tracy works with various charities, including *Freedom From Torture*, *First Story* and *Fine Cell Work*, which teaches prisoners how to embroider and quilt, with the idea that sewing can be psychologically and financially rewarding.



Prison Reading Groups (PRG) was created in 1999 to set up, support and fund informal reading groups in prisons. We have set up more than 75 groups in over 50 prisons nationwide. PRG is part of Give a Book.