

## Staff Holiday reading list 2021

Compiled by Pat Pledger from suggestions from members of the OZTL\_net list.

**Riptides** by Kirsten Alexander. December 1974. Abby Campbell and her brother Charlie are driving to their father's farm on a dark country road when they swerve into the path of another car, forcing it into a tree. The pregnant driver is killed instantly. Debra McGhee.

**The Bear and the Nightingale, The Girl in the Tower, The Winter of the Witch** (The **Winternight** Trilogy) by Katherine Arden. YA. 'Frost-demons have no interest in mortal girls wed to mortal men. In the stories, they only come for the wild maiden.' Excellent fantasy set in Russia. Anne Weaver.

**Freckles** by Cecelia Ahern. Allegra Bird's arms are scattered with freckles, a gift from her beloved father. But despite her nickname, Freckles has never been able to join all the dots. When a stranger tells her that everyone is the average of the five people they spend the most time with, it opens up something deep inside. Debra McGhee.

**Electric Kingdom** by David Arnold. A deadly flu has swept the globe, leaving a shell of the world that once was. Among the survivors are eighteen-year-old Nico and her dog, who are on a journey devised by Nico's father to find a mythical portal; a young artist named Kit, who knows almost nothing of the world outside the abandoned cinema he was raised in; and the enigmatic Deliverer, who lives life after life in an attempt to put the world back together. Pat Pledger.

**The Rain Heron** by Robbie Arnott. Ren lives alone on the remote frontier of a country devastated by a coup. High on the forested slopes, she survives by hunting and trading - and forgetting. But when a young soldier comes to the mountains in search of a local myth, Ren is inexorably drawn into her impossible mission. Mary Davidson.

**Anxious People** by Fredrik Backman. In a small town in Sweden, it appears to be an ordinary day. But look more closely, and you'll see a masked figure approaching a bank...Two hours later, chaos has descended. An attempted robbery has developed into a hostage situation - with the offender refusing to voice their demands. Debra McGhee.

**Grishaverse series** by Leigh Bardugo. Fantasy. All the books (**Shadow & Bone** x 3, **Six of Crows** x 2, **King of Scars** x 2) Tehani Croft, Pat Pledger.

**After Story** by Larissa Behrend. A perfect holiday read – light but thoughtful – about an indigenous Australian mother and daughter who take a literary tour around England. Della, the mother, has never been on a plane. Jasmine, the daughter, is the first in the family to go to university. This trip is a chance to bond but the past is always in the present. Amusing tour group vignettes, interesting literary tales and warm-hearted characters make this a delightful book. Penny Szentkuti.

**The End of the World is Bigger than Love** by Davina Bell. YA. Identical twin sisters Summer and Winter live alone on a remote island, sheltered from a destroyed world. They survive on rations stockpiled by their father and spend their days deep in their mother's collection of classic literature - until a mysterious stranger upends their carefully constructed reality. Meg Dunley.

**Children's Blizzard** by Melanie Benjamin. A story of courage on the prairie, inspired by the devastating storm that struck the Great Plains in 1888, threatening the lives of hundreds of immigrant homesteaders, especially schoolchildren. Gaye Allison.

**When Things are Alive They Hum** by Hannah Bent. Marlowe and Harper share a bond deeper than most sisters, shaped by the loss of their mother in childhood. For Harper, living with what she calls the Up syndrome and gifted with an endless capacity for wonder, Marlowe and she are connected by an invisible thread, like the hum that connects all things. For Marlowe, they are bound by her fierce determination to keep Harper, born with a congenital heart disorder, alive. Meg Dunley.

**Between a Wolf and a Dog** by Georgia Blain. Ester is a family therapist with an appointment book that catalogues the woes of the middle class. She spends her days helping others find happiness, but

her own family relationships are tense and frayed. Estranged from both her sister, April, and her ex-husband, Lawrence, Ester wants to be able to let herself fall in love again. Jo Schenkel.

**The heart's invisible furies** by John Boyne. Forced to flee the scandal brewing in her hometown, Catherine Goggin finds herself pregnant and alone, in search of a new life at just sixteen. She knows she has no choice but to believe that the nun she entrusts her child to, will find him a better life. Marion Silk.

**Year of Wonders** by Geraldine Brooks. A young woman's struggle to save her family and her soul during the most extraordinary year of 1666, when plague suddenly visited a small Derbyshire village and the villagers, inspired by a charismatic preacher, elected to quarantine themselves to limit the contagion. Linda Weeks.

**Before you knew my name** by Jacqueline Bublitz. When she arrived in New York on her 18th birthday carrying nothing but \$600 cash and a stolen camera, Alice Lee was looking for a fresh start. Now, just one month later, she is the city's latest Jane Doe, an unidentified murder victim. Jo Schenkel.

**Penric & Desdemona** novellas by Lois McMaster Bujold. Fantasy. Learned Penric, a sorcerer and divine of the Bastard's Order faces danger and intrigue. Tehani Croft, Pat Pledger.

**Happy Hour** by Jacquie Byron. Growing older doesn't necessarily mean growing wiser. Gin in one hand, paintbrush in the other, Franny Calderwood has turned her back on the world, or at least the world she used to love. Having lost her husband, Frank, in tragic circumstances three years earlier, 65-year-old Franny copes the only way she knows how: by removing herself completely from the life she had before. Debra McGhee.

**The Oyster Girl** by Wren Fraser Cameron. ISBN 9780648854036. It's published by Forty South publishing in Tasmania so may not get a lot of publicity on the mainland. For a first-time author I found this very engaging. It is set in Tasmania when the colony was reasonably well established (the time of steam packets and sailing regattas). It has strong Aboriginal and later Maori themes and, something we all like, a very capable heroine.

**Parasolverse** by Gail Carriger. A blend of Victorian romance, screwball comedy of manners and alternate history. Read in internal chronology, starting with the **Finishing School** books, rather than publication order for best fun and ongoing, long-term character progression. Tehani Croft, Pat Pledger.

**All that I Remember about Dean Cola** by Tania Chandler. Sidney is happily married to her firefighter husband and thinking about having a child, but her life has been marred by psychotic breakdowns. Haunted by memories of Dean Cola - the teenage crush who is an essential piece of the puzzle that is her past - she returns to the town where she grew up. Something unthinkable happened there, but is she strong enough to face it? Meg Dunley.

**The Paris Library** by Janet Skeslien Charles. PARIS, 1939 Odile Souchet is obsessed with books, and her new job at the American Library in Paris - with its thriving community of students, writers and book lovers - is a dream come true. When war is declared, the Library is determined to remain open. But then the Nazis invade Paris, and everything changes. Linda Weeks, Dajo Finlayson.

**Heron's cry** by Ann Cleeves. North Devon is enjoying a rare hot summer with tourists flocking to its coastline. Detective Matthew Venn is called out to a rural crime scene at the home of a group of artists. What he finds is an elaborately staged murder - Dr Nigel Yeo has been fatally stabbed. Pat Pledger.

**Spoiler Alert** and **All the Feels** by Olivia Dade (contemporary romance set in the improbable world of Hollywood, with fannish feels and sexytimes - her **Something About Marysburg** series is also loads of fun). Tehani Croft.

**Boy Swallows Universe** by Trent Dalton. Brisbane, 1983: A lost father, a mute brother, a mum in jail, a heroin dealer for a stepfather and a notorious crim for a babysitter. It's not as if Eli's life isn't

complicated enough already. He's just trying to follow his heart, learning what it takes to be a good man, but life just keeps throwing obstacles in the way - not least of which is Tytus Broz, legendary Brisbane drug dealer. Karen Eyre.

**Love Stories** by Trent Dalton. Trent Dalton, Australia's best-loved writer, goes out into the world and asks a simple, direct question: 'Can you please tell me a love story?' Debra McGhee.

**The way it is now** by Garry Disher. Charlie is living in his family's holiday house, on forced leave since he made a mess of things at work. Things have never been easy for Charlie. Twenty years earlier his mother went missing in the area, believed murdered. His father has always been the main suspect, though her body was never found. Until now - the foundations are being dug for a new house on a vacant block. The skeletal remains of a child and an adult are found - and Charlie's past comes crashing in on him. Pat Pledger.

**All the light we cannot see** by Anthony Doerr. A beautiful, stunningly ambitious novel about a blind French girl and a German boy whose paths collide in occupied France as both try to survive the devastation of World War II. Shirley Donnelly.

**L.A. weather** by Maria Amparo Escandon. L.A. is parched, dry as a bone, and all Oscar, the weather-obsessed patriarch of the Alvarado family, desperately wants is a little rain. He's harboring a costly secret that distracts him from everything else. His wife, Keila, desperate for a life with a little more intimacy and a little less Weather Channel, feels she has no choice but to end their marriage. Mary Davidson.

**Eighth Wonder** by Tania Farrelly. New York, 1897. The richest city in the world. Beautiful, young and privileged, Rose Kingsbury Smith is expected to play by the strict rules of social etiquette, to forfeit all career aspirations and to marry a man of good means. But she has a quietly rebellious streak and is determined to make her own mark on Manhattan's growing skyline. Gaye Allison.

**Ghost Bird** by Lisa Fuller. YA. Stacey and Laney are twins - mirror images of each other - and yet they're as different as the sun and the moon. Stacey works hard at school, determined to get out of their small town. Laney skips school and sneaks out of the house to meet her boyfriend. When Laney disappears one night, Stacey can't believe she's just run off without telling her. Meg Dunley.

**A room made of leaves** by Kate Grenville. What if Elizabeth Macarthur - wife of the notorious John Macarthur, wool baron in the earliest days of Sydney - had written a shockingly frank secret memoir? And what if novelist Kate Grenville had miraculously found and published it? Marion Silk, Elizabeth Derouet.

**Other Bennet Sister** by Janice Hadlow. Mary, the bookish ugly duckling of **Pride and Prejudice's** five Bennet sisters, emerges from the shadows and transforms into a desired woman with choices of her own. Gaye Allison.

**The Midnight library** by Matthew Haigh. When Nora Seed finds herself in the Midnight Library, she has a chance to make things right. Up until now, her life has been full of misery and regret. She feels she has let everyone down, including herself. But things are about to change. Debbie Berger, Elizabeth Derouet, Debra McGhee, Jo Schenkel.

**Force of Nature** by Jane Harper. When a group of colleagues are forced to participate in a team-building exercise in the Giralang Ranges, they reluctantly start walking down the muddy track. But Alice Russell doesn't appear at the other end. Her last phone call was to Federal Police Agent Aaron Falk. Jo Schenkel.

**Grace Under Pressure** by Tori Haschka. Grace Harkness looks like she has it all – two beautiful children, four cookbooks under her belt and an idyllic beachside home #blessed. But add another baby on the way (oops), a spouse that is nowhere to be seen and a relentless list of things she 'should' be doing, and Grace is starting to unravel. Gaye Allison.

**I am Pilgrim** by Terry Hayes. Can you commit the perfect crime? Pilgrim is the codename for a man who doesn't exist. The adopted son of a wealthy American family, he once headed up a secret

espionage unit for US intelligence. Before he disappeared into anonymous retirement, he wrote the definitive book on forensic criminal investigation. Marion Silk.

**The Cactus** by Sarah Haywood. Susan Green doesn't like surprises - she likes to be in control. But at 45 her perfect life starts to unravel, and real life in all its messiness shows her that it's never too late to bloom. Debra McGhee.

**Wild Warriner's** and **The King's Elite** quartets by Virginia Heath (historical romances popcorn reads). Tehani Croft.

**Bila Yarrudhanggalangdhuray: River of Dreams** by Anita Heiss. Wagadhaany is one of the lucky ones. She survives. But is her life now better than the fate she escaped? Forced to move away from her miyagan, she walks through each day with no trace of dance in her step, her broken heart forever calling her back home to Gundagai. (Publisher) Anita Heiss uses Wiradjuri language for the book's title and throughout the story that reflects on Australia's colonial past through the eyes of First Nations women. Opening with the Gundagai flood, this is a romance with a strong connection to country and is based on true events. - Karen Malbon, Linda Weeks, Cherie Allan.

**Paper Palace** by Miranda Cowley Heller. Over the next 24 hours, Elle will have to decide between the life she has made with her much-loved husband, Peter, and the life she imagined would be hers with her childhood love, Jonas, if a tragic event hadn't forever changed the course of their lives. Mary Davidson.

**The Funny Thing about Norman Foreman** by Julietta Henderson. Norman and Jax are a legendary comedy duo in the making, with a five-year plan to perform at the Edinburgh Fringe by the time they're fifteen. But then Jax dies before they even turn twelve. Gaye Allison.

**How to repaint a life** by Steven Herrick. YA. Isaac is running from his old life when he steps off the bus in a small town. He doesn't plan on sticking around and has nowhere to stay, but a local cafe owner's kindness offers him a chance to change his story. Then Isaac meets Sophie and learns he's not the only one wanting to repaint his life. Pat Pledger.

**The Bookshop of the broken hearted** by Robert Hillman. Tom Hope doesn't think he's much of a farmer, but he's doing his best. He can't have been much of a husband to Trudy, either, judging by her sudden departure. It's only when she returns, pregnant to someone else, that he discovers his surprising talent as a father. So when Trudy finds Jesus and takes little Peter away with her to join the holy rollers, Tom's heart breaks all over again. Mary Davidson.

**The bride of Almond Tree** by Robert Hillman. World War II is over and Hiroshima lies in a heap of poisoned rubble when young Quaker Wesley Cunningham returns home to Almond Tree. He served as a stretcher-bearer; he's seen his fair share of horror. Now he intends to build beautiful houses and to marry, having fallen in love with his neighbour's daughter Beth Hardy. Beth has other plans. Mary Davidson.

**Jane Austen Society** by Natalie Jenner. Only a few months after the end of the Second World War, a new battle is beginning in the little village of Chawton. Once the final home of Jane Austen, the Chawton estate is dwindling, and the last piece of Austen's heritage is at risk of being sold to the highest bidder. Gaye Allison.

**Attack** by Catherine Jinks. Robyn Ayres works as the camp caretaker on Finch Island, a former leper colony off the coast of Queensland. Her current clients are a group of ex-military men who run a boot camp for troubled teens. The latest crop looks like the usual mix of bad boys and sad boys. Then Robyn takes a second look at a kid called Darren. Last time she saw him his name was Aaron, and Robyn was his teacher. Pat Pledger.

**From Where I Fell** by Susan Johnson. An anguished email from Pamela Robinson in Australia to her ex-husband in Paris accidentally ends up in the inbox of New York State teacher Chrisanthi Woods. Chrisanthi is sympathetic to Pamela's struggles and the women begin to tell each other the stories and secrets of their lives. Meg Dunley.

**Devotion** by Hannah Kent. Hanne Nussbaum is a child of nature - she would rather run wild in the forest than conform to the limitations of womanhood. In her village of Kay, Hanne is friendless and considered an oddity...until she meets Thea. Tracey Pollard, Marion Silk, Linda Weeks.

The **Saint of Steel** trilogy by T. Kingfisher (fantasy). Murder, magic, and love on the far side of despair. Tehani Croft, Pat Pledger.

**The House in the Cerulean Sea** by T.J. Klune. YA. This is about finding a home in the strangest of places. Lovely Book. Anne Weaver.

**Songbirds** by Christy Leftari. Yiannis is a poacher, trapping the tiny, protected songbirds that stop in Cyprus as they migrate each year from Africa to Europe, and selling them on the black market. He dreams of finding a new way of life, and of marrying Nisha, who works for Petra and her daughter Angela. Gaye Allison.

**The Labyrinth** by Amanda Lohrey. Winner of 2021 Miles Franklin Literary Award. A woman seeking a new start and meaning in her world, decides to build a labyrinth. Lovely descriptions of the South Coast. Beautifully written but an effortless read. Highly recommended. Julia Martin.

**Cold Granite** by Stuart MacBride. DS Logan McRae and the police in Aberdeen hunt a child killer who stalks the frozen streets. Debra McGhee.

**Destroying Avalon** by Kate Mccaffrey. When Avalon moves to the city her life is turned upside down. Starting at a new high school, she finds herself at the centre of a brutal cyber-bullying campaign. (Part of our year 10 or 11 English collection. Dated but great about cyber bullying). Jo Schenkel.

**The Place on Dalhousie** by Melina Marchetta. When Rosie Gennaro first meets Jimmy Hailler, she has walked away from life in Sydney, leaving behind the place on Dalhousie that her father, Seb, painstakingly rebuilt for his family but never saw completed. Two years later, Rosie returns to the house and living there is Martha, whom Seb Gennaro married less than a year after the death of Rosie's mother. Debra McGhee.

The **Warrior Bards** trilogy by Juliet Marillier (darkish folklore/fantasy, sequel trilogy to the brilliant **Blackthorn & Grim** books but can stand alone - though I also highly recommend B&G!) Tehani Croft, Pat Pledger.

**Sorrow and Bliss** by Meg Mason. This novel is about a woman called Martha. She knows there is something wrong with her but she doesn't know what it is. Her husband Patrick thinks she is fine. He says everyone has something, the thing is just to keep going. Meg Dunley.

**Once There Were Wolves** by Charlotte McConaghy. Inti Flynn arrives in Scotland with her twin sister, Aggie, to lead a team tasked with reintroducing fourteen grey wolves into the remote Highlands. She hopes to heal not only the dying landscape but a broken Aggie, too. However, Inti is not the woman she once was, and may be in need of rewilding herself. Linda Weeks, Jo Schenkel.

**The Ruin, The Scholar, The Good Turn** (Cormac Reilly) by Dervla McTiernan. If you like Irish crime, then this may appeal. Dervla moved to Perth, Australia, many years ago. Anne Weaver, Pat Pledger, **Elizabeth Greef**.

**The Phone Box at the Edge of the World** by Laura Imai Messina. When Yui loses her mother and daughter in the tsunami, she wonders how she will ever carry on. Yet, in the face of this unthinkable loss, life must somehow continue. Then one day she hears about a man who has an old disused telephone box in his garden. There, those who have lost loved ones find the strength to speak to them and begin to come to terms with their grief. As news of the phone box spreads, people will travel there from miles around. Elizabeth Derouet.

**The Jam Queens** by Josephine Moon. Award-winning jam maker Aggie is determined to take her Barossa Valley cafe to new heights. She has put the pain of unsuccessful IVF treatments and a broken relationship behind her and is focused on the many wonderful possibilities life still holds in

store. When an invitation to travel across Australia on the Ghan for her mother's seventieth birthday comes her way, she is at first apprehensive. Jo Schenkel.

**You Need To Know** by Nicola Moriarty. A thrilling family drama about the secrets we keep, the lies we tell and the truths that won't stay hidden. Margy Heuschele.

**The Left-Handed Booksellers of London** by Garth Nix. Eighteen-year-old art student Susan Arkshaw arrives in London in search of her father. But before she can question crime boss Frank Thringley he's turned to dust by the prick of a silver hatpin in the hands of the outrageously attractive Merlin. Merlin is one of the youngest members of a secret society of booksellers with magical powers who police the mythic Old World wherever it impinges on the New World - in addition to running several bookshops, of course! Merlin also has a quest of his own: to find the Old World entity who arranged the murder of his mother. Debra McGhee, Pat Pledger.

**The Great Escape from Woodlands Nursing Home** by Joanna Nell. At nearly ninety, retired nature writer Hattie Bloom prefers the company of birds to people, but when a fall lands her in a nursing home she struggles to cope with the loss of independence and privacy. From the confines of her 'room with a view' of the carpark, she dreams of escape. Jo Schenkel.

**The Single Ladies of Jacaranda Retirement Village** by Joanna Nell. The life of 79-year-old pensioner Peggy Smart is as beige as the decor in her retirement village. Her week revolves around aqua aerobics and appointments with her doctor. Following a very minor traffic accident, things have turned frosty with her grown-up children and she is afraid they are trying to take away her independence. Jo Schenkel.

**The Prison Healer, The Gilded Cage (The Prison Healer series, book 1 and 2)** by Lynette Noni. Zalindov Prison is as bad as The Scholomance in Novik's series... Excellent fantasy series by QLD author. Anne Weaver, Pat Pledger.

**A Deadly Education** by Naomi Novik, **The Last Graduate** (The Scholomance 1 and 2) by Naomi Novik. Many might dream of going to Hogwarts and becoming a Magician. But attending magic school might be nasty, very nasty. Excellent fantasy series. Anne Weaver, Pat Pledger.

**Hamnet** by Maggie O'Farrell. Winner of the 2020 Women's Prize for Fiction. *Hamnet* reveals for the first time in fiction the story of heartbreaking loss which inspired Shakespeare's most celebrated play. One of the best books I've read in recent years. It is beautifully written and gives an insight into the life of Shakespeare from the perspective of his long-suffering wife and children. Elizabeth Lansdown, Marion Silk.

**The Thursday Murder Club** by Richard Osman. In a peaceful retirement village, four unlikely friends meet up once a week to investigate unsolved murders. Linda Santolin, Pat Pledger, Karen Eyre, Elizabeth Derouet.

**The Family Doctor** by Debra Oswald. Paula is a dedicated suburban GP, who is devastated by the murder of a friend and her children by their estranged husband and father. Stacey and the children had been staying with her after fleeing his control, and Paula is haunted by the thought that she couldn't protect them when they most needed it. How had she missed the warning signs? How had she failed to keep them safe? Mary Davidson.

**Where the Crawdads Sing** by Delia Owens. For years, rumors of the "Marsh Girl" have haunted Barkley Cove, a quiet town on the North Carolina coast. So in late 1969, when handsome Chase Andrews is found dead, the locals immediately suspect Kya Clark, the so-called Marsh Girl. But Kya is not what they say. Sensitive and intelligent, she has survived for years alone in the marsh that she calls home, finding friends in the gulls and lessons in the sand.(Book jacket) Emotional, dramatic love story. Nature lovers will also enjoy this. Fits mystery and historical fiction genres. Megan Gatt, Marion Silk, Cherie Allan, Elizabeth Derouet, Elizabeth Greef.

**The Inheritance of Soloman Farthing** by Mary Paulson-Ellis. An old soldier dies alone in his Edinburgh nursing home. No known relatives, and no Will to enact. Just a pawn ticket found amongst

his belongings, and fifty thousand pounds in used notes sewn into the lining of his burial suit . Mary Davidson.

**Malibu Rising** by Taylor Jenkins Reid. Malibu: August, 1983. It's the day of Nina Riva's annual end-of-summer party, and anticipation is at a fever pitch. Everyone wants to be around the famous Rivas: Nina, the talented surfer and supermodel; brothers Jay and Hud, one a championship surfer, the other a renowned photographer; and their adored baby sister, Kit. Mary Davidson.

**The Things We Cannot Say** by Kelly Rimmer. Life changed beyond recognition for Alice when her son, Eddie, was born with autism spectrum disorder. She must do everything to support him, but at what cost to her family? When her cherished grandmother is hospitalised, a hidden box of mementoes reveals a tattered photo of a young man, a tiny leather shoe and a letter. Her grandmother begs Alice to return to Poland to see what became of those she held dearest. Debra McGhee.

**Bruny** by Heather Rose. A right-wing US president has withdrawn America from the Middle East and the UN. Daesh has a thoroughfare to the sea and China is Australia's newest ally. When a bomb goes off in remote Tasmania, Astrid Coleman agrees to return home to help her brother before an upcoming election. Linda Weeks.

**When you are mine** by Michael Robotham. Philomena McCarthy has defied the odds and become a promising young officer with the Metropolitan Police despite being the daughter of a notorious London gangster. Called to the scene of a domestic assault one day, she rescues a bloodied young woman, Tempe Brown, the mistress of a decorated detective. The incident is hushed up, but Phil has unwittingly made a dangerous enemy with powerful friends. Pat Pledger.

**My dark Vanessa** by Kate Elizabeth Russell. Vanessa Wye was fifteen-years-old when she first had sex with her English teacher. She is now thirty-two and in the storm of allegations against powerful men in 2017, the teacher, Jacob Strane, has just been accused of sexual abuse by another former student. Mary Davidson.

**The Great Circle** by Maggie Shipstead. This weaves together the astonishing lives of a 1950s vanished female aviator and the rebel-hearted Hollywood millennial who plays her on screen. Gaye Allison.

**The Weight of Water** by Anita Shreve. In 1873, on a small bleak island off the rich fishing coast of New Hampshire, two Norwegian women are murdered in a fit of brutal passion. A third, Maren Hontvedt, escapes to witness a local man's execution for the crime. More than a century later, Jean, a Boston photojournalist, travels to the island on a research assignment to investigate the murder legend. Debra McGhee.

**Honeybee** by Craig Silvey. Late in the night, fourteen-year-old Sam Watson steps onto a quiet overpass, climbs over the rail and looks down at the road far below. At the other end of the same bridge, an old man, Vic, smokes his last cigarette. The two see each other across the void. A fateful connection is made, and an unlikely friendship blooms. Marion Silk, Jo Schenkel.

**Rodham** by Curtis Sittenfeld. With her sharp but always compassionate eye, Sittenfeld explores the loneliness, moral ambivalence and iron determination that characterise the quest for high office, as well as the painful compromises demanded of female ambition in a world ruled by men. Mary Davidson.

**If Not Us** by Mark Smith. YA. Hesse lives a small coastal town, where a coalmine and power station are a part of the scenery, and a part of the ever-growing problem of climate change. His mum is a member of a local environmental group campaigning to close the mine and shut down the power station. It's a no-brainer, of course, but Hesse is more interested in surfing-and in Fenna, the new exchange student from the Netherlands. Dajo Finlayson.

**Crossing to safety** by Wallace Stegner. When two young couples meet for the first time during the Great Depression, they quickly find they have much in common: Charity Lang and Sally Morgan are

both pregnant, while their husbands Sid and Larry both have jobs in the English department at the University of Wisconsin. Immediately a lifelong friendship is born, which becomes increasingly complex as they share decades of love, loyalty, vulnerability and conflict. Elizabeth Greef.

**As Hammers Fall** by Mark Svendsen. Set in the political melting pot of Australia's early Federation, a nation and its youth must overcome personal and global adversity to build a life of integrity, justice and a fair go for all. Joseph Hill is a passionate idealist. He believes in socialism and peace. But life is complicated. Joe Hill is also in love with his best mate's girl, friends with the 'treacherous' Russian emigres and firebrand trade unionists, is a pacifist fighting the forced conscription of men to the army, the son of radical Socialists and, in spite of all, needs to keep believing that only the Revolution can heal the planet. Elizabeth Derouet.

**A Head full of Ghosts** by Paul Tremblay. The lives of the Barretts, a normal suburban New England family, are torn apart when fourteen-year-old Marjorie begins to display signs of acute schizophrenia. Mary Davidson.

**Survivor Song** by Paul Tremblay. In a matter of weeks, Massachusetts has been overrun by an insidious rabies-like virus that is spread by saliva. But unlike rabies, the disease has a terrifyingly short incubation period of an hour or less. Those infected quickly lose their minds and are driven to bite and infect as many others as they can before they inevitably succumb. Mary Davidson.

**A Gentleman in Moscow** by Amor Towles. On 21 June 1922 Count Alexander Rostov – recipient of the Order of Saint Andrew, member of the Jockey Club, Master of the Hunt – is escorted out of the Kremlin, across Red Square and through the elegant revolving doors of the Hotel Metropol. Karen Eyre.

**The Little Stranger** by Sarah Waters. A slow-burn gothic mystery set in '40s England about a once wealthy family in a crumbling mansion who start to experience strange and disturbing events. I couldn't stop thinking about this book – brilliantly constructed! Penny Szentkuti.

**The Tudor Queens** series by Alison Weir. Historian Alison Weir is writing six stunning novels about the Six Queens of Henry VIII. Gaye Allison.

**Fugitive Telemetry** by Martha Wells. Book 6, **Murderbot** series. When Murderbot discovers a dead body on Preservation Station, it knows it is going to have to assist station security to determine who the body is (was), how they were killed (that should be relatively straightforward, at least), and why (because apparently that matters to a lot of people-who knew?) Pat Pledger.

**When the Apricots Bloom** by Gina Wilkinson. What would you do if the secret police demanded you spy on a friend in order to protect your family? Three women confront the complexities of trust, friendship and motherhood under the rule of a dictator in this debut inspired by the author's own experiences in Iraq. Jo Schenkel.

**The Dictionary of Lost Words** by Pip Williams. Esme is born into a world of words. Motherless and irrepressibly curious, she spends her childhood in the 'Scriptorium', a garden shed in Oxford where her father and a team of dedicated lexicographers are collecting words for the very first Oxford English Dictionary. Esme's place is beneath the sorting table, unseen and unheard. Meg Dunley, Marion Silk, Jenny Watts, Elizabeth Greef.

**Still Life** by Sarah Winman. 1944, in the ruined wine cellar of a Tuscan villa, as the Allied troops advance and bombs fall around them, two strangers meet and share an extraordinary evening together. A terrific feel good mostly happy experience, but not soppy or sacharin. Great characters, easy to read. Angela Soutar, Linda Weeks.

## Non fiction

**A Bookshop in Algiers** by Kauther Adimi. **A Bookshop in Algiers** celebrates quixotic devotion and the love of books in the person of Edmond Charlot, who at the age of twenty founded Les Vraies Richesses (Our True Wealth), the famous Algerian bookstore/publishing house/lending library. Cherie Allan.

**Thirty thousand bottles of wine and pig called Helga** by Todd Alexander. Todd and Jeff have had enough of the city. Sick of the daily grind and workaday corporate shenanigans, they throw caution to the wind and buy 100 acres in the renowned Hunter Valley wine region, intent on living a golden bucolic life and building a fabulous B&B, where they can offer the joys of country life to heart-weary souls. Elizabeth Derouet.

**Phosphorescence :\_On Awe, Wonder And Things That Sustain You When The World Goes Dark** by Julia Baird. Investigation into how we can find and nurture within ourselves that essential quality of internal happiness - the 'light within' that Julia Baird calls 'phosphorescence'. Meg Dunley, Cherie Allan, Elizabeth Greef.

**Last Love Song** by Minnie Darke. Joan Didion lived a life in the public and private eye with her late husband, writer John Gregory Dunne. The two were wildly successful writing partners when they moved to Los Angeles and co-wrote screenplays and adaptations together. Gaye Allison.

**Remember** by Lisa Genova. In **Remember**, neuroscientist and acclaimed novelist Lisa Genova delves into how memories are made and how we retrieve them. Cherie Allan.

**The Happiest Man on Earth** by Eddie Jaku. During the Holocaust, Eddie Jaku faced unimaginable horrors every day, first in Buchenwald, then in Auschwitz, then on a Nazi death march. He lost family, friends, his country. Because he survived, Eddie made the vow to smile every day. Linda Santolin, Meg Dunley, Linda Weeks.

**By the Book: A Reader's Guide to Life** by Ramona Koval. **By the Book** is about reading and living, and about the authors that have written themselves into her life: from Oliver Sacks to Oscar Wilde, Christina Stead to Grace Paley. Jenny Watts.

**Who Gets to be smart** by Bri Lee. In 2018 Bri Lee's brilliant young friend Damian is named a Rhodes Scholar, an apex of academic achievement. When she goes to visit him and takes a tour of Oxford and Rhodes House, she begins questioning her belief in a system she has previously revered, as she learns the truth behind what Virginia Woolf described almost a century earlier as the 'stream of gold and silver' that flows through elite institutions and dictates decisions about who deserves to be educated there. Mary Davidson.

**A fig at the gate : the joys of friendship, gardening and the gaining of wisdom** by Kate Llewellyn. Following the joyful crafting of her gardens in the Blue Mountains (**The Waterlily**) and north of Wollongong (**Playing with Water**), Kate creates a new garden near the sea in Adelaide, planting olives, plums, limes and blood oranges, learning how to keep poultry, setting a duck on eggs. Cherie Allan.

**First things first : selected letters of Kate Llewellyn, 1977 - 2004** by Kate Llewellyn. Collected here for the first time are selected letters from the private correspondence of one of Australia's most loved authors, Kate Llewellyn (**The Waterlily, A Fig at the Gate**). Cherie Allan.

**Greenlights** by Matthew McConaughey. This is fifty years of my sights and seens, felts and figured-outs, cools and shamefuls. Graces, truths, and beauties of brutality. Getting away withs, getting caughts, and getting wets while trying to dance between the raindrops. Debbie Berger.

**Tranquility and Ruin** by Danyl McLauchlan. A deep thinker who covers meditation, anxiety, depression, Bhuddism, Effective Altruism (doing good) in a mostly positive and thorough way with some humour. Explained mostly clearly although I did need to read some parts twice to come to terms with philosophical theory. Angela Soutar.

**Full Tilt** by Dervla Murphy. Shortly after her tenth birthday, Dervla Murphy decided to cycle to India. Almost 20 years later, she set out to achieve her ambition. Her epic journey began during the coldest

winter in memory, taking her through Europe, Persia, Afghanistan, over the Himalayas to Pakistan, and into India. Cherie Allan.

**Truths from an Unreliable Witness : Finding laughter in the darkest of places** by Fiona O'Loughlin. A fiercely honest and wryly funny memoir from one of Australia's most loved comedians shows us that no matter how far down you get, there is always a way back. Debra McGhee.

**Gone to the Woods: Surviving a Lost Childhood** by Gary Paulsen. At the age of five Gary Paulsen escaped from a shocking Chicago upbringing to a North Woods homestead, finding a powerful respect for nature that would stay with him throughout his life. At the age of thirteen a librarian handed him his first book, and there he found a lasting love of reading. Linda Santolin.

**Tell Me Why** by Archie Roach. Not many have lived as many lives as Archie Roach – stolen child, seeker, teenage alcoholic, lover, father, musical and lyrical genius, and leader – but it took him almost a lifetime to find out who he really was. Cherie Allan.

**Longitude: the true story of a lone genius who solved the greatest scientific problem of his time** by Dava Sobel. The dramatic human story of an epic scientific quest: the search for the solution of how to calculate longitude and the unlikely triumph of an English genius, John Harrison. Cherie Allan.

**The cost of bravery** by Allan Sparkes. Allan Sparkes didn't think twice about rescuing an 11-year-old boy from a flooded storm water drain – the courageous policeman put his life on the line and saved the kid. He became one of only five people to be awarded Australia's highest decoration for bravery, the Cross of Valour, but the rescue would signal a downward spiral into post-traumatic stress disorder and depression. Debbie Berger.

**You can't stop the sun from shining** by Sonny Bill Williams. Sonny Bill Williams (SBW) is a once in a hundred-year athlete with immense sporting talent in Rugby League, Rugby Union and Boxing. Debbie Berger.

**Elizabeth & Elizabeth** by Sue Williams. The story of how two women, Elizabeth Macquarie and Elizabeth Macarthur, who should have been bitter foes, combined their courage and wisdom to wield extraordinary power and influence behind the scenes of the fledgling colony. Linda Weeks.

