February 2018

Suggested books from the Penguin Random House catalogue

This booklet contains summaries of 22 titles recommended by one of Prison Reading Groups’ most experienced volunteers.

Please choose one first choice and one second choice from this booklet, or from the wider Penguin Random House catalogue (which includes imprints such as Penguin Classics, Vintage and Windmill).

Please send choices to Olivia at admin@prg.org.uk by Friday 9th March
**Nicola Adams, Believe** (Penguin)

At the London 2012 Olympics, Nicola Adams made history. The flyweight boxer became the first woman in the UK to win an Olympic Gold medal for boxing. In Rio 2016, with the nation cheering her on, she did it all over again.

From a leisure centre in Leeds to the Olympic Stadium in Rio, Nicola with her infamous smile has become the poster girl for women in sport. She’s a trailblazer, record-breaker, and has led the way for women’s boxing. This is Nicola’s story of grit, talent and the real person behind the smile.

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**Harriette Arnow, The Dollmaker** (Vintage Classics)

When Gertie Nevels, a strong and self-reliant matriarch, follows her husband to Detroit from their countryside home in Kentucky, she learns she will have to fight desperately to keep her family together. A sprawling book full of vividly drawn characters and masterful scenes, The Dollmaker is a passionate tribute to a woman’s love for her children and the land.

‘A masterwork... A superb book of unforgettable strength and glowing richness’ *New York Times*

‘A terrifying lesson in US history – and a haunting tragedy’ *Guardian*
Truman Capote, *In Cold Blood* (Penguin)

*In Cold Blood* is considered by many to be the first work of the true crime genre. In this ground-breaking book, Truman Capote reconstructs the murder of the Clutter family from information provided by newspaper articles and interviews.

Truman Capote’s detailed reconstruction of the events and consequences of that fateful night, *In Cold Blood* is a chilling, gripping mix of journalistic skill and imaginative power.

‘The American dream turning into the American nightmare. A remarkable book’ *Spectator*

Susannah Catalan *Brain on Fire* (Penguin)

When twenty-four-year-old Susannah Cahalan woke up alone in a hospital room, strapped to her bed and unable to move or speak, she had no memory of how she’d gotten there. Days earlier, she had been on the threshold of a new, adult life: at the beginning of her first serious relationship and a promising career at a major New York newspaper. Now she was labelled violent, psychotic, a flight risk. What happened?

In a swift and breathtaking narrative, Cahalan tells the astonishing true story of her descent into madness, her family’s inspiring faith in her, and the lifesaving diagnosis that nearly didn’t happen.

"Mr Holmes, they were the footprints of a gigantic hound!"

The terrible spectacle of the beast, the fog of the moor, the discovery of a body: this classic horror story pits detective against dog, rationalism against the supernatural, good against evil.

When Sir Charles Baskerville is found dead on the wild Devon moorland with the footprints of a giant hound nearby, the blame is placed on a family curse. It is left to Sherlock Holmes and Doctor Watson to solve the mystery of the legend of the phantom hound before Sir Charles' heir comes to an equally gruesome end.

Roddy Doyle, *Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha* (Vintage Classics)

Roddy Doyle’s Booker Prize-winning novel describes the world of ten-year-old Paddy Clarke, growing up in Barrytown, north Dublin. From fun and adventure on the streets, boredom in the classroom to increasing isolation at home, *Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha* is the story of a boy who sees everything but understands less and less.

"Funny, warm and enriching." Alan Davies, *Daily Express*

"Gloriously triumphant...confirms Doyle as the best novelist of his generation" Nick Hornby, *Literary Review*
Jane Fallon *Faking Friends* (Penguin)

Your best friend stole your fiancé. Do you run away and hide, or start planning your revenge? Find out in Sunday Times bestselling author Jane Fallon's novel, *Faking Friends*.

Amy has lost her home, her fiancé and her best friend in one disastrous weekend - but instead of falling apart, she's determined to get her own back. Piecing her life back together won’t be half as fun as dismantling theirs, after all.

"A deftly plotted, witty tale of revenge. It’s a romcom with attitude - a perfect wicked pleasure to begin a new year of reading." - The Mail on Sunday

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Young, handsome and fabulously rich, Jay Gatsby is the bright star of the Jazz Age, but as writer Nick Carraway is drawn into the decadent orbit of his Long Island mansion, where the party never seems to end, he finds himself faced by the mystery of Gatsby's origins and desires.

Fitzgerald brilliantly captures both the disillusionment of post-war America and the moral failure of a society obsessed with wealth and status. In chronicling Gatsby’s tragic pursuit of his dream - Fitzgerald re-creates the universal conflict between illusion and reality.

Like Jay Gatsby, F. Scott Fitzgerald has acquired a mythical status in American literary history, and his masterwork *The Great Gatsby* is considered by many to be the ‘great American novel’. 
**Richard Flanagan, *First Person* (Penguin)**

A young and penniless writer, Kif Kehlmann, is rung in the middle of the night by the notorious con man and corporate criminal, Siegfried Heidl. About to go to trial for defrauding the banks of $700 million, Heidl proposes a deal: $10,000 for Kehlmann to ghostwrite his memoir in six weeks.

Kehlmann accepts but begins to fear that he is being corrupted by Heidl. As the deadline draws closer, he becomes ever more unsure if he is ghostwriting a memoir, or if Heidl is rewriting him—his life, his future.

By Richard Flanagan, winner of the 2014 Man Booker Prize.

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**Robert Harris, *Fatherland* (Penguin)**

What if Hitler had won the war?

It is April 1964 and one week before Hitler's 75th birthday. Xavier March, a detective of the Kriminalpolizei, is called out to investigate the discovery of a dead body in a lake near Berlin's most prestigious suburb.

As March discovers the identity of the body, he uncovers signs of a conspiracy that could go to the very top of the German Reich. And, with the Gestapo just one step behind, March, together with an American journalist, is caught up in a race to discover and reveal the truth - a truth that has already killed, a truth that could topple governments, a truth that will change history.

'The highest form of thriller . . . non-stop excitement'
*The Times*
Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World* (Vintage)

Far in the future, the World Controllers have created the ideal society. Through clever use of genetic engineering, brainwashing and recreational sex and drugs all its members are happy consumers. Bernard Marx seems alone harbouring an ill-defined longing to break free.

“The best science fiction book ever, definitely the most prescient... Looking at our present trajectory we are on the way to Brave New World” Yuval Noah Harari, author of *Sapiens* and *Homo Deus*

“A masterpiece of speculation... As vibrant, fresh, and somehow shocking as it was when I first read it” Margaret Atwood

Shirley Jackson, *Dark Tales* (Penguin)

Step into the unsettling world of Shirley Jackson with a collection of her finest, darkest short stories, revealing the queen of American gothic at her mesmerising best.

There's something nasty in suburbia. In these deliciously dark tales, the daily commute turns into a nightmarish game of hide and seek, the loving wife hides homicidal thoughts and the concerned citizen might just be an infamous serial killer. In the haunting world of Shirley Jackson, nothing is as it seems and nowhere is safe, from the city streets to the country manor, and from the small-town apartment to the dark, dark woods...
Alan Johnson, *The Long and Winding Road* (Penguin)

From the condemned slums of Southam Street in West London to the corridors of power in Westminster, Alan Johnson’s multi-award-winning autobiography charts an extraordinary journey, almost unimaginable in today’s Britain. This third volume tells of Alan’s early political skirmishes as a trade union leader, where his negotiating skills and charismatic style soon came to the notice of Tony Blair and other senior members of the Labour Party.

In *The Long and Winding Road*, Alan’s characteristic honesty and authenticity shine through every word. His book takes you into a world which is at once familiar and strange: this is politics as you’ve never seen it before…

Susan Lewis, *Hiding in Plain Sight* (Penguin)

Ex-detective Andee has swapped freelance investigation and a broken marriage, for two months in Provence, renovating a beautiful villa with the new man in her life. Pottering around a small picturesque town on an early summer’s day, she is at peace.

But her world is about to be shattered.

Almost thirty years ago, fourteen year old Penny had disappeared from her family’s life, never to be heard from again. It is the missing child case that has haunted Andee her whole life; And now Penny - Andee’s sister - is back.
Rachel Lichtenstein, *Estuary* (Penguin)

A hauntingly beautiful social history of the Thames Estuary, from the author of *On Brick Lane*.

Out at the eastern edge of England, between land and ocean, you will find beautiful, haunted salt marshes, coastal shallows and wide-open skies: the Thames Estuary. The estuary is an ancient gateway to England, a passage for numberless travellers in and out of London. And for generations, the people of Kent and Essex have lived and worked on the Estuary, learning its waters, losing loved ones to its deeps. Their heritage is a proud but never an easy one. In the face of a world changing around them, they endure.


William Watt wants answers about his family’s murder. Peter Manuel has them. But Peter Manuel is a liar.

Based on true events, The Long Drop is an extraordinarily unsettling, evocative and compelling novel from a writer at the height of her powers.

‘The Long Drop is not just a success and a thrilling read in its own right, but a game-changer for the genre’ Scotland on Sunday
Liane Moriarty, *Three Wishes* (Penguin)

Some things can't be undone... One fateful night three women reveal secrets that will change things forever. From the bestselling author of the Golden Globe Award Winning HBO series *Big Little Lies*.

Are the bonds of sisterhood strong enough to withstand some real home truths?

'Funny and dramatic, with vibrant characters, it’s a delight' *Sunday Mirror*

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Gillian Tindall, *The Tunnel Through Time* (Penguin)

Crossrail, the ‘Elizabeth’ line, is simply the latest way of traversing a very old east–west route through what was once countryside to the city and out again. Visiting Stepney, Liverpool Street, Tottenham Court Road and Oxford Street, Gillian Tindall traces the course of many of these historical journeys across time as well as space.

*The Tunnel Through Time* uncovers the lives of those who walked where many of our streets still run. These people spoke the names of ancient farms, manors and slums that now belong to our squares and tube stations. They endured the cycle of the seasons as we do; they ate, drank, worked and laughed in what are essentially the same spaces we occupy today.
Beth Underdown, *The Witchfinder’s Sister* (Penguin)

When Alice Hopkins’ husband dies in a tragic accident, she returns to the small Essex town of Manningtree, where her brother Matthew still lives.

But home is no longer a place of safety. Matthew has changed, and there are rumours spreading through the town: whispers of witchcraft, and of a great book, in which he is gathering women’s names.

To what lengths will Matthew's obsession drive him?

‘Vivid and terrifying’ Paula Hawkins, author of *The Girl on the Train*

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Kurt Vonnegut, *Slaughterhouse 5* (Vintage Classics)

Prisoner of war, optometrist, time-traveller - these are the life roles of Billy Pilgrim, hero of this miraculously moving, bitter and funny story of innocence faced with apocalypse.

*Slaughterhouse 5* is one of the world's great anti-war books. Centring on the infamous fire-bombing of Dresden in the Second World War, Billy Pilgrim’s odyssey through time reflects the journey of our own fractured lives as we search for meaning in what we are afraid to know.

Selected by the Modern Library as one of the 100 best novels of all time.
Ruth Ware, *In a Dark Dark Wood* (Vintage)

‘This year’s hottest crime novel’ *Independent*

Nora hasn’t seen Clare for ten years. Not since the day Nora walked out of her old life and never looked back.

Until, out of the blue, an invitation to Clare’s hen party arrives. A weekend in a remote cottage - the perfect opportunity for Nora to reconnect with her best friend, to put the past behind her.

But something goes wrong. Very wrong. And as secrets and lies unravel, out in the dark, dark wood the past will finally catch up with Nora.

‘Genuinely chilling and totally compulsive’ *Sunday Mirror*

Howard Jacobson, *Shylock Is My Name* (Vintage)

Man Booker Prize-winner Howard Jacobson brings his singular brilliance to this modern re-imagining of one of Shakespeare’s most unforgettable characters: Shylock

Winter, a cemetery, Shylock. In this provocative and profound interpretation of “The Merchant of Venice,” Shylock is juxtaposed against his present-day counterpart in the character of art dealer and conflicted father Simon Strulovitch. With characteristic irony, Jacobson presents Shylock as a man of incisive wit and passion, concerned still with questions of identity, parenthood, anti-Semitism and revenge.
Quick List of all suggested titles

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Harriette Arnow The Dollmaker (Vintage Classics)
Truman Capote In Cold Blood (Penguin)
Susannah Catalan Brain on Fire (Penguin)
Arthur Conan Doyle The Hound of the Baskervilles (Penguin)
Roddy Doyle Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha (Vintage Classics)
Jane Fallon Faking Friends (Penguin)
F Scott Fitzgerald The Great Gatsby (Penguin)
Richard Flanagan First Person (Penguin)
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