

What's Hot in the BDS

The following books have featured in the 'What's Hot' part of the website in the previous two years.

FICTION

As the Earth Turns Silver (by Alison Wong)

NZ Interest

"Interesting discussion. All felt sad that the Chinese had such a tough time in New Zealand in the early days." *Napier 016*

"We all enjoyed the book and could definitely appreciate the poetic influence." *Christchurch 001*

"Three people had read it before and all said the re-reading was particularly interesting. Without the anticipation of plot they were able to drink in the language and the evocative yet sparse descriptions. We appreciated the research and the picture of New Zealand in those years – though so difficult - still a picture of our history." *Auckland 230*

Ask the Posts of the House (by Witi Ihimaera)

NZ interest – Short stories

"Readers enjoyed the variety in his writing style for each of the short stories: suspense, mythology, narrative voice... We recommend this as a must for any book club and to celebrate a very clever New Zealand writer." *Nelson 020*

We all enjoyed this book. Some found his writing lyrical and beautiful; others loved the variety and reality of each of the stories. ..We were impressed by the range and depth of Ihimaera's knowledge, understanding and ability." *Pukekohe 001*

"We all enjoyed the way Witi writes – you feel like you know the characters and can picture them." *Ngongotaha 002*

Atonement (by Ian McEwan)

"Interesting insights into the role of the writer throughout the book." *Hikurangi 001*

"We had an enthusiastic discussion about the power of the imagination, growing up, the British class system and living with guilt." *Fernside 001*

"Much animated discussed over the plot, the way the book was put together and what the actual outcome was....The best read of the year!" *Nelson 019*

The whole undertone of the book that things did not work out perfectly or as you would normally expect was a refreshing change." *Christchurch 178*

Behind the Scenes at the Museum (by Kate Atkinson)

"...a really interesting family saga. The discontinuous narrative and unusual use of footnotes added interest and complexity. The mix of poignant and comic incidents and portrayal of vivid and flawed characters added to the richness of the tapestry and provoked a wide-ranging and lovely discussion." *Wellington 036*

"We all found it enormously multi-layered...we want to read it again." *Westport 001*

"The humour counter-balanced the sadness and ordinariness of life ... A spirited discussion about this book." *Carterton 001*

The Book Thief (by Markus Zusak)

"Everybody absolutely loved it. This is the best book we have read for a long time!" *Alexandra 004*

"All members were high in praise of all aspects of the book. *Whakatane 005*

"Absolutely fabulous book, strongly recommend to all ages. The role of 'death' as the narrator gave it a unique slant. *Wanganui 008*

"We all thoroughly enjoyed this book and would whole heartedly recommend it to other groups. We especially enjoyed the fresh visual imagery and the multi-dimensional characters." *Auckland 105*

Cannery Road (by John Steinbeck)

Add variety to your reading with an American classic that's been well received.

"Loved this book, beautifully written with lively characters. More like a series of short stories but fun." *Gisborne 010*

"We all found it friendly and very amusing in spite of being set in the Great Depression...anecdotes very real to life." *Christchurch 010*

"Enjoyed Steinbeck's non-judgemental tone and wonderfully descriptive writing." *Auckland 088*

The Captive Wife (by Fiona Kidman)

NZ Interest

"All agreed it made a clever portrayal of life between 1820 and 1840, a period we know little about and we all learnt about an NZ female pioneer." *Wellington 123*

"A robust discussion took place - especially as to the morality of historical novels developing a story with accurate facts. The majority of the group felt Fiona Kidman had created an extremely readable and plausible story for the facts that were known." *Christchurch 071*

"The insight into the 'Harriet Affair' made fascinating reading as did the account of life in the early convict settlement of Sydney and in the NZ whaling stations of Te Waiti and Kakapo Bay, not to mention the account of these whalers and the notorious, and treacherous, Te Rauparaha." *Katikati 001*

"Everyone enjoyed it and admired Fiona Kidman's great storytelling ability and her researching of the subject." *Hamilton 034*

Crossing to Safety (by Wallace Stegner)

"Unanimously enjoyed this book. Unusual for a man to be writing about friendship in this way." *Auckland 230*

"We all loved the book...we had heaps to discuss and lots of lovely phrases to share." *Wellington 134*

"...the book is a deeply satisfying, thought-provoking work." *Napier 016*

"What a lovely story! We talked and talked about it!" *Palmerston Nth 013*

"This book portrayed very well how different types of marriages can work. Enjoyed the author's portrayal of nature [too]." *Christchurch 009*

Crow Lake (by Mary Lawson)

If you like this author's work, don't miss out on 'The Other Side of the Bridge'.

"All agreed a beautifully written story told mostly through the eyes of a sensitive child. A tale of family love and loyalty. A simple but complex book. Would make a great Canadian film." *Otorohanga 003*

"Many in the group were surprised that this was the author's first novel as we felt it was cleverly written. Easy to read but still had plenty of substance." *Napier 011*

"The characters were totally believable. The vague menace/mystery brought in every now and again was clever and kept one wanting to read more. ..Pond life interesting." *Upper Hutt 002*

"...The writing, the story, the cast of characters, even minor ones were deftly drawn. We came out of the book with a sense of place and community and time scale – all very real." *Te Puke 005*

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time (by Mark Haddon)

"A much anticipated book which lived up to what everyone expected." *Wanganui 008*

"It's funny, touching and shows a different perspective on what is 'normal'." *Matamata 002*

"Really interesting book [that] gave us a great insight into the mind of a special-need boy and family life. Whole group enjoyed it!" *Auckland 157*

"Clever author to write so insightfully about Aspergers without having the syndrome himself." *Ashburton 013*

"Appreciation of Mark Haddon's fantastic ability to empathise with Christopher and his parents. Great read." *Christchurch 203*

"We enjoyed the humour and it was certainly a very different read! But very entertaining." *Mt Maunganui 006*

Davita's Harp (by Chaim Potok)

"We had an excellent discussion about the Jewish race and different groups from conservative to liberal. Most of the group found the book fascinating and informative of its historical setting." *Tairua 001*

"Very much enjoyed...beautifully paced and a loving portrayal of a psychological crisis in a young girl's life." *Hamilton 019*

"Everybody loved this book...We had the best, most informative and animated meeting that I can remember." *Taupo 006*

Disgrace (by JM Coetzee)

"A great book for discussion regardless of whether you liked the subject matter or not. It's a book once started has to be finished." *Mt Maunganui 001*

"Very well liked from literary and South African points of view, also the universal themes of identity and displacement. Read by all members of the group - consider it a highlight of recent selections – would recommend to other groups." *Wellington 024*

"Lots of issues and so much in a very short book. We could see why it won the Booker Prize. Good discussion – lively." *Parnassus 001*

"This book created so much discussion! ...Issues of white/coloured/black attitudes and actions, political changes and their impact. Very thought provoking." *Whakatane 009*

Edwin & Matilda (by Laurence Fearnley)

NZ Interest

"Lively discussion. We thought the book was well crafted. It showed us the reality of the uniqueness of every relationship." *Wellington 130*

"Most members felt the writing was beautiful and easy to cope with. Interesting plot-demonstrates how a deep need to be nurtured can bring people together and develop into an emotional attachment." *Katikati 002*

"A great discussion, especially because a number of us are South Islanders and know the area well. Very nostalgic." *Mangawhai 002*

Family Matters (by Rohinton Mistry)

"Lively discussion about cultural differences, also the universal qualities of the book and the nature of illness, caring for the elderly and what that could demand." *Whitby 003*

"It gave a great insight into Indian culture and you empathise with all the characters and their problems. So many themes covered and it was beautifully written." *New Plymouth 005*

"Multi-storied tale: old age, racism, good versus evil, religion. Filled with humour, compassion and an eye for detail." *Masterton 004*

"Brilliant/wonderful – loved by everyone. On a par with *A Fine Balance*. Not as tragic." *Christchurch 145*

Family Tree (by Carole Cadwalladr)

"A first – all our group enjoyed this book and had many of our own family 'stories' to tell." *Nelson 021*"

"Most interesting as regards nature/ nurture and family dynamics." *New Plymouth 005*"

It caused lots of discussion particularly about family resemblances, and would we want to know if in the future we were to have something like Alzheimers or Huntington's." *Ashburton 009*

"Everyone enjoyed this book! Found it sad and funny. Enjoyed the references to 70s and 80s TV programmes ie, *Dallas*, and the way all the threads of the story were woven together." *Te Puke 005*

Girl with a Pearl Earring (by Tracy Chevalier)

"Wide ranging discussion from the lifestyle endured in the 1800s, to the painter. All liked the book; we even had the DVD [movie] and books from library on works by the painter [Vermeer] in the book." *Palmerston North 029*

"A good light read and insight into the drudgery of a maid's life – yeah for washing machines!" *Christchurch 031*

"This book was a great and popular choice – beautifully written and sensitive and fitted well with the history of the time and social scene in Europe then." *Auckland 071*

"Her [the author's] writing style brought the characters to life...easy to imagine life in Holland in the 17th century." *Wellington 039*

The Guernsey Literary & Potato Peel Pie Society (by Mary Ann Shaffer)

"Good discussion on the use of letters to tell the story." *Napier 005*

"We would all highly recommend this book for its humour and liveliness, presentation in the letter format and balance of light-heartedness and seriousness." *Taupo 005*

"We loved the style of writing and the day-to-day occurrence of the reality of war. Attention to details in terms of the impact of war on communities and individuals." *Dunedin 067*

"Universally liked. Wonderful characterisation. Clever and entertaining style. A good book to buy and have on your shelf." *Mangaweka 001*

Half of a Yellow Sun (by Chimamandi Ngozi Adichie)

From the author of 'Purple Hibiscus'.

"Adichie has brought to life the short, tragic and searing history of Biafra as she takes us into the lives of her characters with non-judgemental clear-sighted compassion." *Auckland 055*

"For several of us this was the best book of the year. We found the characterisation wonderful and the ability of the author to combine the personal and the political extremely good." *Owaka 001*

"A revealing story about civil war politics which upsets one's complacency but illustrates how we can find out about how people behave by reading a good novel." *Taupo 004*

The Help (by Kathryn Stockett)

“The characters were so believable and so sympathetically drawn. The pace was just right, all individual stories interwoven beautifully – a great read. We kept talking about the book even after our meeting.” *Auckland 088*

“Such an enjoyable un-put-down-able book.” *Auckland 164*

“Wow! What a book. We loved (and hated) the characters and the way they were portrayed so well. This is a book that feels as if it should have been written 100 years ago and it shocked us all to that this was a story of our life-times.” *Mangawhai 002*

Homestead (Rosina Lippi)

“A really lovely little book, beautifully wrought, cleverly constructed. It was a pleasure to immerse ourselves in the lives of the dwellers of this remote valley in Austria; an experience to be savoured.” *Coromandel 002*

“This book led to very animated discussion with most members admiring the skilled use of language and intertwined story lines.” *Havelock North 011*

“Some of us read it twice and still found it rewarding to dip into and read a chapter. [Brought] back childhood memories of no electricity or telephone, no car and milking the cow.” *Wairoa 001*

How to Stop a Heart from Beating (by Jackie Ballantyne)

NZ Interest

“What a delightful story. Very readable. Many commented on the freedom to roam that we had at that age unlike today's children.” *Masterton 007*

“We all loved this book - from start to finish it was beautifully written, gripping, tender, surprising and a delight.” *Doubtless Bay 001*

Industry of Souls (by Martin Booth)

“Superb characterisation. Exquisitely written. Liberally sprinkled with startling, original metaphor...Martin Booth, surprisingly, managed to make his story both harrowing and uplifting.” *Katikati 001*

“Some lovely original writing and interesting material about Russia's political prisoners.” *Auckland 020*

“The imagery of the village, forests, animals etc. were all discussed at length. The juxtaposition of the village, the gulag, the comradeship and friendship, all led to meaningful discussion. For many members it was the best book to date.” *Wanganui 008*

“Without exception, our group found this book a quality read. Beautifully written, it touched on many social and psychological issues in a thought provoking and eloquent manner.” *Te Anau 001*

Let me Sing You Gentle Songs (by Linda Olssen)

NZ Interest

"Amazingly written from the heart for a first novel. Very sensitive, well-constructed, tender, [a] quiet flowing." *Papamoa 001*

"Loved the way the relationship story worked. Both tragic and positive. Very visual writing, you could imagine the settings." *Otorohanga 001*

"Liked the relationship between the two (damaged) main characters and the way their friendship changed both their lives for the better." *Auckland 174*

Lottery (by Patricia Wood)

"A very full discussion...Issues of 'uncomfortable truths' very thought provoking." *Ashburton 003*

"We all loved this book for the story, the good characterisation as well as the humour and above all the 'cleverness' of Perry and the innate wisdom of Gram." *Tauranga 023*

"We were impressed with the author's insight into the thinking and life of someone intellectually slow as was the main character Perry." *Palmerston Nth 006*

"Great read. Delightful. Good to have a happy ending." *Auckland 056*

"It sparked an excellent discussion. This book certainly makes one look at disability and the important things in life in a whole new light." *Palmerston Nth 001*

The Madonnas of Leningrad (by Debra Dean)

"We all enjoyed this book and the discussion was about Russia, the Siege [of Leningrad], its history. One of our members was in St Petersburg last month and brought along photos of the Winter Palace and the Hermitage, plus books. We all want to go there!" *Queenstown 005*

"Had a long and good discussion on this book and linked it with various other books and films we'd seen/read. Wonderfully descriptive (and occasionally surreal) also sad..." *Lower Hutt 004*

Mister Pip (by Lloyd Jones)

NZ Interest

Recipient in 2007 of the Commonwealth Writer's Prize, the Montana Book Award for Fiction and shortlisted for the Man Booker.

"It generated much discussion on the links with Dicken's '*Great Expectations*'. Comments included: 'learned a lot about Papua New Guinea and customs', 'cruel and harrowing in parts', 'a lot to this book and much to enjoy'. Most were keen to seek out author's [other] books." *Auckland 058*

"It provoked a strong discussion with in-depth remarks about a wide range of subjects. Mr Watts a standout book character... Certainly deserved to be on the Booker list." *Akaroa 002*

"A Pacific book which made it particularly relevant to the group." *Taupo 004*

"Really enjoyed by most. A work of clever understatement. A window into a simpler way of life." *Auckland 134*

My Year of Meats (by Ruth Ozeki)

"Probably one of our most popular books. Mixture of fact/fiction, different genres, humour and stimulated a good discussion." *Nelson 015*

"Good discussion regarding meat processing, cattle raising etc." *Winton 002*

"Disturbing, unusual, horrible at times; it gave plenty of food for thought." *Hamilton 010*

"Thought there were many parallels to the advent of big scale dairy farming in our local area." *Hinds 001*

Namesake (by Jhumpa Lahiri)

"Group members found it a fascinating book giving an understanding of Indian culture and the difficulties of assimilating into a western situation." *Wanganui 004*

"All the members of our large group (12) loved this book. It rated 8.5 out of 10. We had a stunning discussion with lots of comments about names and their impact on lives. An excellent title for BDS to have in its catalogue." *Richmond 008*

"First book in the eight years our group have been together that everyone loved! Well written, sensitive, a good story." *Palmerston North 013*

Never Let Me Go (by Kazuo Ishiguro)

"We found this a fascinating and rather scary read....One of the best discussions we have had about a book. We all had strong feelings about it." *Wellington 045*

"Chilling, brilliantly written, too close for comfort. Prolonged interesting discussion." *Christchurch 043*

"A fantastic book for book discussion group...The subject matter may be disturbing but the possibilities are with us now and demand discussion." *Ashburton 012*

"Stimulated thought while reading it and lead to a more involved involved and spirited discussion than usual." *Auckland 174*

Old Filth (by Jane Gardam)

"We loved the book and talked a lot about the unfeeling way people dealt with children in past generations. Great writing style too. Most wanted to read it again when finished." *Takaka 001*

"Well crafted and very readable...Gardam explores an intriguing life with great wit and humour, pathos and nostalgia." *Katikati 001*

"We really enjoyed this book. It gave insight into the plight of the 'Raj orphans' and how the mothers of such children faced the dilemma of having to send their very young children away and how this affected these children in some way for their whole lives." *New Plymouth 005*

"A great read enjoyed by all but one. A lot of discussion [on] colonial children sent 'home' to England for schooling, emotional deprivation, stiff upper lip etc. Old Filth was a great character." *Mangawhai 002*

On Chesil Beach (by Ian McEwan)

“Had a good discussion for such a quick, easy read – lots of subtle, hidden messages and undertone.” *Auckland 157*

“We loved this. Such a brilliant author who doesn’t waste words but still paints a complete picture...He gives just enough to make you wonder.” *Methven 001*

“Another masterpiece from Ian McEwan. A tragic-comedy of the era. The writer takes the reader so convincingly into the inner world of these diverse characters. The beach will remain in [our] minds for a long time.” *Christchurch 064*

The Other Side of the Bridge (by Mary Lawson)

Canadian author of the popular Crow Lake

“This book was loved by everyone. Author married the two stories very cleverly. Members now keen to read her other book.” *Auckland 155*

“Beautifully told story. Quite heart-breaking – a quiet story.” *Christchurch 229*

“Showed great understanding of the family situations and interactions and how teenage boys think, feel and behave. The native American Indian influence on the writer and through her on the main character is evident throughout...” *Auckland 088*

“Perceptive, well told story of sibling rivalry and parental love.” *Morrinsville 001*

The Poisonwood Bible (by Barbara Kingsolver)

“Without exception we all felt this is a brilliant book in so many ways. Barbara Kingsolver has wonderful descriptive powers. Most of us had read it previously and still thought we could read it for a second and third time.” *Whitby 003*

“We all got a lot out of this book - something for everyone. A really ‘meaty’ read.” *Wairau 001*

“Several had read the book for the second time and picked up more on the political side of the Congo. Well structured book with its various complex characters.” *Wellington 117*

The Reader (by Bernhard Schlink)

“One of the better books on postwar Germany we have read. It was a simple but deep book which covered many issues sensitively and succinctly.” *Palmerston Nth 011*

“Book enjoyed and appreciated. Provoked much interesting discussion around collective guilt.” *Auckland 015*

“The whole group rated this book very highly. It was easy to read but raised all sorts of issues which we discussed vigorously.” *Christchurch 155*

“A very powerful book. All members were greatly moved by it. An excellent book for discussion.” *Pahiatua 001*

The Reluctant Fundamentalist (by Mohsin Hamid)

“The book provoked an excellent discussion with a great deal of speculation about the ending.” *Wellington 039*

“All agreed it was extremely well written and raised important issues regarding fear of the unknown in other cultures.” *Hamilton 034*

“Easy book to read. Discussion about the dangers of overreacting to stereotypes, like ‘fundamentalist’, came up with a wide range of examples. *Wanganui 008*

“A great book. Lots of very lively discussion. Different readers noticed different things and imagined different endings.” *Dunedin 042*

Restless (by William Boyd)

“Unanimous applause for a great story and brilliant writing.” *Wellington 117*

“Those who liked the genre [historical thriller] thoroughly enjoyed it. Well written, informative eg. the strength of the British people trying to get the USA into the war... A real page turner!” *Christchurch 058*

“The discussion was animated and took many different directions. Of particular interest was the history of spying in America, an era we were unaware of.” *Geraldine 002*

“A great read ... All wanting to read more William Boyd books.” *Queenstown 005*

The Road Home (by Rose Tremain)

NZ Interest

“Thought it an excellent picture of those who travel to foreign countries for work and remuneration.” *Whakatane 005*

“Rose Tremain is a wonderful storyteller.” *Nelson 014*

“Agreed Rose Tremain’s characters feel real and we found ourselves becoming emotionally involved with Lev. We all thought the ending was as it should be, quite satisfactory.” *Queenstown 005*

“We all appreciated the book. Recalled immigrants who have survived and remained in their host country, especially those who came and stayed in NZ.” *Te Anau 001*

Rules for Old Men Waiting (by Peter Pouncey)

“A very worthwhile read - something almost noble about it, a sense of tragedy and passion, waste and glory but also intensely human.” *Hamilton 019*

“...beautifully written, fascinating vignettes of odd characters – full of pathos, visual evocations. A must-read.” *Doubtless Bay 001*

“A great discussion. The book was described as a work of art, the best book read in a long time.” *Wellington 104*

A Short History of Tractors in Ukranian (by Marina Lewycka)

"This book was enjoyed immensely by all the members of our group. The humour on the surface was skilfully blended with the social issues that were presented. The sequential story line was also appreciated, and the 'easy' style made the book hard to put down, and very easy to pick up. The author's descriptive passages were like word pictures. A book to own!" *Palmerston North 002*

"Enjoyed by all. Plenty of discussion re old age and secret pasts. *Napier 007*

"Not very many times that everyone enjoys a book but this was one of them. We didn't think it was as humorous as portrayed, although many funny parts – mainly quirks of language. *Hamilton 003*

"We had all been looking forward so much to reading this book and all but two of us were disappointed! We'd expected it to be a comedy but most felt it was a black comedy. We found the actual history of tractors to be very interesting. We discussed immigration, cross country/cultural marriages and family conflicts." *Upper Hutt 001*

St Agnes' Stand (by Thomas Eidson)

"... generated heaps of discussion and continuing email discussion. Must be good!"
Wellington 079

"Very easy to read and had great moments of anticipation. In several parts my heart was pounding with anxiety about the characters." *Riversdale 001*

"First 'western' many had read. Excellent landscape setting and interesting personalities." *Coromandel 001*

"Enjoyed the style of writing – action and suspense. Strong imagery and impact on people." *Christchurch 143*

"...the discussion was lively... arrived at the conclusion it is a story of faith. We'd all like to read more of Thomas Eidson's work." *Dunedin 001*

Talking about O'Dwyer (by C.K.Stead)

"A terrific read, gripping, evocative and informative ... people were keen to read more C.K.Stead and the Battalion on Crete." *Gisborne 005*

"Our group enjoyed this book – it was of a high standard and well crafted." *Auckland 094*

"...the story was fascinating and the lovely descriptions of Auckland, Crete and Oxford evoked the cities/island superbly." *Dunedin 002*

"Stead created connections between the characters which were clever and realistic – never felt it was overstated. Subtle writing with some wonderful descriptive passages." *Wellington 024*

Talking Heads (by Alan Bennett)

“What a writer – deep but simple insight to human thought.” *Christchurch 078*

“As ever the writing was superb. He [the author] leaves nothing out unpicking his characters to the last stitch.” *Christchurch 145*

“A brilliant book. So clever and entertaining but so very sensitive and insightful ranging from humorous to some quite sad and pathetic.” *Wellington 041*

“What splendid dialogue!” *Havelock North 005*

Thirteenth Tale (by Diane Setterfield)

“A very strong thumbs up for this book. Wonderfully written, gripping. Engendered much discussion around twinship, mystery genre, gothic precursors etc” *Christchurch 203*

“What a marvellous gothic romp to read! Perfect for a wet Sunday to read straight through.” *Auckland 016*

“We had a really interesting discussion as the book is fairly complex with lots of twist and turns to the story.” *Nelson 041*

A Thousand Splendid Suns (by Khaled Hosseini)

“Almost all of our group found this book an easy read. Although this is a grim story, the author’s excellent writing gave us an insight into what life is like for women in Afghanistan where men hold the power and women are considered worthless. Very good discussion.” *Christchurch 071*

“Couldn’t put it down. Gripping. Introduction to a life we have no inkling about. Interesting but disheartening.” *Wellington 036*

What a marvellous book. We all found it sad but it was an amazing story! We loved Mariam. Recommended highly. [Christchurch 072]

“All members of the group enjoyed the book and felt they had gained a greater understanding of the background to political events in Afghanistan. Lively discussion.” *Lower Hutt 006*

“Everyone was moved by this sad story. We can’t believe this is happening in our lifetime.” *Christchurch 229*

To Kill a Mockingbird (by Harper Lee)

“We loved this - a classic that many of us had read and still generated lots of discussion.” *Oamaru 004*

“Many had read it before and consider it a favourite. We loved many of the minor characters, their quirks and idiosyncrasies. All considered Atticus Finch to be a most wonderful father.” *Pukekohe 001*

“Enjoyed the style and narration from Scout; brought an innocence to a sad story. And after all these years is still as relevant and valid.” *Oamaru 001*

“A deeply moving, well researched, direct and unpretentious account of the deleterious effects of the two world wars on one family.” *Katikati 001*

“A fascinating book with so many threads to discuss.” *Putaruru 001*

“Enjoyed the great discussion about the war stories our fathers ‘never told us’. Agreed that we needed to know this history and admired Patricia Grace’s wonderful portrayal of a family.” *Invercargill 002*

“All found this book poignant, moving, and even for some cathartic.” *Palmerston North 006*

“We learnt quite a bit of Maori discrimination. Also the futility of war. A book of enlightenment.” *Pahiatua 001*

“We all thought this was a moving account of war-beautifully written about a proud moment in time for the Maori race.” *Wellington 074*

Underground Man (by Mike Jackson)

“Excellent discussion on dementia and admiration for a 37-year-old author treating it with such compassion.” *Turangi 001*

“The group found this a fascinating book. Several went to the internet and delved into the history of Welbeck Abbey and the 5th Duke [of Portland] ...very funny in parts...” *Wellington 069*

“Vivid descriptions, insightful observations, delightful read.” *Timaru 003*

“We could see it making a wonderful movie.” *Auckland 031*

Water for Elephants (by Sara Gruen)

“We all loved this book – great insight into circus life in the 1930s, and times of depression.” *Rotorua 003*

“Highly recommended ... Really enjoyed the depth of research that Sara did and putting in real pictures in a fictional book. Lots of surprises and twists that kept us engaged.” *Te Awa 003*

“We all thoroughly enjoyed it – appealed to those who prefer fiction and the non-fiction readers alike.” *Martin 003*

“Loved the book despite the difficult subject: cruel treatment of animals and people.” *Mapua 001*

“Most commented they couldn’t put it [the book] down. Rich and full of vibrant characters, many of whom were on the fringe of society.” *Dunedin 012*

We Need to Talk about Kevin (by Lionel Shriver)

“The topic was painful. The writing, however, was exquisite. We found it extraordinary that she [the author] had never had a child but got right inside the heads of a mother and child. A rewarding read.” *Auckland 143*

“Disturbing and sad but compelling reading. Who to believe, mother or son?” *Christchurch 218*

“Everyone enjoyed the book. Great discussion about childrearing and supportive husbands!” *Winton 002*

“...we concluded a ‘good’ book is one that stays in the mind after reading and causes us to continue pondering the questions that it raises. Therefore this one qualifies!” *Whitby 002*

NON-FICTION

Child of Tibet (by Soname Yangchien with Vicki MacKenzie)

“Good discussion... It encouraged more research into Tibet and Soname – one [member] listened to her sweet singing on the internet.” *Ngongotaha 001*

“Was a great read learning about a country and its culture we know so little about.” *Aria 001*

“The information on Buddhism was interesting to us all. She [Soname] had huge strength and was unbelievably lucky. One member will buy the book for her teenage daughter.” *Auckland 208*

The Color of Water (by James McBride)

“Agreement was unanimous that this was a great read. Ruth’s account of her surprising, hard, sometimes harrowing, sometimes hilarious and totally incredible life kept us spellbound.” *Katikati 001*

“...a story of a determined woman despite barriers. We all admired her.” *Cambridge 002*

“We had a lively discussion on Judaism and the long-lasting influence on Ruth in spite of her conversion to Christianity.” *Hamilton 026*

“She was such a survivor. Two black husbands, twelve children and no monetary help, but determined to educate her family which she did with outstanding success.” *Christchurch 048*

Daughter of Persia (by Sattareh Farmaian)

"We had an endless discussion about it." *Wairoa 001*

"...so much to talk about – many wives, Persia's history, anarchy, current state of Iran. Really good." *Dunedin 006*

".. a good understanding/insight into life in a Muslim country. Recommended." *Auckland 183*

"Once caught by the book it was difficult to put down – an amazing life, book and woman." *Te Puke 005*

The Diving Bell & the Butterfly (by Jean Dominique Bauby)

The author wrote the book while suffering from Locked-In Syndrome.

"All the group thought this a special book. The feat of writing it – composing, editing and refining all in the mind - was amazing. The author's spirit, his irony and wry humour shone through." *Christchurch 058*

"A staggering accomplishment. Group unanimous in praise not only of the will and courage of the author but his 'grace under pressure'. Beautiful work stylistically as well." *Palmerston Nth 008*

His voice was so strong you forget he had produced it [the book] by winking one eye." *Whangarei 012*

Down Under (by Bill Bryson)

"Content good and author has a passion and interest in discovery of other things and worlds." *Auckland 071*

"Discussion focused on the humorous side and the off-beat historical information which make his books interesting." *Drummond 001*

"Historical, geographical, even geological facts presented in easily understood manner. Humorous and wonderful publicity for parts of Australia." *Coromandel 001*

"Enough history and descriptive passages to 'take us there', but also entertaining. A 'laugh-out-loud book in places.'" *Hamilton 019*

"We all had a good chuckle at Bill Bryson's view of Australia. Those who had been to places he described said he was wickedly accurate." *Christchurch 024*

Glass Castle (by Jeanette Walls)

"This book engendered a wonderful discussion...great that Jeanette allowed herself to be so honest and tell us how it really happened..." *Wellington 074*

"We thought NZ would be too small for such a family to abscond so often - they would not hide so easily here." *Te Kuiti 002*

Hanoi Adieu (by Mandaley Perkins)

A bittersweet memoir of French Indonesia recommended for groups who enjoy historical background.

"Everyone felt they had learned more about Vietnam's history than they already knew and was quite a revelation." *Nelson 031*

"The book sent us off to study atlas and internet and some plan to read more about this area." *Blenheim 003*

Hidden Lives (by Margaret Forster)

"This book generated a great discussion about our own grandmothers and mothers – we know a lot more about each other!" *Waikanae 002*

"Very interesting exploration of the mother/daughter relationships...Fascinating account of the change in social pressures over the three generations." *Christchurch 140*

"The discussion we had after reading *Hidden Lives* was amazing. We nearly all had a family story that could be written about - [such as] adoption and lost father, or aunt/uncle who had 'vanished' with death records providing the key. Thanks to Margaret Forster..." *Palmerston North 006*

"Discussion fantastic. Secrets – we all have them, not always prepared to disclose them (not surprisingly. What a change to the lot of women in 100 years." *Taupo 004*

House by the Dvina (by Eugenie Fraser)

"All enjoyed the book very much for its refresher on Russian history and detailed account of life in revolutionary and pre-revolutionary Russia." *Waikanae 004*

"One person's remarkable account of her childhood, a privileged one in pre-Revolution Russia, written at the age of 79. Vivid accounts of family gatherings and Archangel in all its seasons." *Upper Hutt 002*

"It achieved atmosphere with nostalgia and an almost fairytale quality. The group remarked on the love and warmth of the large Russian families and contrasted with the Scottish side." *Wellington 117*

House of Stone (By Christina Lamb)

"Most of the group felt privileged to have had the chance to read this book and had high praise indeed for the bravery and skill of Christina Lamb...We had an interesting discussion about the difficulties of making democracy work in a tribal country." *Culverden 001*

"One of the few times we have been unanimous in our approval of the book. Well written, researched and very interesting from an historical point of view. A very sad situation." *Levin 001*

"Well liked. A really well told 'human' story..." *Christchurch 229*

I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings (by Maya Angelou)

How about trying an American classic? This is the first of a six-volume autobiographical series.

“The book created a lot of discussion on race relations here as well America. Well written ... most of us would like to read the sequels.” *Mt Maunganui 001*

“The group found the book highly readable and moving. They liked the depiction of females – the strong grandmother especially - and Maya Angelou’s honesty and sense of responsibility” *Hamilton 029*

“Stunning book. Rich discussion of the Negro situation, lifestyle, goals and the USA in the years before the Second World War.” *Christchurch 203*

In Siberia (by Colin Thubron)

“We loved *In Siberia*. What a wonderful writer. Not a travel book but a personal experience.” *Invercargill 002*

“A wonderful account of a journey into a totally different world ... the people he meets are drawn beautifully and he gives an overwhelming sense of the beauty of the landscape.” *Governors Bay 001*

“Outstanding in its depth of understanding of history and more recent events in Russia. Compelling style delivers a sense of place.” *Palmerston Nth 008*

Life is So Good (by George Dawson)

“Good ‘feel good’ book. All enjoyed it. Good discussion on segregation and USA history.” *Palmerston North 019*

“A simple straight forward life – quite amazing.” *Kurow 001*

“Nice, gentle read that gave a bird’s-eye view into another era, country and such a different life... stimulated lots of discussion.” *Wellington 027*

“George Dawson won admiration for his equanimity.” *Queenstown 003*

Lilla’s Feast (by Frances Osborne)

“She [Lilla Eckford] was a memorable lady, very feisty and brave throughout her life. A very good and inspired read.” *Gisborne 002*

“We found the book fascinating...it gave interesting insights into the English class system, twin relationships, and Chinese history relating to English trade with China.” *Tauranga 018*

“Provoked a long and illuminating discussion on belonging, where home is, why one’s home is home and what changes that feeling.” *Dannevirke 001*

Nazi Officer's Wife (by Edith Hahn Beer)

"An amazing autobiography revealing another aspect of life during WW2. We all felt Edith was a remarkable woman and her story was told so frankly and personally that we all felt involved. Would thoroughly recommend it." *Wellington 041*

"An interesting picture of life as an undercover Jew in Germany-gave rise to much discussion as to what constituted a hero and what a survivor." *Putaruru 001*

"We were glad that her [Edith Hahn's] daughter had persuaded her to relate her story. A book that will stay in our hearts and memories." *Christchurch 095*

Never Have Your Dog Stuffed (by Alan Alda)

"We all felt we learnt a lot about the author as most of our prior knowledge was of his part in the M.A.S.H series." *Christchurch 010*

"A great insight into the theatrical life of Alan Alda. We all enjoyed the read." *Gisborne 002*

"Easily read memoir...We admired his frankness of his early life and respected what he did not reveal of the later years. Very good discussion." *Diamond Harbour 001*

An Ordinary Man (by Paul Rusesabagina)

An amazing story of an 'ordinary man' who was extraordinarily brave. Promoted a lot of discussion on the power of propaganda and the 'myth' of differences between one group of people in society and another." *Palmerston North 004*

A book that everyone could learn from...An eye-opener to the 'devil' within that can be awakened." *Tauranga 018*

"An horrific episode in recent history! We were all pleased to have read the book to increase our awareness of Rwanda in the 1970s." *Timaru 007*

A Scandalous Life (by Mary S. Lovell)

"...the book gave us a fascinating insight into the lives of the Bedouin tribes and the history of that time which tied in with our reading of William Dalrymple earlier in the year. Great discussion material." *Coromandel 002*

"Discussion went well, a lot of laughter over individual views about 'waywardness'." *Geraldine 002*

"Good discussion on social roles and the risk, and price, paid for stepping outside of these...We are all going to do one scandalous thing during the next month!" *Ngongotaha 002*

"Oh to live with money as no object! We found the telling of Jane Digby's life sympathetic and gentle...we learned a lot about the life and traditions of the desert..." *Coromandel 001*

Stasiland (by Anna Funder)

“A big discussion followed the group’s reading of this informative book. Everyone agreed with the reviews that it is highly readable and stylishly written.” *Nelson 007*

“Liked the ‘ordinary stories’ about people living in East Germany. Good discussion about the mentality of spying for very little money in return.” *Nelson 028*

“This book should be read so that the reign of the Stasi shall not be forgotten and swept under the carpet!” *Whitby 002*

“Everyone got something out of this book – fascinating look at life behind the iron curtain. Recommended reading.” *New Plymouth 012*

Station Life in New Zealand (by Lady Barker)

NZ Interest

“Everyone was surprised at how much they enjoyed this book – what an amazing woman and how well travelled.” *Te Kuiti 002*

“Descriptive writing that painted a picture of this time well...Insight into station life.” *Huntly 001*

“Admired her positive outlook on life’s obstacles in the colonies.” *Palmerston Nth 019*

A Woman Unknown: Voices from a Spanish Village (by Lucia Graves)

“A story which was quite fascinating in the history of Spain/Catalonia. Several group members could relate to the idea of ‘not quite belonging – born of one race/country brought up in another’”. *Pukekohe 001*

“A beautifully written book – a subject, Franco’s era – not very well known by our group. A wise mature woman looking back.” *Rotorua 002*

“We greatly enjoyed this historically rich, autobiographical account of changing Spain. The author’s cleverly constructed interweaving of stories from her own and others’ lives gave a vivid picture of many aspects of Spanish women’s lives over the 20th century and before.” *Coromandel 002*

“Encouraged members to read Robert Graves’ [the poet] works.” *Richmond 006*