

Popular Adult Fiction for 2021

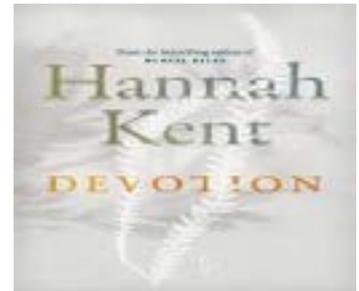
The Best Fiction Books of 2021!

Devotion

Author: Hannah Kent

Format: eBook, eAudiobook, Book

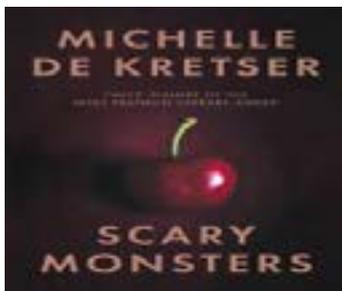
Prussia, 1836. Hanne Nussbaum is a child of nature - she would rather run wild in the forest than conform to the limitations of womanhood. In her village of Kay, Hanne is friendless and considered an oddity . . . until she meets Thea. Ocean, 1838. The Nussbaums are Old Lutherans, bound by God's law and at odds with their King's order for reform. Forced to flee religious persecution the families of Kay board a crowded, disease-riddled ship bound for the new colony of South Australia. In the face of brutal hardship, the beauty of whale song enters Hanne's heart, along with the miracle of her love for Thea. There is a bond that nothing can break. The whale passed. The music faded. South Australia, 1838. A new start in an old land. God, society and nature itself decree Hanne and Thea cannot be together. But within the impossible . . . is devotion.



Scary Monsters

Author: Michelle De Kretser

Format: Book



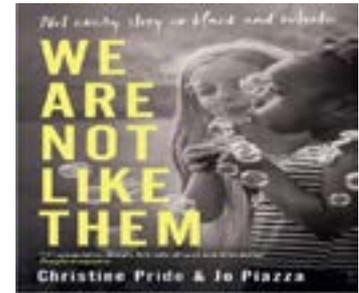
From the twice-winner of the Miles Franklin Award, *Scary Monsters* is an affecting, profound and darkly funny exploration into racism, misogyny, and ageism. Narrated by two migrants, *Scary Monsters* is a political novel like no other, one that makes us laugh and despair in equal measure. Each side explores with great depth and empathy the migrant experience in the Western world and the narrowness of a society that fears the other, whether that be migrants themselves, or the scary monsters of racism, ageism and misogyny. *Scary Monsters* warns of evils that inhabit and are perpetrated by individuals as well as the state. It does so in a format that is strange, running contrary to the usual way a book is presented. Lili is a young woman teaching in a high school in the south of France in the early 1980s. She makes friends, dances to Blondie, tries to imagine what her future will hold and is disturbed by a creepy neighbour. Lyle is a middle-aged man working for the right-wing government in near-future Melbourne. He dresses in filing cabinet colours in order to avoid attracting attention, worries about his unruly children and wayward mother, and fears that a cover-up he's engineered at work will lead to repatriation. Is there a horrifying link between the two narratives? Peopled by mesmerising characters, *Scary Monsters* is suspenseful, affecting, and witty by turn. It offers a profound meditation on racism, misogyny, and ageism: three monsters that plague the world.

We Are Not Like Them

Author: Jo Piazza

Format: eBook

Told from alternating perspectives, an evocative and riveting story about the lifelong bond between two women, one black and one white, whose friendship is indelibly altered by a tragic event—a powerful and poignant exploration of race in America today and its devastating impact on ordinary lives. Jen and Riley have been best friends since kindergarten. As adults, they remain as close as sisters, though their lives have taken different directions. Jen married young, and after years of trying, is finally pregnant. Riley pursued her childhood dream of becoming a television journalist and is poised to become one of the first black female anchors of the top news channel in their hometown of Philadelphia. But when tragedy strikes, the deep bond the two women share is severely tested. Six months pregnant, Jen is in free fall as her family's future and her friendship with Riley are thrown into uncertainty. Covering a career-making story, Riley wrestles with the implications of what this tragic incident means for her black community, her ambitions, and her relationship with her lifelong friend. Like Tayari Jones's *An American Marriage* and Jodi Picoult's *Small Great Things*, *We Are Not Like Them* considers complex questions of race and how they pervade and shape our most intimate spaces in a deeply divided world. But at its heart, it's a story of enduring friendship—a love that defies the odds even as it faces its most difficult challenges.



Mrs England

Author: Stacey Halls

Format: eBook



'Something's not right here.' I was aware of Mr Booth's eyes on me, and he seemed to hold his breath. 'What do you mean?' 'In the house. With the family.' West Yorkshire, 1904. When newly graduated nurse Ruby May takes a position looking after the children of Charles and Lilian England, a wealthy couple from a powerful dynasty of mill owners, she hopes it will be the fresh start she needs. But as she adapts to life at the isolated Hardcastle House, it becomes clear there's something not quite right about the beautiful, mysterious Mrs England. Distant and withdrawn, Lilian shows little interest in her children or charming husband, and is far from the 'angel of the house' Ruby was expecting. As the warm, vivacious Charles welcomes Ruby into the family, a series of strange events forces her to question everything she thought she knew. Ostracised by the servants and feeling increasingly uneasy, Ruby must face her demons in order to prevent history from repeating itself. After all, there's no such thing as the perfect family - and she should know. Simmering with slow-burning menace, *Mrs England* is a portrait of an Edwardian marriage, weaving an enthralling story of men and women, power and control, courage, truth and the very darkest deception. Set against the atmospheric West Yorkshire landscape, Stacey Halls' third novel proves her one of the most exciting and compelling new storytellers of our times.

Apples Never Fall

Author: Liane Moriarty

Format: eBook, eAudiobook, Book

From the outside, the Delaneys appear to be an enviably contented family. Even after all these years, former tennis coaches Joy and Stan are still winning tournaments, and now that they've sold the family business they have all the time in the world to learn how to 'relax'. Their four adult children are busy living their own lives, and while it could be argued they never quite achieved their destinies, no-one ever says that out loud. But now Joy Delaney has disappeared and her children are re-examining their parents' marriage and their family history with fresh, frightened eyes. Is her disappearance related to their mysterious house guest from last year? Or were things never as rosy as they seemed in the Delaney household?



Once There Were Wolves

Author: Charlotte McConaghy

Format: eBook



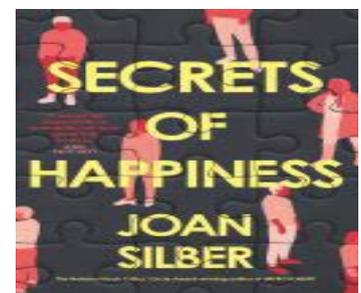
Inti Flynn arrives in Scotland with her twin sister, Aggie, to lead a team tasked with reintroducing fourteen grey wolves into the remote Highlands. She hopes to heal not only the dying landscape, but a broken Aggie, too. However, Inti is not the woman she once was, and may be in need of rewilding herself. Despite fierce opposition from the locals, Inti's wolves surprise everyone by thriving, and she begins to let her guard down, even opening up to the possibility of love. But when a local farmer is found dead, Inti knows where the town will lay blame. Unable to accept her wolves could be responsible, she makes a reckless decision to protect them, testing every instinct she has. But if her wolves didn't make the kill, then who did? And what will she do when the man she's been seeing becomes the main suspect? Propulsive and spellbinding, *Once There Were Wolves* is the unforgettable tale of a woman desperate to save the creatures she loves. Part thriller, part redemptive love story, Charlotte McConaghy's profoundly affecting novel will stay with you forever.

Secrets of Happiness

Author: Joan Silber

Format: Book

Ethan, a young lawyer in New York, learns that his father has long kept a second family - a Thai wife and two kids living in Queens. In the aftermath of this revelation, Ethan's mother spends a year travelling abroad, returning much changed, just as her now ex-husband falls ill. Across town, Ethan's half brothers are caught in their own complicated journeys: one brother's penchant for minor delinquency has escalated and the other must travel to Bangkok to bail him out, while the bargains their mother struck about love and money continue to shape all their lives. As Ethan finds himself caught in a love triangle of his own, the interwoven fates of these two households elegantly unfurl to touch many other figures, revealing secret currents of empathy and loyalty, the bounty of improvised families and the paradoxical ties that weave through life's rich contours. With a generous and humane spirit, *Secrets of Happiness* elucidates the ways people marshal the resources at hand in an effort to find joy.

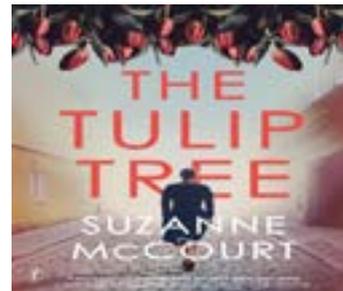


The Tulip Tree

Author: Suzanne McCourt

Format: eBook

Brothers Henryk and Adam Radecki's relationship is one of fraught love and jealousy. Henryk, unhappily married, becomes a rich and successful industrialist, while Adi, a devoted vet, finds and loses love. Their bond is tested throughout their lives, from the 1920s, against the background of Poland's tragic and tumultuous relationship with Russia, through war, revolution and invasion, until 1954 in the Snowy Mountains of Australia. Adi's wife and son are at the heart of this riveting tale, in which family secrets threaten to tear lives apart. Caught up in momentous events, each character reminds us of our power to survive extraordinary times, of the moral choices we make and the dramatic turns our lives can take. Beautifully written, full of the detail of everyday life, its joys and suffering, *The Tulip Tree* is engrossing historical fiction at its best, a profoundly moving story of love, sacrifice and loyalty.



O

Author: Steven Carroll

Format: Book



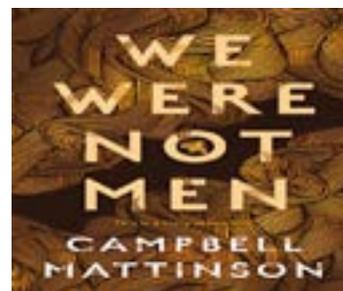
Occupied France, 1943. France's most shameful hour. In these dark times, Dominique starts an illicit affair with a distinguished publisher, a married man. He introduces her to the Resistance, and she comes to have a taste for the clandestine life - she has never felt more alive. Shortly after the war, to prove something to her lover, she writes an erotic novel about surrender, submission and shame. Never meant to be published, *Story of O* becomes a national scandal and success, the world's most famous erotic novel. But what is the story really about - Dominique, her lover, or the country and the wartime past it would rather forget? From one of our foremost writers, the acclaimed and multi-award-winning Steven Carroll, comes *O*, a reimagining of what might have been, the story of a novel that took on a life of its own and mirrored its times in a way the author never dreamt of.

We Were Not Men

Author: Campbell Mattinson

Format: eBook

We were sons, we were brothers. I didn't know how to be either.' This is a story about love. About the love that nine-year-old twins Jon and Eden Hardacre have for their mum, for the creek that they swim in, for each other - this is the love that they trust, that's clear and pure as sunlight, as honey, as water. But in the wake of a terrible accident, the boys have to grow up fast. They compete with each other to make the Olympic Games swimming squad, fall in love with the same girl, and begin to realise how complicated love can be and how it doesn't always show itself in the ways that we expect. Heart-hammeringly original, intense and deeply moving, *We Were Not Men* is a powerhouse of a novel about all the various faces that love shows us and how sometimes, distracted by life, ambition or attraction, we take it for granted until it's too late - or almost too late. An unforgettable novel that pulses with grief, revelation, hope and love.

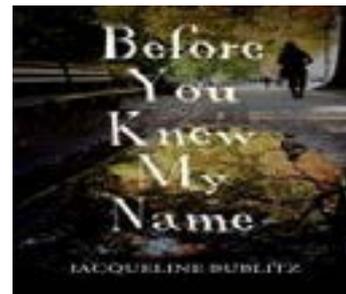


Before You Knew My Name

Author: Jacqueline Bublitz

Format: eBook, Book

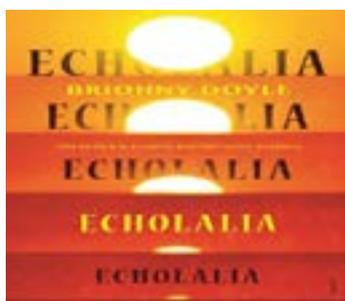
When she arrived in New York on her 18th birthday carrying nothing but \$600 cash and a stolen camera, Alice was looking for a fresh start. Now, just one month later, she is the city's latest Jane Doe, an unidentified murder victim. Ruby Jones is also trying to start over; she travelled halfway around the world only to find herself lonelier than ever. Until she finds Alice Lee's body by the Hudson River. From this first, devastating encounter, the two women form an unbreakable bond. Alice is sure that Ruby is the key to solving the mystery of her life - and death. And Ruby - struggling to forget what she saw that morning - finds herself unable to let Alice go. Not until she is given the ending she deserves.



Echolalia

Author: Briohny Doyle

Format: eBook



Before: Emma Cormac married into a perfect life but now she's barely coping. Inside a brand new, palatial home, her three young children need more than she can give. Clem, a wilful four year old, is intent on mimicking her grandmother; the formidable matriarch Pat Cormac. Arthur is almost three and still won't speak. At least baby Robbie is perfect. He's the future of the family. So why can't Emma hold him without wanting to scream? Beyond their gleaming windows, a lake vista is evaporating. The birds have mostly disappeared, too. All over Shorehaven, the Cormac family buys up land to develop into cheap housing for people they openly scorn. After: The summers have grown even fiercer and the Cormac name doesn't mean what it used to. Arthur has taken it abroad, far from a family unable to understand him. Clem is a young artist who turns obsessively to the same dark subject. Pat doesn't even know what legacy means now. Not since the ground started sinking beneath her. Meanwhile, a nameless woman has been released from state care. She sticks to her twelve-step program, recites her affirmations, works one day at a time on a humble life devoid of ambition or redemption. How can she have an after when baby Robbie doesn't?

Circus of Wonders

Author: Elizabeth Macneal

Format: Compact Disc

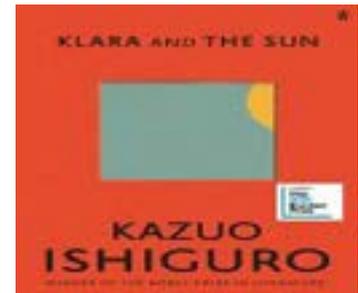
1866. In a coastal village in southern England, Nell picks violets for a living. Set apart by her community because of the birthmarks that speckle her skin, Nell's world is her beloved brother and devotion to the sea. But when Jasper Jupiter's Circus of Wonders arrives in the village, Nell is kidnapped. Her father has sold her, promising Jasper Jupiter his very own leopard girl. It is the greatest betrayal of Nell's life, but as her fame grows and she finds friendship with the other performers and Jasper's gentle brother Toby, she begins to wonder if joining the show is the best thing that has ever happened to her. In London, newspapers describe Nell as the eighth wonder of the world. Figurines are cast in her image, and crowds rush to watch her soar through the air. But who gets to tell Nell's story? And as she falls in love with Toby, can he detach himself from his past and the terrible secret that binds him to his brother?



Klara and the Sun

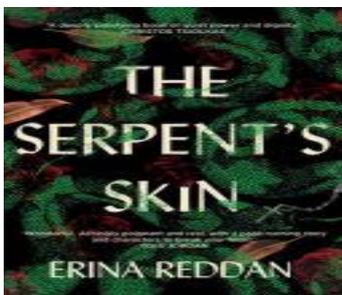
Author: Kazuo Ishiguro
Format: Book, Large Print

This is the story of Klara, an Artificial Friend with outstanding observational qualities, who, from her place in the store, watches carefully the behaviour of those who come in to browse, and of those who pass in the street outside. She remains hopeful a customer will soon choose her, but when the possibility emerges that her circumstances may change for ever, Klara is warned not to invest too much in the promises of humans.



The Serpent's Skin

Author: Erina Reddan
Format: eBook, Large Print



It's a cold and wintery night in 1968 and ten-year-old JJ's mother isn't home. The cows are milked, the pigs fed, and her dad won't answer any questions. Sarah is the lifeblood of their family, and her absence throws everyone off course: Tessa takes charge, Tim gets in trouble, Philly retreats, and JJ blames herself. Their father works hard to keep up appearances, but something's not right. It's always been JJ's job to cause trouble, and when she can't leave the clues alone, her sleuthing wreaks havoc in their tight-knit community, and she swears off troublemaking for good. Fourteen years on, JJ has a new life, a loving partner and a good job. But she puts it all in jeopardy when she stumbles across a chance to solve the big mystery of her childhood. While pretending to have made peace with it, she organises a final farewell for her mother so the family can all put the past behind them. Will the explosive truth finally set them free? Compulsive, gripping and full of heart, *The Serpent's Skin* ushers in Erina Reddan as a brilliant new voice in Australian fiction.

Elizabeth & Elizabeth

Author: Sue Williams
Format: eBook, eAudiobook, Book, Compact Disc

There was a short time in Australia's European history when two women wielded extraordinary power and influence behind the scenes of the fledgling colony. One was Elizabeth Macquarie, the wife of the new governor Lachlan Macquarie, nudging him towards social reform and magnificent buildings and town planning. The other was Elizabeth Macarthur, credited with creating Australia's wool industry and married to John Macarthur, a dangerous enemy of the establishment. These women came from strikingly different backgrounds with husbands who held sharply conflicting views. They should have been bitter foes. *Elizabeth & Elizabeth* is about two courageous women thrown together in impossible times. Borne out of an overriding admiration for the women of early colonial Australian history, Sue Williams has written a novel of enduring fascination.

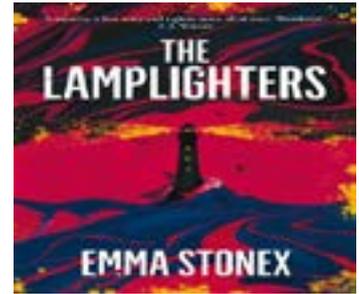


The Lamplighters

Author: Emma Stonex

Format: eBook, Compact Disc

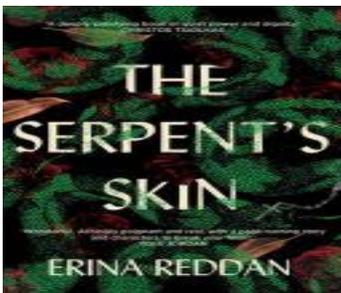
Cornwall, 1972. Three lighthouse keepers vanish from a remote lighthouse, miles from the shore. The entrance door is locked from the inside. The clocks have stopped. The Principal Keeper's weather log describes a mighty storm, but the skies have been clear all week. What happened to those three men, out on the tower? The heavy sea whispers their names. Black rocks roll beneath the swell, drowning ghosts. Can their secrets ever be recovered from the waves? Twenty years later, the women they left behind are still struggling to move on. Helen, Jenny and Michelle should have been united by the tragedy, but instead it drove them apart. And then a writer approaches them. He wants to give them a chance to tell their side of the story. But only in confronting their darkest fears can the truth begin to surface.



The Serpent's Skin

Author: Erina Reddan

Format: eBook



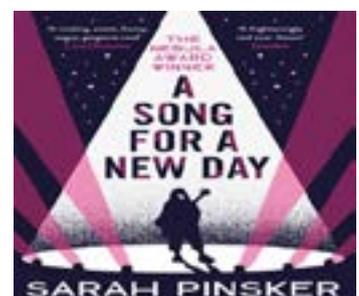
It's a cold and wintery night in 1968 and ten-year-old JJ's mother isn't home. The cows are milked, the pigs fed, and her dad won't answer any questions. Sarah is the lifeblood of their family, and her absence throws everyone off course: Tessa takes charge, Tim gets in trouble, Philly retreats, and JJ blames herself. Their father works hard to keep up appearances, but something's not right. It's always been JJ's job to cause trouble, and when she can't leave the clues alone, her sleuthing wreaks havoc in their tight-knit community, and she swears off troublemaking for good. Fourteen years on, JJ has a new life, a loving partner and a good job. But she puts it all in jeopardy when she stumbles across a chance to solve the big mystery of her childhood. While pretending to have made peace with it, she organises a final farewell for her mother so the family can all put the past behind them. Will the explosive truth finally set them free? Compulsive, gripping and full of heart, *The Serpent's Skin* ushers in Erina Reddan as a brilliant new voice in Australian fiction.

A Song for a New Day

Author: Sarah Pinsker

Format: eBook

In the Before, when the government didn't prohibit large public gatherings, Luce Cannon was on top of the world. One of her songs had just taken off and she was on her way to becoming a star. Now, in the After, terror attacks and deadly viruses have led the government to ban concerts, and Luce's connection to the world--her music, her purpose--is closed off forever. She does what she has to do: she performs in illegal concerts to a small but passionate community, always evading the law. Rosemary Laws barely remembers the Before times. She spends her days in Hoodspace, helping customers order all of their goods online for drone delivery--no physical contact with humans needed. By lucky chance, she finds a new job and a new calling: discover amazing musicians and bring their concerts to everyone via virtual reality. The only catch is that she'll have to do something she's never done before and go out in public. Find the illegal concerts and bring musicians into the limelight they deserve. But when she sees how the world could actually be, that won't be enough.

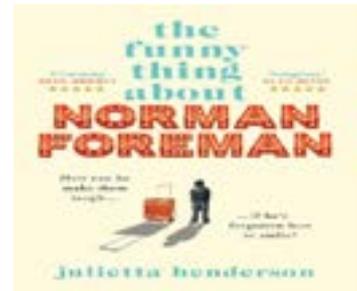


The Funny Thing About Norman Foreman

Author: Julietta Henderson

Format: eBook

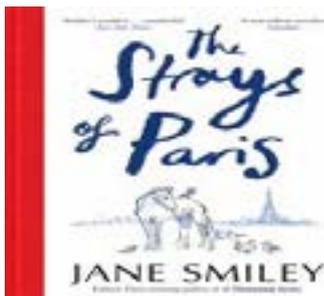
Little Miss Sunshine meets Wonder meets A Man Called Ove in this stunning debut novel that will touch your heart. "What do you get when you cross a painfully awkward son, lofty comedic ambition and a dead best friend? Norman." Norman and Jax are a legendary comedy duo in the making, with a five-year plan to perform at the Edinburgh Fringe by the time they're fifteen. But then Jax dies before they even turn twelve. Norman's mum Sadie knows she won't win Mother of the Year anytime soon, and she really doesn't know, or care, who Norman's father is. But her heart is broken when she discovers her grieving son's revised plan: 'Find Dad' and 'Get to the Edinburgh Fringe'. If meeting his dad and performing at the Festival are the two things that will help Norman through this devastating time, then Sadie is going to make them happen. So mother and son set off from Cornwall, with their friend Leonard in his vintage Austin Maxi, on a pilgrimage to Edinburgh - to honour Jax and to track down a few maybe-fathers on the way . . .



The Strays of Paris

Author: Jane Smiley

Format: Book



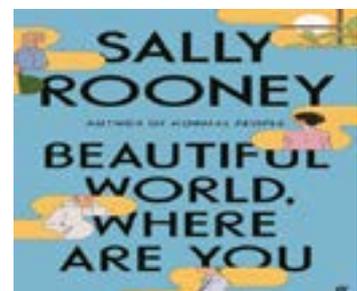
Paras is a spirited young racehorse living in a stable in the French countryside. That is until one afternoon, when she pushes open the gate of her stall and, travelling through the night, arrives quite by chance in the dazzling streets of Paris. She soon meets a German shorthaired pointer named Frida, two irrepressible ducks and an opinionated crow, and life amongst the animals in the city's lush green spaces is enjoyable for a time. But everything changes when Paras meets a human boy, Étienne, and discovers a new, otherworldly part of Paris: the secluded, ivy-walled house where the boy and his nearly-one-hundred-year-old great grandmother live quietly and unto themselves. As the cold weather of Christmas nears, the unlikely friendships bloom among humans and animals alike.

Beautiful World, Where Are You

Author: Sally Rooney

Format: eBook

Alice, a novelist, meets Felix, who works in a warehouse, and asks him if he'd like to travel to Rome with her. In Dublin, her best friend Eileen is getting over a break-up and slips back into flirting with Simon, a man she has known since childhood. Alice, Felix, Eileen and Simon are still young - but life is catching up with them. They desire each other, they delude each other, they get together, they break apart. They worry about sex and friendship and the world they live in. Are they standing in the last lighted room before the darkness, bearing witness to something? Will they find a way to believe in a beautiful world?

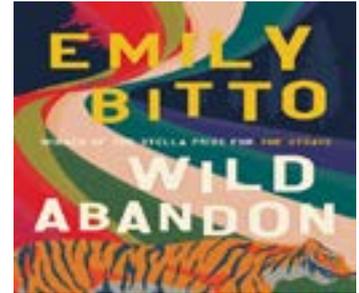


Wild Abandon

Author: Emily Bitto

Format: eBook

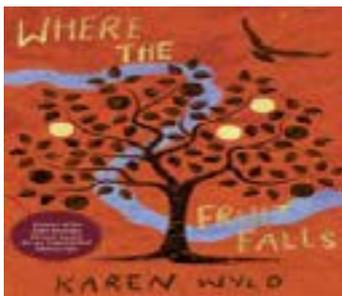
In spring of 2011, a young Australian man travels to the USA. It is a quest of sorts, a quest as old as narrative itself: a young man striking out from home in search of experience and culture, which he associates with that talismanic word, America. Beginning in the excessive, uncanny-familiar glamour and plenitude of New York City, Will crashes with expat chef and former nemesis Paul, and his girlfriend Justine, a rising star in the art scene. From here, he embarks on a doomed road trip into the American heartland, where he meets Wayne Gage. This charismatic, fast-living and deeply damaged Vietnam veteran, collector of exotic animals and would-be spirit guide, draws Will towards the dark conclusion of his journey. *Wild Abandon* is a headlong tumble through the falling world of end-days capitalism, a haunting, hyperreal snapshot of our own strange times and what it means to be a tourist, or indeed a human, within them.



Where the Fruit Falls

Author: Jane Smiley

Format: Book



Brigid Devlin, a young Aboriginal woman, and her twin daughters navigate a troubled nation of First Peoples, settlers and refugees - all determined to shape a future on stolen land. Leaving the sanctuary of her family's apple orchard, Brigid sets off with no destination and a willy wagtail for company. As she moves through an everchanging landscape, Brigid unravels family secrets to recover what she'd lost - by facing the past, she finally accepts herself. Her twin daughters continue her journey with their own search for self-acceptance, truth and justice. This evocative family saga celebrates the strength and resilience of First Nation women, while touching on deeply traumatic aspects of Australian history. Threads of magic realism shimmer throughout the story, offering a deeper understanding of reality and challenging the reader to imagine a kinder, more just, more humane world. This writing celebrates the agency of Indigenous women to traverse ever-present landscapes of colonisation and intergenerational trauma. Country has an omniscient presence in the story lines, guiding the women across vivid desert and coastal landscapes. This book recognises both the open wounds of living histories of colonisation and the healing power of belonging to Country.

Troy

Author: Stephen Fry

Format: Book

The story of Troy speaks to all of us - the kidnapping of Helen, a queen celebrated for her beauty, sees the Greeks launch a thousand ships against the city of Troy, to which they will lay siege for ten whole years. It is a terrible war with casualties on all sides as well as strained relations between allies, whose consequences become tragedies. In Troy you will find heroism and hatred, love and loss, revenge and regret, desire and despair. It is these human passions, written bloodily in the sands of a distant shore, that still speak to us today.

