

100 BEST BOOKS OF 2021

Welcome to the Listener's annual list of the finest reads of the year. Compiled by Mark Broatch.

FICTION

- Animal*, by Lisa Taddeo (Bloomsbury)
At Night All Blood Is Black, by David Diop, tr Anna Moschovakis (Pushkin Press)
The Author's Cut, by Owen Marshall (Vintage)
Beautiful World, Where Are You?, by Sally Rooney (Faber)
Before You Knew My Name, by Jacqueline Bublitz (Sphere)
Bewilderment, by Richard Powers (William Heinemann)
Cloud Cuckoo Land, by Anthony Doerr (Fourth Estate)
Crazy Love, Rosetta Allan (Penguin)
Crossroads, Jonathan Franzen (Fourth Estate)
Devil's Trumpet, by Tracey Slaughter (VUP)
Early Morning Riser, by Katharine Heiny (Fourth Estate)
Entanglement, by Bryan Walpert (Makaro Press)
Everything Changes, Stephanie Johnson (RHNZ Vintage)
Filthy Animals, by Brandon Taylor (Daunt Books)
A Good Winter, by Gigi Fenster (Text Publishing)
Great Circle, by Maggie Shipstead (Doubleday)
Greta and Valdin, by Rebecca K Reilly (VUP)
The Hummingbird, by Sandro Veronesi (W&N)
Isobar Precinct, by Angeliqe Kasmara (The Cuba Press)
Klara and the Sun, Kazuo Ishiguro (Faber)
Light Perpetual, Francis Spufford (Faber)
Loop Tracks, Sue Orr (VUP)
The Magician, Colm Toibin (Viking)
Matrix, Lauren Groff (William Heinemann)
No one is Talking About This, Patricia Lockwood (Bloomsbury)
Oh William!, Elizabeth Strout (Viking)
The Piano Girls, Elizabeth Smither (Quentin Wilson)
The Pink Jumpsuit, by Emma Neale (Quentin Wilson)
The Promise, by Damon Galgut (Chatto & Windus)
Real Estate, Deborah Levy (Penguin)
Second Place, by Rachel Cusk (Faber)
She's a Killer, by Kirsten McDougall (VUP)

Should We Stay or Should We Go?, by Lionel Shriver (Borough Press)

Still Life, by Sarah Winman (Fourth Estate)

Tenderness, by Alison McLeod (Bloomsbury)

Unsheltered, by Clare Moleta (VUP)

We Run the Tides, by Vendela Vida (Atlantic Books)

CRIME & THRILLERS

1979 by Val McDermid (Little, Brown)

Dream Girl, by Laura Lippman (Faber)

Exit, by Belinda Bauer (Bantam)

Harlem Shuffle, Colson Whitehead (Little, Brown)

The Last Guests, by JP Pomare (Hachette)

The Quiet People, by Paul Cleave (Upstart)

Razorblade Tears, by SA Cosby (Headline)

Silverview, by John le Carre (Viking)

The Stoning, by Peter Papathanasiou (Transit Lounge)

Treasure and Dirt, by Chris Hammer (Allen & Unwin)

Winter Counts, by David Heska Wanbli Weiden (Simon & Schuster)

MODERN LIFE & POLITICS

The Aristocracy of Talent: How meritocracy made the modern world, by Adrian Wooldridge (Allen Lane)

Australia and The Pacific: A history, by Ian Hoskins (NewSouth Publishing)

The Commercial Hotel, John Summers (VUP)

Empire of Pain, Patrick Radden Keefe (Picador)

Freedom by Sebastian Junger (Fourth Estate)

Helen Kelly, by Rebecca Macfie (Awa Press)

Land of Big Numbers by Te-Ping Chen (Scribner)

Mana Whakatipu, by Sir Mark Solomon and Mark Revington (MUP)

The Status Game: On social position and how we use it, by Will Storr (HarperCollins)

The Weirdest People in the World: How the West became psychologically peculiar and particularly prosperous, Joseph Henrich (Allen Lane)

Wildland, Evan Osnos (Bloomsbury)

HISTORY

Alexandria: Quest for the Lost City, Edmund Richardson (Bloomsbury)

The Anglo-Saxons, by Marc Morris (Hutchinson)
Blood and Ruins: The great imperial war, 1931-1945, by Richard Overy (Allen Lane)
Hei Taonga Mā ngā Uru Whakatipu, edited by Dr Wayne Ngata, Dame Anne Salmond et al (Te Papa)
The Ottomans: Sultans, khans and caesars, David Marc Baer (Hachette)
Ethel Rosenberg: A cold war tragedy, by Anne Sebba (Orion)
Stalin's War by Sean McMeekin (Basic Books)

LIFE STORIES

Bourdain in Stories, edited by Laurie Woollever (Bloomsbury)
Burning Man: The ascent of DH Lawrence, by Frances Wilson (Bloomsbury)
The Forgotten Coast, Richard Shaw (MUP)
Leaving is Not the Hardest Thing, Lauren Hough (Coronet)
Life as a novel: A biography of Maurice Shadbolt, by Philip Temple (David Ling)
The Mirror Book, by Charlotte Grimshaw (RHNZ Vintage)
Sea State, Tabitha Lasley (HarperCollins)
Times Like These: Of grief, hope and remarkable love, by Michelle Langstone (Allen & Unwin)
Tranquility and Ruin, by Danyl McLauchlan (VUP)
Uprising: Walking the Southern Alps of New Zealand, by Nic Low (Text Publishing)

ART, MUSIC & LITERATURE

Index, A History of the, Dennis Duncan (Allen Lane)
Te Kupenga: Stories of Aotearoa, edited by Michael Keith and Chris Szekely (MUP)
The Musical Human: A history of life on Earth, Michael Spitzer (Bloomsbury)
Shifting Grounds: Deep Histories of Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland, by Lucy Mackintosh (BWB)
A Swim in the Pond in the Rain, by George Sanders (Bloomsbury)
Tussock, by Bruce Hunt (Bateman Books)

SCIENCE & PHILOSOPHY

Being You, by Anil Seth (Faber)
Conflicted: Why Arguments Are Tearing Us Apart and How They Can Bring Us Together, by Ian Leslie (Faber & Faber)
The End of Everything: (Astrophysically speaking), by Katie Mack (Penguin)
Four Thousand Weeks: Time management for mortals, Oliver Burkeman (Bodley Head)
The Genetic Lottery: Why DNA matters for social equality, Kathryn Paige Harden (Princeton University Press)
Losing Our Minds: What mental really is and what it isn't, Lucy Foulkes (Bodley Head)
The Right to Sex, by Amia Srinivasan (Bloomsbury)

The Sleeping Beauties, by Suzanne O'Sullivan (Picador)

Testosterone, by Carole Hooven (Hachette)

Think Again, Adam Grant (WH Allen)

NATURE & THE ENVIRONMENT

Albert and the Whale: Albrecht Dürer and how art imagines our world, by Philip Hoare (Fourth Estate)

Count Down, by Shanna H Swan (Scribner)

Life As We Made It: How 50,000 years of human innovation refined – and redefined – nature, by Beth Shapiro (Basic Books)

Finding the Mother Tree: Uncovering the wisdom and intelligence of the forest, by Suzanne Simard (Allen Lane)

The Foghorn's Lament: The disappearing music of the coast, by Jennifer Lucy Allan

On Animals, by Susan Orlean (Atlantic Books)

Silent Earth: Averting the insect apocalypse, by Dave Goulson (Jonathan Cape)

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