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**Opening Extract from...**

# **Bookworms, Dog-Ears and Squashy Big Armchairs**

Written by Heather Reyes

Published by Oxygen Books

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Bookworms, Dog-Ears &  
Squashy  
Big Armchairs

A Book  
Lover's  
Alphabet

HEATHER REYES

AUTHOR OF  
AN EVERYWHERE: A LITTLE BOOK ABOUT READING

Bookworms,  
Dog-Ears &  
Squashy  
Big Armchairs

A Book Lover's  
Alphabet

HEATHER REYES

OXYGEN BOOKS

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## A FEW WORDS ...

Read. Book. The most powerful four-letter words in the English language.

The dedicated reader will usually do it anywhere – on top of a bus, under the sheets, on a street corner – though eminent French writer Marguerite Duras confessed to rarely doing it out of doors because ‘*you can’t read by two lights at once, the light of day and the light of the book.*’ She advises that ‘*You should read by electric light, the room in shadow, and only the page lit up.*’

But wherever and whatever we choose to read, it will shape who we are – just as much as *not* reading will. We are what we read in the same way that we are what we eat. Good food nourishes a healthy body and reading is good for the brain – and not just in an intellectual way. When watching television or films, the eyes are mostly stationary: when reading, the physical movements of the eyes (so neurologists have discovered) actually stimulate and condition the brain.

Transforming the brain, both physically and intellectually, transforms the life. Books open windows

and doors onto a richer life. But, as a book-lover, you already know that. This little dip-in book is for you: a reminder of the long, wonderful history and the complex life and daily miracle of books.

# A

Margaret Atwood - “I read for pleasure and that is the moment I learn the most.”

## ABERRANT

*(Adjective) Differing or departing from what is normal or accepted as standard.*

Don't let them get at you – those people who say that, as a book-lover in the twenty-first century, your behaviour is *aberrant*. No. You are a member of a large and very special tribe, a tribe marked by civility, empathy, and intelligence. Its members may not be the noisiest in society, and you may not have another member of the tribe living within a mile's radius of you. But they are out there and, like you, joyfully participating – day in, day out – in one of the most sophisticated functions of the human brain. Reading books.

The motto of the tribe: *Amor librorum nos unit* (The love of books unites us).

## ADDICTION

Far safer to be addicted to books than just about anything else.

**Wise words** ‘There's no such thing as too many books.’  
(And there's no such thing as Bibliophiliacs Anonymous.)

## ADVANCE QUOTES

Those words of praise from other writers that appear on the covers of books to try to persuade you to buy them.

If you've ever wondered how the literary movers and shakers get to read the book early enough to comment on it before it's actually been published, the answer's quite simple: the bigger publishers will have 'proof copies' printed and sent out to those they hope might say something nice about the book; smaller publishers, who don't have the luxury of paying for proof copies first, will usually make do with sending the book in electronic form, or 'run off a copy' on the office printer and send it in a Jiffy bag (if they can find one big enough).

Really famous writers differ in their levels of willingness to give advance quotes: some will categorically refuse to do it – ever (or except for friends) – while others are more generous and remember what it was like, perhaps, to be an 'emerging writer' in need of a bit of help and encouragement.

**Talking point** Do those quotes really help to sell you the book?

## AGA SAGA

A once popular sub-genre of the **family saga**, it takes its name from the old-fashioned AGA cooker,



popular in middle-class country houses. The term was first used by Terence Blacker in 1992 to describe certain early novels by Joanna Trollope and has come to stand for tales of 'naughty goings-on' among the middle classes in English village life. The setting is usually a rather cosy one of farmhouses, Wellie boots and dogs. The 'jokey' sound of the term acts as something of a put-down for stories of this type.

### AIRPORT FICTION

Not known for its literary merit but judged on its efficacy in taking your mind off the fact that you are about to get into a small metal tube, powered by a great deal of highly inflammable liquid, travelling at several hundred miles per hour, several miles above *terra firma* and that, if something goes wrong, you will most probably die. So it has to be pretty powerful stuff!

### ALEXANDRIA, LIBRARY OF

A book-lover's dream ... and nightmare. Here's why. It was Ptolemy the First who, in the third century BC, founded the great library of Alexandria. The aim was for the library to contain the whole of human knowledge. The library as total global brain. Dedicated to the Nine Muses and incorporating lecture halls, meetings rooms and gardens – in addition to

its vast collection of texts – it can be seen as a forerunner or model for the modern university campus.

In the mid-third century BCE, the poet Callimachus was employed there and created the first known alphabetical library catalogue.

The Library came to house nearly half a million scrolls, plus another forty thousand stored in a separate 'overflow' building. One method of expanding the collection was to demand that any ship stopping at Alexandria render up all books on board for copying, after which they – or the copies – would be returned. (Such scrolls were identified by having the words '*from the ships*' stamped on them.) The modern equivalent is the **legal deposit library**.

The main library was for scholars, but Ptolemy II set up an 'offshoot' library – the Serapeum – which was more of a public library.

The library of Alexandria was destroyed by fire around 640 CE: a bibliophile's nightmare. There are various theories about how this happened, but in *The Yellow-Lighted Bookshop*, Lewis Buzbee fleshes out perhaps the most convincing of the stories. When Muslim armies conquered the city, there was a debate about the worth of the library. Caliph Omar's representative, Ibn Amrou el-Ass, was swayed by the arguments of the librarian John Philoponus that, as the library's contents pre-dated the Prophet, they were

not ‘infidel’ texts, and many of the greatest works were of Arabic origin. But Caliph Omar himself was not swayed. Convinced the Koran was the only book anyone needed, he ordered the contents of the library to be distributed around the bath-houses of Alexandria and burnt to heat the water. It took six months for them all to be consumed by flames.

Although there is some ambiguity about the exact circumstances of the library’s destruction, destroyed it most certainly was, and its contents ‘put to the flames.’ Today, however, there is a vast new library in Alexandria (it was begun in 1988) with enough shelf-space for over 8,000,000 books, besides audio-visual and virtual forms of knowledge.

**AND** ... Alexandria wasn’t the only ancient library (though it’s the most famous). Other great institutions include the library at Thebes: the inscription over its entrance, ‘Medicine for the Soul’, suggests that the therapeutic aspects of reading – **bibliotherapy** – have long been officially recognised.

The library of Ashurbanipal, at Nineveh, was founded between 669 and 631 BCE, while in China records show there was an imperial library at the time of the Qin dynasty (around the third century BCE), if not before. And a library curator of the Han dynasty (second to first century BCE) is thought to have set up China’s first classification system.

Persia had many libraries, including the royal library of Isfahan and an important public library at Gunishapur dating from 667 CE. Christian and Islamic libraries flourished in the Middle Ages and included the great Sufiya library in Aleppo, attached to the Grand Umayyad Mosque.

Many other mosques also sponsored public libraries which, as 'halls of science', were quite widespread by the ninth century, covering secular as well as religious knowledge. Tenth-century Shiraz had a huge library in an attractive setting of gardens, lakes and waterways – recalling the beauty of the Great Library of Alexandria.

## AMAZON

1 The largest river in the world, rising in the Peruvian Andes and running through northern Brazil into the Atlantic.

2 A member of legendary tribes of women warriors, in Greek myth but also in South America. Used metaphorically to refer to a tall, aggressive woman.

3 As a book-lover you cannot fail to be aware of the third meaning. Those who still run small, independent bookshops are only too aware of the appropriateness of the Amazon trading name.

Let's face it, Amazon provides a brilliant service to those who can't get to a good bookshop, those

who know exactly what they want and need it fast, and those who have forgotten birthdays till the last minute and know that Amazon can get the book to cousin Jill for you by next day.

True, it doesn't beat browsing in a well-stocked bookshop. But we need both for a vibrant book culture in the modern world. And in one sense, Amazon has done a small favour to 'literary culture': in order to compete with Amazon and stay commercially viable, bookshops have become locations for **author events**, reading groups, and cafés where the local literati can talk about their latest (guilty) Amazon purchases over coffee and cakes whose prices help to subsidise the struggling bookshop.

**Advice** Amazon when you have to, bookshops when you can.

## ANTHOLOGY

From the Greek *anthos* (flower) and *legein* (to collect). So, basically, the literary equivalent of a bunch of flowers. Rather lovely!

**ARMCHAIR** – see SQUASHY, BIG

## AUDIOBOOKS

Have their uses, but the pleasure one takes in them is likely to depend on –

- 1 whether you like the voice of the person(s) reading the book
- 2 how *sensitive* you are to having a voice other than the one imagined in your head reading the book to you
- 3 how skilful the abridgement is, if it's not the whole text being read
- 4 how long that car journey is ...

Of course, for those with bad sight or simply tired eyes, audiobooks are a godsend. And for those extra long, difficult novels in small print, they can be a real help. I'm thinking particularly of James Joyce's *Ulysses*. The 22 CD unabridged recording, with Jim Norton reading most of it and Marcella Riordan as Molly Bloom, will, I am sure, make even the most faint-hearted a fan of this Modernist masterpiece.

**AUTHOR** – see **WRITER**

## **AUTHOR EVENTS**

Contrary to popular belief, these are nothing new – though it must be admitted that there has been a veritable explosion of them in recent years as bookshops (and libraries) battle to survive the inroads into their trade from the internet, e-books, and the collapse of the **net book agreement** and try to tempt you into their premises with the chance to meet 'big

name' authors ... or sometimes more modest, local writing celebrities. It is hoped, of course, that you will buy their books, and any others that happen to take your fancy in the good mood usually raised by such events – often helped along by a glass or two of wine.

For book-lovers – and particularly for lovers of direct contact with authors – these events can fill the gaps between **festivals** with their multiple 'meet the author' opportunities.

But, no, these events are nothing new. Think back to the hugely successful tours of America made by Charles Dickens and Oscar Wilde, playing to much larger audiences than your local bookshop could accommodate. The literary salons of the eighteenth century were opportunities for the cultural and social élite to meet and encourage both emerging and established writers and to keep abreast of literary trends.

And even Ancient Rome had its regular author events. Roman authors began the process of publication with a public reading to introduce a new work. Apparently Virgil and Horace received so much attention at these events that they found it all rather embarrassing. At the time of the Empire the whole thing got quite out of hand and we hear the younger Pliny complaining that there was a 'recitation' nearly every day. As these events were prior to

actual publication, authors could benefit from the reactions of the audience – a kind of instant feedback and editorial service. Not a bad idea. Perhaps we still have something to learn from the Romans ...

So, when you attend an author event in your local bookshop or library, you can enjoy the feeling of taking part in a long tradition of civilised activity. Do support such events when you can – and be nice to the poor staff who, after being on their feet all day, are still manning the till and pouring wine late into the evening, on very little (or no) overtime, and still have to clear up after everyone has gone. And pity the poor writer, too, who is under increasing pressure from publishers to take on book tours and events as part of their promotional programme: don't keep them talking too long. Just because the person in front of you in the book-signing queue has told the author their own life story doesn't mean you need to. Be kind.

**Talking point** What makes for a good 'author event'?  
Any particularly memorable ones you've been to?

## AUTOBIOGRAPHY

A version of someone's life story written by themselves and purporting to be the truth.

The custom of the famous writing about their lives goes back to Classical times but doesn't become an



established genre until much later. There are a few famous early examples, such as the Confessions of St Augustine (354–430) and the *Historia Calamitatum* of the twelfth-century French philosopher Peter Abelard (famous for his affair with and marriage to the highly intellectual and passionate Eloise, and his subsequent castration by her uncle). In the mid-sixteenth century, the Renaissance sculptor and goldsmith Benvenuto Cellini wrote his *Vita* ('Life'), suggesting that no-one should attempt to write their life story until they were over forty. With life expectancy much lower at that time, the equivalent today would probably be at least sixty. (Perhaps this advice should be born in mind more frequently by today's 'celebrities'.)

The eighteenth century saw a vogue for the supposed memoirs of libertines – often works of fiction passing themselves off as true and written to satisfy a public taste for scandalous revelations about other people's supposed sexual adventures.

With the rise of Romanticism and the cult of the individual at the end of the eighteenth century and beginning of the nineteenth, and the example set by Jean-Jacques Rousseau in his *Confessions*, the emphasis shifted from the public deeds of the subject to their personal and emotional life, with an increasing emphasis on childhood and early

years – possibly a result of the growing awareness of the formative importance of this period.

By the nineteenth century it was expected of the great and the good that they would, at some point, publish a record of their lives, while the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries have seen an explosion of autobiographical writing to satisfy a growing public taste to learn about the lives of celebrities ... even if those lives have not yet been very long. These are often ghost-written. (One celebrity is famously quoted as saying that she hadn't yet read her autobiography ... )

The advent of blogging and Facebook does, in many cases, provide the kind of information about a person's life that would, at one time, have been recorded in a private diary to be filtered and refined, much later, into a considered autobiography.

The term **life-writing** is sometimes used interchangeably with 'autobiography' – though, like **memoir**, it may only address a particular period or aspect of a person's life, rather than the whole story so far (which is expected of a full autobiography).

**Talking points** What makes autobiography such a popular genre? Is there a minimum age for writing a serious autobiography? Are there any autobiographies you have found particularly good or memorable – and why?

# B

Jorge Louis Borges - "Paradise is a library"

## BACKLIST

An author's 'backlist' refers to all their books apart from the most recently published one. Bookshops are less and less likely to carry a substantial backlist for most authors, apart from the very top-ranking. It's usually a matter of space. But if you want to support your bookshop, rather than buy online, backlist titles can always be ordered ...

## BAD SEX IN FICTION AWARD

Has been presented annually, since 1993, under the auspices of the *Literary Review*, for the worst description of sex in a work of 'respectable' fiction (in other words, simple pornography isn't included). The trophy depicts a naked woman draped over an open book. The rationale of the award is stated as follows: "to draw attention to the crude, tasteless, often perfunctory use of redundant sexual description in the modern novel and to discourage it."

We won't further embarrass past winners by naming and shaming them: they know who they are ... (and some of them are really famous!).

**TALKING POINTS** Is this just another manifestation of the British 'nudge-nudge, wink-wink, snigger-snigger' attitude to sex? Would the French do it? Why not be more positive and have a 'Good Sex' award? Or a 'Bad Landscape', 'Bad Animals', 'Bad Clothing' or 'Bad Conversation' award?

## BAILEY'S WOMEN'S PRIZE FOR FICTION

Formerly the **Orange Prize for Fiction**, this prestigious annual prize is awarded to any female writer, regardless of nationality, for a novel written in English and published in the twelve months before the prize.

Having lost its original 'Orange' funding, the prize was able to continue in 2013 thanks to the generosity of private donors – including Cherie Blair (wife of former Prime Minister Tony Blair) and novelist Joanna Trollope – but the £30,000 prize is now funded by the company producing Bailey's Irish Cream – hence the new name.

While some have questioned the merits of a 'women only' prize, others feel it goes a little way towards redressing the balance for women who can still face a certain level of discrimination in the world of 'serious' literature.

Since its founding in 1996 the winning authors and novels have been:

BAILEY'S WOMEN'S PRIZE FOR FICTION

- 1996 Helen Dunmore for *A Spell of Winter*  
1997 Ann Michaels for *Fugitive Pieces*  
1998 Carol Shields for *Larry's Party*  
1999 Suzanne Berne for *A Crime in the  
Neighbourhood*  
2000 Linda Grant for *When I Lived in Modern  
Times*  
2001 Kate Grenville for *The Idea of Perfection*  
2002 Ann Patchett for *Bel Canto*  
2003 Valerie Martin for *Property*  
2004 Andrea Levy for *Small Island*  
2005 Lionel Shriver for *We Need to Talk About  
Kevin*  
2006 Zadie Smith for *On Beauty*  
2007 Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie for *Half of a  
Yellow Sun*  
2008 Rose Tremain for *The Road Home*  
2009 Marilyn Robinson for *Home*  
2011 Téa Obreht for *The Tiger's Wife*  
2012 Madeleine Miller for *The Song of Achilles*  
2013 A. M. Holmes for *May We Be Forgiven*  
2014 Eimear McBride for *A Girl is a Half-Formed  
Thing*

**TALKING POINT** Do we still need a prize specifically  
for fiction by women?

## BANDE DESINÉE

Literally 'drawn strips'. The term is used in France and Belgium for books in the popular **graphic novel** form, particularly associated, in its early days, with the *Tintin* and *Asterix* series. Many different kinds of texts are now available in the *bande dessinée* format – history, biography, current affairs, and simplified versions of great literary works. At their best, they are a genuine art form and, popular among the young in particular, can introduce them to worthwhile areas of knowledge in an enjoyable way.

## BAT GIRL

was a **librarian**

## BED

Lots of pillows, a good bedside lamp that can be directed onto the page, a non-ticking alarm clock, a mug of hot chocolate, an early night ... Bliss.

## BEST-SELLER

Some come and go, some stick around. Some are best-sellers just in their country or culture of origin, others are a world-wide phenomenon. *A Christmas Carol* is an obvious example of a book that was not only a raving success at the time of its first publication, but has continued to be a book that's always 'there'. The same can be said of J. D. Salinger's 1951 novel, *The*

*Catcher in the Rye*, the initial success being maintained with continuing sales of about a quarter of a million each year and a total so far of over 65 million.

**TALKING POINT** Which of today's best-sellers might still be widely read in fifty years' time – and why?

## BIBLIOBIBULI

A term coined in the 1950s by American writer and critic H. L. Mencken to indicate those who read so much that they appear to be drunk on books. Such people, he claimed, are so absorbed in their reading that they are unaware of the life around them.

We would suggest, however, that being drunk on books is preferable to being drunk on alcohol: better for the liver ...

## BIBLIOMANIA

From 'biblos' (Gk., 'book') and '-mania' (abnormal, uncontrollable or obsessive desire for a specified thing or of a specified kind).

Some people obsessively collect thimbles ... or spoons ... or beer-mats ... or matchboxes. This is abnormal. The desire to possess books is not abnormal. It is merely civilised.

## BIBLIOPHILE

From 'biblos' (Gk., 'book') and '-philos' (Gk., 'loving'). You.

## BIBLIOTHERAPY

This isn't therapy to rid you of your love of books: it's the use of books and reading to help in the healing of mind and even body. It's sometimes known as 'the reading cure' (as opposed to the psychoanalytic 'talking cure').

Bibliotherapy has a long history. In Ancient Greece, Plato recognized that the arts were an aid to bringing an out-of-tune soul-circuit back into harmony with itself, while it was a common Renaissance idea that poetry and song could rid one of vexations of both the body and the soul. George Eliot alleviated her great grief at the death of her partner by reading Dante, and John Stuart Mill experienced a comparable 'healing' through reading the right book at a difficult time. D. H. Lawrence said, 'One sheds one sicknesses in books', and in the USA it was used with soldiers recovering after the Second World War.

Something of a 'buzz word' recently in certain medical circles, the actual practice of bibliotherapy varies. At the most basic level there's the doctor's recommendation that a depressed patient go to the library and read up on their own condition, maybe providing an appropriate reading list. The hope is that they will read information and self-help books in order to understand and take control of their



condition, with less recourse to medication (mainly for cases of depression or minor ailments resulting from stress).

Then there is the situation of seriously ill people, such as cancer patients, being encouraged – if they are well-enough – to join a ‘non-cancer’ book discussion group. The rationale for this is that, while it may be of comfort to read of sufferings that relate to our own, a more profound help can come from entering other worlds that help us place our own in relation to them. Better than books that echo our own lives can be those that take us somewhere else.

Some of the deepest uses of bibliotherapy concern patients with severe, long-term mental illness who are being painstakingly coaxed by expert practitioners into language worlds that lay beyond their own closed-in and limiting universe.

And, of course, there’s nothing to stop you prescribing bibliotherapy for yourself.

**TALKING POINT** Can you recall a particular example of when reading has helped in coping with a mental, emotional or physical difficulty?

## BILDUNGSROMAN

The German term, in general use, is sometimes translated as ‘coming-of-age novel’, or ‘novel of education’

and indicates a story charting the protagonist's development from youth to adulthood. Said to have its roots in the common folk-tale theme of the young man going out into the world to seek his fortune, the term *bildungsroman* dates from the early nineteenth century but was not popularly used until the early twentieth. Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* (1795/6) is usually recognised as the instigating work of the genre, though there are some earlier texts that could be considered forerunners. *Great Expectations* and *Jane Eyre* are two famous nineteenth-century examples, while the greatest twentieth- and twenty-first-century *bildungsromans* include D. H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers* (1913), James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916), J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951), Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1960), Jeanette Winterson's *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* (1985), and Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* (2003).

## **BIOGRAPHY** (see also AUTOBIOGRAPHY and LIFE WRITING)

From Greek *bio* (life) and *graphiā* (a record or account, from *gráphein*, to write). First used in English in 1683 in John Dryden's translation from Latin of **Plutarch's** *Lives* (80 CE) outlining the lives of famous Greeks and Romans which focus on

the role played by the subjects' characters in their destiny, rather than giving simple historical facts. The *Lives* are recognised as an important originating text in the history of biographical writing. Shakespeare made extensive use of the translation of Plutarch by Thomas North (1535–1604) when writing *Julius Caesar*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, and *Coriolanus*.

Most surviving biographies from the early Middle Ages are of religious figures, and that's true of both the Christian and Islamic worlds. In the late Middle Ages, the genre was less exclusively religious, and by the time of the Renaissance, the growing move towards Humanism positively encouraged more writing about secular figures. The most famous example of the genre from this period is probably Giorgio Vasari's *Lives of the Artists* (1550).

The first truly great biography of a literary figure, in English, is James Boswell's *Life of Samuel Johnson* (1791), while Lytton Strachey's still famous *Eminent Victorians* (1918) – in which he casts a cold, rational eye over the lives of four much-lauded 'heroes' of the period (including Florence Nightingale) – is possibly the first modern exemplar of the genre.

**SUGGESTED READING** A list of all the best biographies would need a book to itself, so we're restricting ourselves to a selection of works by acclaimed biographers of literary figures:

**Peter Ackroyd** has written on T. S. Eliot (1984), Ezra Pound (1989), William Blake (1995), Charles Dickens (2002), Geoffrey Chaucer (2002), William Shakespeare (2006) and Wilkie Collins (2012).

**Victoria Glendinning** has written on Elizabeth Bowen (1977), Vita Sackville-West (1983), Willa Cather (1989), Anthony Trollope (1992), Jonathan Swift (1998), Leonard Woolf (2006), and Edith Wharton (2007).

**Michael Holroyd** has written on Lytton Strachey (1994 – though a much earlier version dates from 1967–8), and George Bernard Shaw (he turned the original four volumes of 1988, 1989, 1991, and 1992 into a single volume version in 1997).

**Hermione Lee** has written on Elizabeth Bowen (1981, but revised in 1999), Willa Cather (1989), Virginia Woolf (1996), Edith Wharton (2007) and Penelope Fitzgerald (2013).

**Graham Robb** has written on Honoré de Balzac (1994), Victor Hugo (1997), and Arthur Rimbaud (2000).

**Claire Tomalin** has written on Katherine Mansfield (1987), Jane Austen (1997), Samuel Pepys (2002), Thomas Hardy (2006) and Charles Dickens (2011).

**A. N. Wilson** has written on Sir Walter Scott (1980), Hilaire Belloc (1985), Tolstoy (1988), C.S. Lewis (1990), John Milton (new edition 2002), Iris Murdoch (2003), John Betjeman (2006), and Dante (2011).

## BLOOMSDAY

The annual celebration, held on 16th June, dear to Dubliners and to all of a truly literary inclination.

## BLURB

It marks the day on which James Joyce's Modernist masterpiece, *Ulysses*, is set. The novel takes place within a single day – 16th June, 1904 – which marks the first time Joyce 'walked out' with Nora Barnacle ... with whom he subsequently eloped. The main character of the novel is Leopold Bloom – hence 'Bloomsday'.

In Dublin, the day gives rise to great shenanigans – people dressing up as characters from the book (or just in period costume), recreating scenes, giving/attending readings from the novel, and so on.

A true Bloomsday enthusiast will (unless vegetarian) eat pork kidneys for breakfast – just as Bloom himself does in the novel.

## BLURB

The term is believed to have been coined in 1907 by the American humourist and illustrator Gelett Burgess (1866–1951) to satirize the excessive praise found on book jackets. The word seems to contain a suggestion of both 'blur' and 'blurt', with a strong hint of 'burble'. The sting has gradually gone out of the term, most people using it in a technical sense to refer to the publisher's description of a book on the cover which, while emphasising the positive and trying to persuade us that the book is worth reading, doesn't go too over-the-top in its praise ... though there are exceptions,

of course. (See also **shout line**, **advance quotes** and **change your life, this book will.**)

## BOOK

Prior to the invention of the Internet, the most effective and powerful means devised by mankind for the spread of knowledge and ideas across the planet.

## BOOK BLOGS

One of the advantages – and sometimes curses – of the internet is that everyone is free to broadcast their opinions and experiences to the world. Readers are no exception. Book blogs have added a whole new dimension to book **reviews**. If you're fed up with the sometimes over-critical newspaper reviewers and want a bit more enthusiasm and a personal approach, the best book blogs offer a good alternative. The only problem is there are now so many it's hard to identify which are the best. A few websites claim to identify the best book blogs for you, but there's really no alternative to trying out a few for yourself and seeing which ones appeal. Or, as a book-lover, you could, of course, start your own ...

## BOOK BURNING

Unfortunately, book burning has a long history, reputedly going back to at least the seventh century

BCE (when books were in the form of scrolls). In the twentieth century, the most infamous examples were the mass burning of books by the Nazis and the public burning of Salman Rushdie's novel *The Satanic Verses*. Ironically, those who burn books are demonstrating their belief in the power of books to profoundly influence the way we think and their ability to shape the world.

Ray Bradbury's novel *Fahrenheit 451*° (the temperature at which paper spontaneously combusts) is the most famous novel to feature book burning – though library conflagrations have notably featured in Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose* and Elias Canetti's *Auto da Fé*.

German poet Heinrich Heine (1797–1856) famously said that 'Where they have burned books, they will end in burning human beings.'

## BOOK CLUBS

Not to be confused with **Book Groups** or **Reader Groups**, Book Clubs are commercial organisations that will regularly send you books through the post – at a reduced rate – in return for a pre-agreed payment. Special introductory offers will often give you several books at a very low price, then a regular mailing of books at a higher – but still reduced – price. General Book Clubs had their heyday in the

decades immediately after the Second World War, while 'niche' clubs, catering for special interests, now dominate (e.g. the Railway Book Club, The History Guild, The Fantasy and Sci Fi Book Club and various clubs providing books for children).

## BOOK ENDS

A pair of supports used to stop a row of books from falling over. Good gift for booklovers – but do check that the person you are giving them to has no objection to cute owls, kinky dragons, meditating dogs, Superman, and the two parts of a dachshund before inflicting them upon the bibliophile's daily life.

Assume a booklover's taste is simple and tasteful – unless you have incontrovertible evidence to the contrary.

## BOOK, ETYMOLOGY OF

The word is said to have derived originally from the word for 'beech' – the assumption being that early forms of written communication in the Indo-European languages (from which the word is derived) may have been upon beech wood.

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