

What's Next? Episode 2

Hello Book Lovers! Welcome to What's Next? The Riverina Regional Library's podcast for readers. My name is Amy Heap and reading is my super power. I am here to be your personal librarian, helping you to find your next great read. You can email me at amyheap@gmail.com let me know what you like and don't like to read, what you are in the mood for, and I will give some reading suggestions, just for you, though everyone can listen in.

The book I abandoned: Memories of the Future by Siri Hustvedt

Tips to get through a book you are struggling with:

- Don't try to read it when you are tired, you will end up reading the same page over and over.
- Don't make it the only book you are reading. Have another book, of a different genre, on the go, and tell yourself you can read the other book, once you have read a chapter of the tricky one.
- Take a similar approach with other things you do to unwind – read a chapter before turning on the television, or before checking Facebook or Instagram.
- Try the audiobook version, if you can get it, and listen while you clean the house and walk the dog.

Historical fiction.

Pandemics and troubled times:

The Year of Wonders by Geraldine Brooks, is based on the true story of Eyam, a little village in Derbyshire, in 1666

Kate Atkinson's **Life After Life** begins in 1910 when Ursula Todd is born, and dies before she can take her first breath. She is born again, on the same night, and survives, and what follows is the story of her many deaths and lives as she overcomes obstacles which caught her out before.

In 1722 Daniel Defoe wrote **A Journal of the Plague Year** about the bubonic plague in London in 1665,

Maggie O'Farrell's latest novel, **Hamnet**, about Shakespeare's son, of that name, who probably died of the bubonic plague.

Amor Towles' **A Gentleman in Moscow**. In 1922 a Russian aristocrat is sentenced to house arrest in a luxurious hotel, spending the next thirty or so years of his country's upheaval, confined to the hotel with a cast of quirky, loveable, dastardly, glamorous, powerful, and heart-warming characters. **Rules of Civility**, which is New York in the late 1930s.

Gentle or cosy reads:

Maeve Binchy's domestic dramas in the Ireland of yesteryear, Rosamunde Pilcher for slightly more romantic stories in England or Scotland, and the slightly quirky Mary Wesley, who wrote books like **The Chamomile Lawn**.

Multigenerational family sagas:

The Forsyte Saga by John Galsworthy, which spans Victorian, Edwardian, and post WWI eras for the Forsyte family, upper middle class in England.

A Spool of Blue Thread by Anne Tyler, set in Baltimore from the 1920s to now.

Middlesex by Jeffrey Eugenides beginning in Asia Minor in the 1920s.

Homegoing by Yaa Gyasi begins as the story of two sisters from Africa's Gold Coast. One marries a white slave trader and the other is sold into slavery.

Way back:

The Red Tent by Anita Diamant, which is about a female character in Genesis.

The Secret Chord by Geraldine Brooks, based on King David
Colm Toibin's **The Testament of Mary**.

Ancient, mythological times:

The Silence of the Girls, by Pat Barker is a retelling of The Iliad.

Circe by Madeleine Miller. Circe is the least daughter of Helios, the god of the sun, but she does find that she has the power of witchcraft.

The Middle Ages:

Umberto Eco's **The Name of the Rose** - murder mystery set in a mediaeval abbey.

The Shardlake series by C.J. Sansom where Matthew Shardlake is a lawyer-detective in the court of Henry VIII. Also by C.J. Sansom, an historical spy novel, called **Winter in Madrid**, set just after the Spanish Civil War, and on the cusp of WWII, and an alternate history called **Dominion**, set in the UK in the 1950s where Britain had surrendered to Germany in 1940.

Ken Follet's **Pillars of the Earth**

Hilary Mantel's award winning **Thomas Cromwell series** beginning with **Wolf Hall**, and finishing just recently with **The Mirror and the Light**.

History in places other than England:

Desert God: A novel of Ancient Egypt by Wilbur Smith

Colleen McCullough - **Masters of Rome series**

Amy Tan for Chinese/American

The moon in the palace: a novel of Empress Wu by Weina Dai Randel, Lisa See's **Snow Flower and the Secret Fan**, set in the 19th century, and about a secret women's language, as well as life for women in China at that time.

Japan - Memoirs of a Geisha by Arthur Golden

Silence by Shusaku Endo tells the story of a seventeenth-century Portuguese priest in Japan at the height of the fearful persecution of the small Christian community.

The Thousand Autumns of Jacob de Zoet by David Mitchell. In 1799 a Dutch clerk, Jacob de Zoet, arrives on Dejima, an island connected to Nagasaki, when all of Japan is closed to foreigners.

Vikram Seth's **A Suitable Boy**, set in 1950s India, when the country was newly independent and going through a rough period. It follows four extended families and is about love, family, ambition, and politics.

Lonesome Dove by Larry McMurtry, a western set in nineteenth century US.

Australian History:

Early colonial history; pioneer times:

Deborah Challinor, Patricia Shaw, Tricia Stringer's **Flinders Ranges** series, **Eureka** by Bruce Venables, and **Bridget Crack** by Rachel Leary.

Thomas Keneally has written lots of Australian historical fiction, such as **The Daughters of Mars**, about WWI.

Anita Heiss' **Barbed Wire and Cherry Blossoms** is set in Cowra in 1944, during the breakout of Japanese prisoners.

Too Much Lip by Melissa Lucashenko, and **The Yield** by Tara June Winch both have historical elements.

Strong historical women on the frontier of discovery:

The naturalist's daughter by Tea Cooper, **The wild air** by Rebecca Mascull, **Lady of the butterflies** by Fiona Mountain, **The flying circus** by Susan Crandall

The Signature of All Things by Elizabeth Gilbert. Beginning in the 18th century, and going through most of the 19th, it begins with the ruthlessly ambitious Henry Whittaker, who made his fortune in botanical trade, and then moves to his intellectually voracious daughter, Alma.

Recent history:

The Line of Beauty by Alan Hollinghurst, set in 1980s London

The Great Alone by Kristin Hannah about a family going off grid in Alaska in the 70s.

Jasper Jones by Craig Silvey, small town Australia in the 60s, and in a similar vein, but set in Adelaide in the late 70s, is Richard Beasley's **Me and Rory Macbeath**.

Half of a Yellow Sun by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is set during the Biafran war in Nigeria in the late 60s, until 1970.

Now and then – These are the books with a current, and an historical setting.

Kate Morton, Kirsty Manning, Fiona McIntosh, and Beatriz Williams.

A.S. Byatt's **Possession**. Also by AS Byatt, but not dual storyline is **The Children's Book**.

Sebastian Faulks' **Paris Echo**, the Paris setting, the engaging characters, and thoughtful pondering of history in all its complexity.

WWI and WWII

Books that focus on women's experiences and/or relationships:

The Tattooist of Auschwitz and its sequel, **Cilka's Journey**, by Heather Morris.

The Nightingale by Kristin Hannah, **The Paris Architect** by Charles Belfour, **The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society**, and Mary-Rose MacColl's **In Falling Snow** which is about a hospital run by women, on the Western Front.

WWI:

Sebastian Faulks' **Birdsong**, **All Quiet on the Western Front** by Erich Maria Remarque, **A Farewell to Arms**.

Pat Barker's **Regeneration Trilogy** - about how young Englishmen coped, or didn't cope, with life in the trenches. Pat Barker also has another trilogy, the first two books, **Life Class** and **Toby's Room**, are set around WWI, and the third, called Noontide is set in WWII, and is about how very bleak that was for those who lived through the Great War.

WWII:

Sebastian Faulks' **Charlotte Gray** about a young English woman working for the French Resistance, **All the Light We Cannot See** by Anthony Doerr, **The Night Watch** by Sarah Waters (and she has lots of great historical novels), **The Book Thief** by Markus Zusak.

A God in Ruins by Kate Atkinson - an undeniable statement on the complex tragedy of WWII.

Miscellaneous

The Essex Serpent by Sarah Perry

Ann Patchett's **The Dutch**

The Outlander series by Diana Gabaldon.

What I am reading:

The Trespasser by Tana French (Dublin Murder Squad #6), **Hamnet** by Maggie

O'Farrell, **The Witch of Exmoor** by Margaret Drabble, and my audio book is **Notes on a Nervous Planet** by Matt Haig.

That's it for this week, don't forget to send me your reading questions – if you want help finding books for yourself, your children, your elderly neighbour. Books in particular genres, or with certain themes. Email me at amyehap@gmail.com and until next time, happy reading.