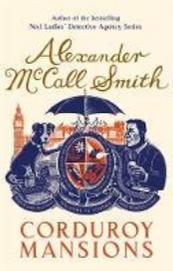
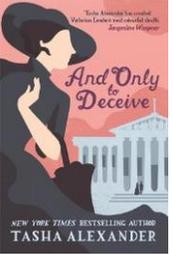
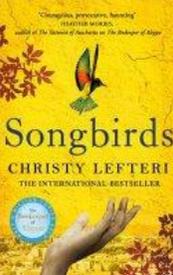
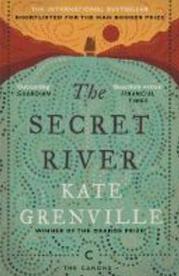
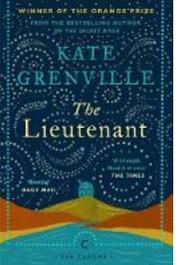
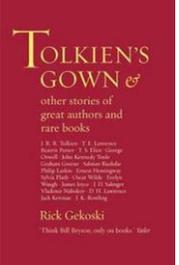
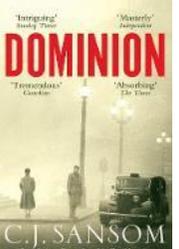


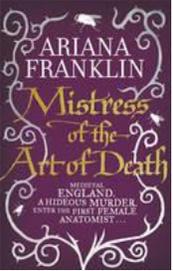
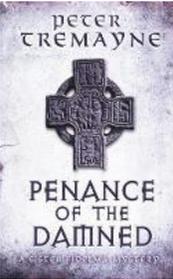
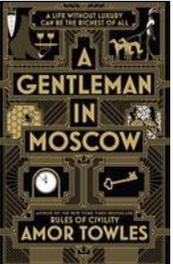
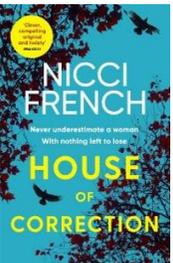


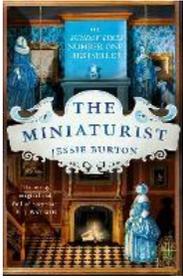
FOKL Best reads 2021

	<p>L. C. Tyler The 'Herring' Mysteries (currently 9 books, starting with <i>The Herring Sellers Apprentice</i>) (Fiction)</p>	<p>An enjoyable series of 'cosy' whodunnits. The main protagonists are Ethelred, a crime writer and Elsie, his literary agent, who hates all authors, but Ethelred in particular. The titles are all based on crime novels from the 'Golden Age' of crime fiction. It's fun trying to spot the references.</p>
	<p>Julie Anderson: Plague (published by Claret Press) (Fiction, London)</p>	<p>A thriller set in the the murky world of Westminster politics and in subterranean London. The author is an ex-Senior Civil Servant and the insight into the workings of the Palace of Westminster are fascinating. The details of the world below the streets of London are clearly well-researched and suitably claustrophobic.</p>
	<p>Sarah Gibson. Swifts and Us. The Life of the Bird that Sleeps in the Sky. (Non Fiction)</p>	<p>A recently published and beautifully written account of the life of swifts, by someone whose fascination with these birds shines through. Lots of up-to-date information about how these birds live, the challenges they face and the people around the world who do so much to safeguard them. A wonderful read.</p>
	<p>Barbara Pym. Excellent Women (Fiction, London)</p>	<p>The story of a few months in the rather grey life of a 30-ish woman in post-war London, one of the 'excellent women' who do good works and serve the men around them. It's a first-person narrative, so we get inside her head to hear her sardonic thoughts about her relationships with various people, from her immediate neighbours to the local parson to new acquaintances among a group of anthropologists. It ends with the possibility of new activities in her life, but it looks as though she's doomed to continue to be one of the excellent women. Great, witty writing.</p>

	<p>Alexander McCall Smith Corduroy Mansions (Fiction, Humour)</p>	<p>I read this book rather unexpectedly – “not my sort of read”! I actually found it fascinating and interesting – a big clap for book clubs.</p>
	<p>Tasha Alexander Lady Emily Mysteries (Fiction)</p>	<p>A series of 20 novels set in Victorian England. Each book is a standalone story that can be read as a one off, but if you get captured by the characters reading in order allows you to follow the back story of Lady Emily and her companions.</p> <p>Lady Emily accepts a proposal of marriage to escape from her controlling mother, but it widowed soon after when her husband dies on an African hunting expedition. She then finds the freedom she most desired to pursue her education in ancient Greek, its history and artefacts as a widow. In discovering more about her husband’s activities after his death she discovers that all is not as it seems.</p> <p>The series provides an interesting view on the conventions of the day both in the UK and further afield. Each story has a crime to be solved, that is never what it first appears. Can you work out ‘whodunnit’ ahead of Lady Emily?</p>
	<p>Sayragul Sauytbody The Chief Witness (Biography)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">A must read!</p> <p>A shocking depiction of one of our world’s current regimes and the story of one woman’s fight to survive. It is about the persecution of the Kazakh and Uyghur, China’s ethnic minorities.</p>
	<p>Christine Lefteri Songbirds (Fiction)</p>	<p>Set in Cyprus it explores twin themes: the life of migrant domestic workers and the illegal trapping of songbirds – both trapped migrants.</p> <p>Very moving, and as good a read as The Beekeeper of Aleppo.</p>

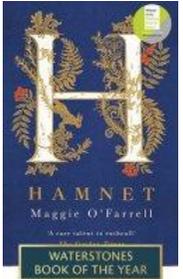
	<p>Kate Grenville Series of novels set in Australia (Fiction)</p>	<p>She fictionalises the history of the early settlers, based on her own family history and a lot of research. All very readable e.g. The Secret River, The Lieutenant.</p>
	<p>Kate Grenville The Lieutenant (Fiction)</p>	<p>A fascinating and moving book – fiction based on historical facts. Humans from different Countries in our world.</p>
	<p>Rick Gekoski (Rare book dealer, writer and broadcaster) Tolkein's Gown & Other stories of great authors and rare books (2004) (Non Fiction)</p>	<p>Based on Radio 4 series – 'Rarebooks, Rare People' Amusing and informative essays, each giving insight of biography of a single book by author and Rick Gekoski's involvement. 20 books feature in all. A book to refer to again and again!</p>
	<p>CJ Sansom Dominion (Fiction)</p>	<p>'At once a vivid, haunting reimagining of 1950s Britain, a gripping, humane spy thriller and a poignant love story, with <i>Dominion</i> C. J. Sansom once again asserts himself as the master of the historical novel.'</p>

	<p style="text-align: center;">Ariana Franklin Mistress of the Art of Death (Fiction)</p>	<p>‘Adelia Aguilar is a rare thing in medieval Europe - a woman who has trained as a doctor. Her speciality is the study of corpses, a skill that must be concealed if she is to avoid accusations of witchcraft. But in Cambridge a child has been murdered, others are disappearing, and King Henry has called upon a renowned Italian investigator to find the killer - fast. What the king gets is Adelia, his very own Mistress of the Art of Death. The investigation takes Adelia deep into Cambridge; its castle and convents, and streets teeming with life. And it is here that she attracts the attention of a murderer who is prepared to kill again...’</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;">Peter Tremayne Penance of The Damned (Fiction)</p>	<p>Part of historical crime series called ‘Sister Fidelma Mysteries’. Setting is Ireland in 7th century. This collection is brilliant for any crime lovers.</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;">Amar Towles A Gentleman in Moscow (Fiction)</p>	<p>Very easy and interesting to read. Good characters and provides some information on Bolshevik Russia.</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;">Nicci French House of Correction (Fiction)</p>	<p>Very well written with lots of twists and turns. The end was very surprising.</p>



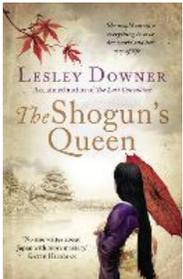
Jessie Burton
The Miniaturist
(Fiction)

An amazingly accomplished first novel. Set in 17th Century Amsterdam, we learn how the 18 year old Nella Oortman adjusts to a totally different way of life.



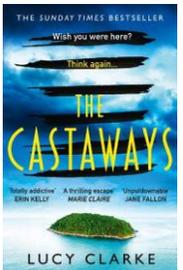
Maggie O'Farrell
Hamnet
(Fiction)

Powerful recreation of 16th Century rural English family – Shakespeare's. Moving account of devastating illness (plague) and the death of a child (Shakespeare's son Hamnet).



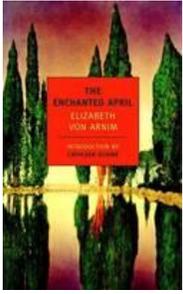
Lesley Downer
The Shogun's Queen
(Fiction)

As the book jacket says: 'Based on the remarkable true story of a woman who sacrificed everything in a bid to save her world' The Shogun's Queen is epic historical fiction.'



Lucy Clarke
The Castaways
(Fiction)

Different from the usual mystery stories and a bit of a page turner.



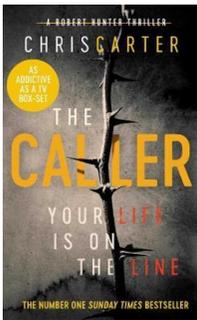
Elizabeth von Arnim
The Enchanted April
(Fiction)

I had seen this on screen and loved it – it is beautifully written



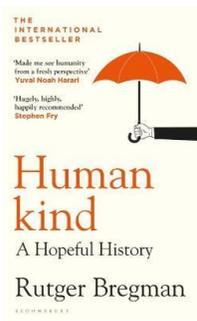
Ann Patchett
The Dutch House
(Fiction)

This is a fascinating story about a brother and sister and the house they grew up in and keep returning to.



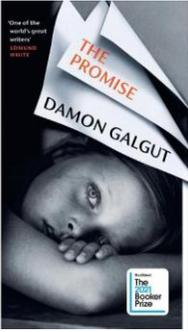
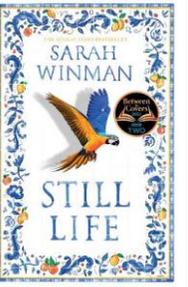
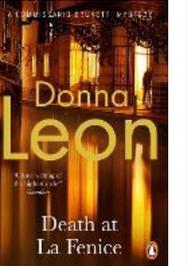
Chris Carter
“The Caller” – A Robert Hunter thriller series
(Fiction)

Not a book to be “enjoyed”. If you can cope with the graphic murder details, the final reveal opens a lot more questions i.e. who is the original murderer!.



Rutger Bregman
Humankind A Hopeful History
(Non Fiction)

This book clarifies some important events from the past – with surprising, shocking and often feelings of hope and awareness.

	<p style="text-align: center;">Damon Galgut The Promise (booker winner 2021) (Fiction)</p>	<p>Moving scenarios but with some very funny passages and characters. Wonderful writing</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;">Sarah Winmans Still Life (Fiction)</p>	<p>The enchanting tale of an unlikely friendship between a British soldier and an alleged spy in a wartime Tuscany ripe with colour and the ghosts of the past.</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;">Sarah Winmans Tin Man (Fiction)</p>	<p>One of those rare novels that lives on long after the last page; Sarah Winman’s power to fully inhabit her characters only seems to deepen, and this is a novel that almost stings with truth. It begins with a painting won in a raffle: fifteen sunflowers, hung on the wall by a woman who believes that men and boys are capable of beautiful things. And then there are two boys, Ellis and Michael, who are inseparable. And the boys become men, and then Annie walks into their lives, and it changes nothing and everything. Ellis, Michael and Annie, three points in a poignant triangle of loss and longing, a story of paths taken and the regrets that can haunt forever. Masterclass stuff from the author of “When God was a Rabbit”.</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;">Donna Leon Commissario Brunetti series (Fiction)</p>	<p>‘For her millions of fans, Donna Leon's novels have opened a window into the private Venice of her citizens, a world of incomparable beauty, family intimacy, shocking crime, and insidious corruption. Her novels featuring Commissario Brunetti, beginning with “Death at La Fenice”, have all been highly acclaimed’</p>