

THE STRIPEY BADGER BOOKSHOP

ARMCHAIR TRAVEL BOOK CLUB

BOOKS FROM *north america*

(plus qualifying books from our shelves displaying a passport sticker)



1. FRIED GREEN TOMATOES AT THE WHISTLE STOP CAFÉ, Fannie Flagg, 1992

Rediscover the ultimate comfort read in the classic story of friendship, loyalty and secrets set in the deep south of America in the 1930s. The day Idgie Threadgoode and Ruth Jamison opened the Whistle Stop Cafe, the town took a turn for the better. It was the Depression and that cafe was a home from home for many of us.

You could get eggs, grits, bacon, ham, coffee and a smile for 25 cents. Ruth was just the sweetest girl you ever met. And Idgie? She was a character, all right.

You never saw anyone so headstrong. But how anybody could have thought she murdered that man is beyond me. Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Cafe is a mouth-watering tale of love, laughter and mystery.

2. A WALK IN THE WOODS, Bill Bryson, 1995

In the company of his friend Stephen Katz (last seen in the bestselling *Neither Here nor There*), Bill Bryson set off to hike the Appalachian Trail, the longest continuous footpath in the world. Ahead lay almost 2,200 miles of remote mountain wilderness filled with bears, moose, bobcats, rattlesnakes, poisonous plants, disease-bearing ticks, the occasional chuckling murderer and - perhaps most alarming of all - people whose favourite pastime is discussing the relative merits of the external-frame backpack. Facing savage weather, merciless insects, unreliable maps and a fickle companion whose profoundest wish was to go to a motel and watch *The X-Files*, Bryson gamely struggled through the wilderness to achieve a lifetime's ambition - not to die outdoors.

3. THE SHIPPING NEWS, Annie Proulx (Canada), 1994

Annie Proulx's highly acclaimed, international bestseller and Pulitzer Prize-winning novel. Quoye is a hapless, hopeless hack journalist living and working in New York. When his no-good wife is killed in a spectacular road accident, Quoye heads for the land of his forefathers - the remotest corner of far-flung Newfoundland.

With 'the aunt' and his delinquent daughters - Bunny and Sunshine - in tow, Quoye finds himself part of an unfolding, exhilarating Atlantic drama. 'The Shipping News' is an irresistible comedy of human life and possibility.

4. THE BLIND ASSASSIN, Margaret Atwood, (Canada), 2001

Winner of the Man Booker Prize. By the author of *The Handmaid's Tale* and *Alias Grace*. Laura Chase's older sister Iris, married at eighteen to a politically prominent industrialist but now poor and eighty-two, is living in Port Ticonderoga, a town dominated by their once-prosperous family before the First War. While coping with her unreliable body, Iris reflects on her far from exemplary life, in particular the events surrounding her sister's tragic death. Chief among these was the publication of *The Blind Assassin*, a novel which earned the dead Laura Chase not only notoriety but also a devoted cult following.

Sexually explicit for its time, *The Blind Assassin* describes a risky affair in the turbulent thirties between a wealthy young woman and a man on the run. During their secret meetings in rented rooms, the lovers concoct a pulp fantasy set on Planet Zycron. As the invented story twists through love and sacrifice and betrayal, so does the real one; while events in both move closer to war and catastrophe.

By turns lyrical, outrageous, formidable, compelling and funny, this is a novel filled with deep humour and dark drama.

5. AN AMERICAN MARRIAGE, Tayaria Jones, 2019

A moving portrayal of the effects of a wrongful conviction on a young African-American couple.' - Barack Obama. A Book of the Year according to the i, Guardian, Sunday Times, Sunday Mail. Newlyweds Celestial and Roy are the embodiment of the American Dream. He is a young executive, and she is an artist on the brink of an exciting career. Until one day they are ripped apart by circumstances neither could have imagined.

Roy is arrested and sentenced to twelve years for a crime Celestial knows he didn't commit. Devastated and unmoored, Celestial finds herself struggling to hold on to the love that has been her centre, taking comfort in Andre, their closest friend. When Roy's conviction is suddenly overturned, he returns home ready to resume their life together.

A masterpiece of storytelling, *An American Marriage* offers a profoundly insightful look into the hearts and minds of three unforgettable characters who are at once bound together and separated by forces beyond their control.

6. THERE THERE, Tommy Orange, 2019

One of Barack Obama's best books of 2018, the New York Times bestselling novel about contemporary America from a bold new Native American voice. Red Feather is newly sober and hoping to reconnect with her estranged family. That's why she is there. Dene is there because he has been collecting stories to honour his uncle's death, while Edwin is looking for his true father and Opal came to watch her boy Orvil dance.

All of them are connected by bonds they may not yet understand. All of them are here for the celebration that is the Big Oakland Powwow. But Tony Loneman is also there.

And Tony has come to the Powwow with darker intentions. 'An exhilarating, polyphonic debut novel... Dazzling' Daily Telegraph 'Lyrical and playful, shaking and shimmering with energy...

7. EDUCATED, Tara Westover, 2018

Tara Westover and her family grew up preparing for the End of Days but, according to the Government, she didn't exist. She hadn't been registered for a birth certificate. She had no school records because she'd never set foot in a classroom, and no medical records because her father didn't believe in hospitals. As she grew older, her father became more radical and her brother more violent. At sixteen, Tara knew she had to leave home. In doing so she discovered both the transformative power of education, and the price she had to pay.

8. BOBCATS BEFORE BREAKFAST , John W. Kulish, New Hampshire

A classic now in paperback. This is a firsthand account of a twentieth-century naturalist, guide, hunter, trapper, and woodsman who spent more than forty years living with and off the land. Kulish's daily routine was to rise before dawn, get out into the woods, and track, observe, and record his findings on deer, otters beaver and wildcats, all before breakfast.

9. AUGUST, Callan Wink, 2020

August is an average 12-year old – he likes dogs and fishing, and doesn't even mind the early morning chores on his family's farm. When his parents' marriage falls apart and he has to start over a few towns, he tries hard to be an average teen. Beautifully written and unfolding against an epic American landscape, August is a compelling, authentic and poignant story about the joys and traumas that irrevocably shape us all.

10. HOW MUCH OF THESE HILLS IS GOLD, C Pam Zhang, Longlisted for the 2020 Booker Prize

This is a sweeping adventure story about siblings, divided and bound, and the powerful illusion of the American Dream. Ba dies in the night, Ma is already gone. Lucy and Sam, twelve and eleven, are suddenly alone and on the run. With their father's body on their backs, they roam an unforgiving American West dotted with giant buffalo bones and tiger paw prints, searching for a place to give him a proper burial.

