



Best books... Rosalind Miles

The writer and broadcaster chooses her favourite books. Rebel Women, a follow-up to her 1988 Sunday Times and New York Times bestseller The Women's History of the World, is out now, published by Virago at £25

Adam Bede by George Eliot, 1859 (Penguin £8.99). World history resounds with women's silenced voices, and Dinah speaks out for Eliot's aunt, a lay preacher banned from her ministry for life. Gorgeous, too, are the lush Warwickshire settings and Shakespearean characters such as Mrs Poyser.

The Golden Arrow by Mary Webb, 1916 (Michael Walmer £6.99). A beguilingly old-fashioned story with a strikingly modern treatment of love and pain at its heart: a heroine Deborah, rooted in the Shropshire landscape, whose soul wanders with the stars but who still washes dishes and brings the cattle home.

Wide Sargasso Sea by Jean Rhys, 1966 (Penguin £7.99). All her life Rhys listened to women's silences and made them cry out. Her reinvention of the gargoyle Bertha in *Jane Eyre* as the broken blossom Antoinette is a triumph of revolutionary feminist re-creation.

Bonjour Tristesse by Françoise Sagan, 1954 (Penguin £7.99). Still unrecognised as a mini-masterpiece of existentialism, this riveting account of cool Parisians on a hot Riviera was a world away from the sweet, safe shires of my girlhood: the machinations of teenager Cécile were an eye-opener.

The Group by Mary McCarthy, 1963 (Virago £9.99). An eye-opener and leg-opener, too, this exposé of the lives of women graduates did as much as The Beatles to put sex on the map. McCarthy's depiction of Dottie's tragicomic struggles with her Dutch cap demonstrates the value of women telling it like it is.

Coming from Behind by Howard Jacobson, 1983 (Vintage £9.99). Sefton is on his knees and the only way is up. Every word of this novel rings true, and nothing is funnier than the truth. But as a master of creating laughter on the edge of pain, Jacobson also likes us to think.

Live events during lockdown

It has – inevitably – been a bleak spring for the literary world, with bookshops closed and festivals cancelled. But amid the gloom came news that the Hay Festival would be going ahead online, with a “reshaped” programme from 18 to 31 May, featuring many of the authors who had been on the original line-up.

Hay Festival Digital will live stream 80 free events, with interactive Q&As; speakers include Hilary Mantel, Stephen Fry, Maggie O'Farrell, Gloria Steinem and Roddy Doyle. There's also a starry Wordsworth 250 celebration on 22 May, featuring readings by Benedict Cumberbatch, Margaret Atwood, Vanessa Redgrave and Jonathan Pryce, and a five-day schools programme (register at hayfestival.com). Other live-events organisers making the leap into cyberspace (mostly via Zoom) include the **How To Academy**. It has some free talks – including novelist Will Self discussing Kafka on 19 May – as well as paid-for interactive digital masterclasses on a range of subjects (howtoacademy.com). **5x15** is taking its format (five speakers talking for 15 minutes each) online with a free streaming event on 18 May (5x15.com). Meanwhile the **Lockdown LitFest**, launched in March, hosts weekly talks with authors. Wordsworth scholar Jonathan Bate will feature on 20 May, and actress Miriam Margolyes is interviewing academic Janet Todd on 22 May (lockdownlitfest.com). Normally, the **Aspen Institute** is a forum for business and political leaders, but it's now hosting free weekday webinars reflecting on what the post-pandemic world will look like. On 18 May, Peter Mandelson and others will discuss “The Future of Relations with China” (aspenuk.org).

Titles in print are available from The Week Bookshop at TheWeekBookshop.co.uk. For out-of-print books visit biblio.co.uk

The Week's guide to what's worth watching

Programmes

The Best of RHS Chelsea Flower Show With the flower show cancelled this year, Monty Don looks back at its past decade, and talks to the creators of some of its most memorable garden designs. Mon 18 May, BBC2 20:00, and every weeknight (60mins each).

Monkman & Seagull's Genius Adventures The *University Challenge* alumni tour Britain to take an offbeat look at the stories behind major scientific breakthroughs, starting with inventions that sparked the Industrial Revolution. Mon 18 May, BBC2 21:00 (60mins).

The Changin' Times of Ike White Forgotten musical prodigy Ike White recorded an album in a US jail in 1976, while serving life for murder, but as stardom beckoned, he disappeared. In this documentary, Daniel Vernon sets out to discover why. Mon 18 May, BBC4 22:00 (80mins).

Old, Alone and Stuck at Home An unsparing look at the challenges faced by the elderly and vulnerable during lockdown, narrated by Imelda Staunton. Wed 20 May, C4 21:00 (60mins).

What's the Matter with Tony Slattery? The 1990s comedy star explores the struggle with mental illness and addiction that ended his show-business career 25 years ago, and examines its roots. Thur 21 May, BBC2 21:00 (60mins).

Films

Educating Rita (1983) Julie Walters made her film debut in Willy Russell's affecting film about a Liverpool hairdresser trying to better her lot by getting a university education. Michael Caine co-stars as her jaded tutor. Sun 17 May, BBC1 22:30 (110mins).



The Changin' Times of Ike White, Mon 18 May

The Grand Budapest Hotel (2014) Beloved for its stylish design and superb cast, Wes Anderson's quirky but unexpectedly moving comedy-thriller follows the fates of the staff and guests at a hotel in eastern Europe in the 1930s. Tue 19 May, Film4 21:00 (120mins).

Spotlight (2015) Gripping, downbeat drama about The Boston Globe's investigation into a paedophilia scandal in the Catholic Church, starring Mark Ruffalo and Michael Keaton. Fri 22 May, BBC2 23:20 (120mins).

New to subscription TV

Brassic The second series of the brash comedy about a group of ne'er-do-well friends in a fictitious Lancashire town. Starring Joe Gilgun and Michelle Keegan, with a cameo by Dominic West. *On Sky One*.

Hollywood Fact and fiction are “blended insouciantly” in Ryan Murphy's glossy new period drama, about a group of young hopefuls who'll do almost anything to make it in Tinseltown in the late 1940s (Daily Telegraph). *On Netflix*.

Coming up for sale

Sotheby's is hosting an online sale of **Impressionist and Modern Art**, including works by Degas, Renoir and Morandi. You can see specialists discussing some of the works that are going under the hammer, before these disappear back into private collections. Auction ends 18 May; sothebys.com.