

# Best books for September

Good Housekeeping's books editor, Kerry Fowler, gives you her recommended reads



**The Ghost Lover** by Gillian Greenwood, (John Murray, £16.99)

Josie Price is a cool and isolated narrator of life, who has spent much of her emotional energy on the Haddeley family.

Following the death of Alice Haddeley, whom Josie loved almost as a daughter, Josie has lived a secondary life with Alice's widower and new wife. She is entwined in their lives and in her career selling Egyptian tomb relics, but when an unsettlingly ambivalent boy appears claiming to be Alice's son, he stirs up an emotional dust-storm. A fiercely powerful story of disturbing the past.



**Sacred Hearts** by Sarah Dunant (Virago, £14.99)

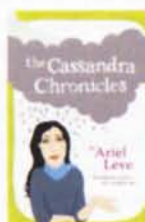
Convent life, you'd imagine, is one you choose - a vocation. But this searing story of the nuns of Santa Caterina in 16th-century Italy reveals

how enforced convent entry was common for noble women who couldn't find husbands, or, like 16-year-old Serafina, who are sent by their family to end unsuitable relationships. Serafina's horror at her incarceration is palpable, but as a bond develops with Zuana, the nun who treats the sisters for illness, repressed emotion and self-inflicted wounds, so does a glimmer of hope.



**Family Album** by Penelope Lively (Fig Tree, £16.99)

Such a cosy thing: comfortable middle-class family life. But in the large, well-worn domain of Allersmead - home to six, now grown and largely dispersed children, their ample and accomplished cook of a mother, distracted father and lifelong au pair - only the dog stays true under scrutiny to the image of shambling contentment. Beyond the chequerboard hallway, sibling sniping, marital disharmony and unspoken pacts to conceal unforgivable acts play out uncomfortably. A deeply satisfying, eloquent family-fabric novel.



**The Cassandra Chronicles** by Ariel Leve (Portobello Books, £12.99)

This was never intended to be a feel-good book but in a perverse way it proves itself a great mood-shifter and lifter.

Darkly humorous Ariel Leve lays out her daily insecurities like a patchwork quilt of modern anxiety and inadequacy, sparkling with tiny appliquéd gems of self-deprecating cynicism. Her hand-wringing at social trends: breast-sharing for new mothers/therapy 'n' jogging sessions; fessing up to her afternoon naps and Blackberry deficiency... Every admission of falling short makes us all feel a bit better.

## On my bookshelf



GMTV presenter Penny Smith is passionate about books and is now a novelist herself; her latest fiction, **After The Break**,

is published by Harper Perennial, £6.99. Here she explains why Colin Firth in breeches comes a poor second to her own image of Mr Darcy...

**Winnie The Pooh** by AA Milne (Egmont Children's Books, £6.99)

is brilliant because people are often like the animals - one of my brothers was like Eeyore, quite gloomy; I was like Rabbit, always tidying up. It was the first book I read on my own, so AA Milne was responsible for me becoming a bookworm, to the extent that when we were about to go out as a family, I used to hide behind the curtains reading, hoping my parents would forget there were four children and leave me behind.

**Pride And Prejudice** by Jane Austen (Wordsworth Classics, £1.99)

This wasn't a set text for us at school, but I read it anyway and it got me into the classics big time. I had such vivid pictures of all the characters and places. Sadly, every adaptation, including the fantastic one with Colin Firth, was never a patch on my image of what they all looked like and were like. Plus I just love a love story...

**Life At The Extremes: The Science Of Survival** by Dr Frances Ashcroft (University of California Press, £9.99)

is full of derring-do and really mad scientists trying to prove what they think they know. You know QI (Quite Interesting)? Well this should be VI because I find it Very Interesting. For example, when they tell you to put on your mask first in a plane it's because the 15 seconds before the oxygen becomes too thin is the only time you are capable of doing anything. That's worth knowing!

## This month you could win...

Celebrating 60 years in publishing, Weidenfeld & Nicolson has produced a stunning hardback collection of its classic titles in beautifully designed modern jackets. The set includes authors such as Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, John Irving, Jostein Gaarder and JG Farrell. We have

10 sets of four of the books to give away: **The Color Purple** by Alice Walker, **A Suitable Boy** by Vikram Seth, **The Reader** by Bernhard Schlink and **Lolita** by Vladimir Nabokov. Each of the sets is worth more than £59. For your chance to win one, send a postcard with your name and address details to Weidenfeld Books Competition, Good Housekeeping, 72 Broadwick Street, London W1F 9EP, by 20 September 2009.



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