

Staff Holiday Reading List 2018

compiled by Pat Pledger from suggestions from members of the OZTL_NET listserv.

Britt-Marie was here by Fredrik Backman. In a similar category to **'The Cactus'** by Sarah Haywood and **'Eleanor Oliphant is Completely Fine'**, Britt-Marie is the tale of an extremely organised woman who copes with life by cleaning. She walks out of her 40 year marriage, and finds herself in a small town, with the responsibility of managing a recreation centre. This book is both funny and heart-warming. Recommended by **Marie Miegel**.

The Bus on Thursday by Shirley Barrett. Freshly single and thoroughly traumatised from the ordeals of breast cancer, Eleanor Mellett starts a new job as a teacher in a remote mountain hamlet. It's certainly peaceful enough, almost too peaceful. But what's become of the previous teacher, the saintly Miss Barker, who has disappeared abruptly under mysterious circumstances? And what's with all those locks on the door? And what the hell is that bus doing idling outside her house late, late at night? (Publisher) Recommended by Karys McEwen.

Piglettes by Clementine Beauvais. An uplifting YA story about three teenage French girls who decide, after being cyber-bullied about their looks, to undertake a road trip on their bicycles to Paris where each has a life-affirming goal awaiting. Funny and clever. Recommended by Craig Edgman.

The Readers of Broken Wheel by Katarina Bivald. Broken Wheel, Iowa, has never seen anyone like Sara, who traveled all the way from Sweden just to meet her book-loving pen pal. When she arrives, however, she finds Amy's funeral guests just leaving. Recommended by Sandra Shannon.

In the Dark Spaces by Cally Black. YA. The latest winner of the Ampersand Prize is a genre-smashing hostage drama about 14-year-old Tamara, who's faced with an impossible choice when she falls for her kidnappers. Yet this is no ordinary kidnapping. Tamara has been living on a star freighter in deep space, and her kidnappers are terrifying Crowpeople – the only aliens humanity has ever encountered. No-one has ever survived a Crowpeople attack, until now – and Tamara must use everything she has just to stay alive. (Publisher) Recommended by Susie Hall, Pat Pledger

The Miniaturist by Jessie Burton. On an autumn day in 1686, eighteen-year-old Nella Oortman knocks at the door of a grand house in the wealthiest quarter of Amsterdam. She has come from the country to begin a new life as the wife of illustrious merchant trader Johannes Brandt, but instead she is met by his sharp-tongued sister, Marin. Only later does Johannes appear and present her with an extraordinary wedding gift: a cabinet-sized replica of their home. (Publisher) Recommended by Susie Hall

Record of a Spaceborn Few by Becky Chambers (SciFi) *Wayfarers* book 3. Centuries after the last humans left Earth, the Exodus Fleet is a living relic, a place many are from but few outsiders have seen. Humanity has finally been accepted into the galactic community, but while this has opened doors for many, those who have not yet left for alien cities fear that their carefully cultivated way of life is under threat. Tessa chose to stay home when her brother Ashby left for the stars, but has to question that decision when her position in the Fleet is threatened. (Publisher) Recommended by Dee McQueen, Kara Bystrom.

Kill shot by Garry Disher. Wyatt Thriller. Some people just work better alone. Wyatt's one of them. He's been getting by on nice quiet little burglaries-one-man jobs-when he gets wind of something bigger. A corporate crook, notorious Ponzi schemer, set to face court and certain jail time. He's about to skip bail the old-fashioned way- on a luxury yacht with a million dollars in cash. Wyatt thinks it sounds like something he should get into. He's not alone. Recommended by Pat Pledger.

Eve of Man by Giovanna and Tom Fletcher. What if the fate of humanity was down to you? They had predicted the end of the world would be epic - a nuclear war, a plague, an asteroid. But it came with a whisper, not a bang. For over fifty years, no girls have been born - only boys. The youngest and last generation of women alive are now in their fifties. Not only are their looks fading, but these greying women are humanity's only hope for survival. Until there is sudden hope: a girl is born. And in that moment, she instantly becomes the most important person in history. She is their saviour. Her name is Eve. (Publisher) Recommended by Katie Gerber.

Florida by Lauren Goff (Short stories). The stories in this collection span characters, towns, decades, even centuries, but Florida – its landscape, climate, history and state of mind – becomes their gravitational centre. (Publisher). Recommended by Dee McQueen.

Marry Me, Mischa McPhee by Kate Gordon. **Marry Me, Mischa McPhee** is a sweet novella set in Hobart, right in Salamanca, revolving around a bookstore and the staff who work there. (Australian, Christmas themed) Recommended by Tehani Croft.

The Stella Hardy series by JM Green (**Good Money** and **Too Easy**) Introducing Stella Hardy, a wise-cracking social worker with a thirst for social justice, good laksa, and alcohol. Stella's phone rings. A young African boy, the son of one of her clients, has been murdered in a dingy back alley. Stella, in her forties and running low on empathy, heads into the night to comfort the grieving mother. (Publisher) Recommended by Kara Bystrom.

Icefall by Stephanie Gunn (Australian SF). The Mountain on the planet of Icefall holds the mystery to a lost colony and an irresistible, fatal allure to the climbers of the universe. Maggie is determined to be the first to make the summit. Aisha, injured in a climbing incident herself, has always supported her wife, trusting Maggie would always return from her adventures. But no one ever returns from the Mountain. (Publisher) Recommended by Tehani Croft.

The Dry by Jane Harper. Luke Hadler turns a gun on his wife and child, then himself. The farming community of Kiewarra is facing life and death choices daily. If one of their own broke under the strain, well ... When Federal Police investigator Aaron Falk returns to Kiewarra for the funerals, he is loath to confront the people who rejected him twenty years earlier. But when his investigative skills are called on, the facts of the Hadler case start to make him doubt this murder-suicide charge. (Publisher) Recommended by Sonja Faust, Pat Pledger, Karen Garson.

The lost man by Jane Harper. Three brothers, one death, a fence line stretching to the horizon. Two brothers meet at the border of their vast cattle properties under the unrelenting sun of outback Queensland. They are at the stockman's grave, a landmark so old, no one can remember who is buried there. But today, the scant shadow it casts was the last hope for their middle brother, Cameron. (Publisher) Recommended by Pat Pledger, Karen Garson.

Gillespie and I by Jane Harris. As she sits in her Bloomsbury home, with her two birds for company, elderly Harriet Baxter sets out to relate the story of her acquaintance, nearly four decades previously, with Ned Gillespie, a talented artist who never achieved the fame she maintains he deserved. (Publisher) Recommended by Paul Byrne.

The Observations by Jane Harris. Scotland, 1863. In an attempt to escape her past, Bessy Buckley takes a job working as a maid in a big country house. But when Arabella, her beautiful mistress, asks her to undertake a series of bizarre tasks, Bessy begins to realise that she hasn't quite landed on her feet. (Publisher) Recommended by Paul Byrne.

The Sparsholt Affair by Alan Hollinghurst. In October 1940, the handsome young David Sparsholt arrives in Oxford. A keen athlete and oarsman, he at first seems unaware of the

effect he has on others – particularly on the lonely and romantic Evert Dax, son of a celebrated novelist and destined to become a writer himself. While the Blitz rages in London, Oxford exists at a strange remove: an ephemeral, uncertain place, in which nightly blackouts conceal secret liaisons. Over the course of one momentous term, David and Evert forge an unlikely friendship that will colour their lives for decades to come. (Publisher) Recommended by Dee McQueen.

Eleanor Oliphant is completely fine by Gail Honeyman. Such a bestseller it hardly needs a recommendation, except to say, “If you haven’t yet read it, do yourself a favour and pick up a copy”. The eponymous heroine is a socially-isolated office worker who through a series of unplanned events is drawn into connections that change her life. Completely devoid of mawkishness or sentimentality, but an intensely moving read. Recommended by Craig Edgman, Karen Collins.

Broken Earth trilogy, **The fifth season**, **The obelisk gate** and **The stone sky** by N K Jemisin (spec fic). The amazing multi-Hugo award winning series. This is the way the world ends...for the last time. A season of endings has begun. It starts with the great red rift across the heart of the world's sole continent, spewing ash that blots out the sun. It starts with death, with a murdered son and a missing daughter. (Publisher) Recommended by Tehani Croft.

The Calculating Stars & The Fated Sky by Mary Robinette Kowal. **Lady Astronaut** series – alternate history SF. Elma York’s experience as a WASP pilot and mathematician earns her a place in the International Aerospace Coalition’s attempts to put man on the moon. Review at https://www.readplus.com.au/blog_detail.php?id=9162 Recommended by Tehani Croft, Pat Pledger.

The Choke by Sofie Laguna. Beautifully told story of Justine, a neglected child living near the Murray River. Neglected and abandoned by her parents, and given very little support, Justine tells the story of her male-dominated world through naive eyes. She navigates this potentially dangerous world until inevitably falling prey to the first person to show her affection. Harrowing, but ultimately uplifting. Recommended by Marie Miegel, Kim Miller.

The eye of the sheep by Sofie Laguna. Winner of the 2015 Miles Franklin Literary Award Meet Jimmy Flick. He’s not like other kids - he’s both too fast and too slow. He sees too much, and too little. Jimmy’s mother Paula is the only one who can manage him. She teaches him how to count sheep so that he can fall asleep. She holds him tight enough to stop his cells spinning. It is only Paula who can keep Jimmy out of his father’s way. But when Jimmy’s world falls apart, he has to navigate the unfathomable world on his own, and make things right. (Publisher) Recommended by Sonja Faust.

Paris seamstress by Natasha Lester. 1940. Parisian seamstress Estella Bissette is forced to flee France as the Germans advance. She is bound for Manhattan with a few francs, one suitcase, her sewing machine and a dream: to have her own atelier. 2015. Australian curator Fabienne Bissette journeys to the annual Met Gala for an exhibition of her beloved grandmother’s work - one of the world’s leading designers of ready-to-wear clothing. Recommended by Helen Eddy.

A short history of tractors and **We are all made of glue** by Marina Lewycka. Both books have similar themes: elderly abuse, dysfunctional families and central characters still suffering the effects of war. However, the books are lightened with humour and will make entertaining holiday reading. Recommended by Thelma Harvey.

History of bees by Maja Lunde. The story is told as three story strands in different settings and times: William, a biologist in England in 1852; George, a beekeeper in the United States in 2007, and Tao, a worker in China in 2098. Recommended by Helen Eddy, Paul Pledger.

Prague Spring by Simon Mawer (Historical set in 1968) It's the summer of 1968, the year of love and hate, of Prague Spring and Cold War winter. Two English students, Ellie and James, set off to hitch-hike across Europe with no particular aim in mind but a continent, and themselves, to discover. Somewhere in southern Germany they decide, on a whim, to visit Czechoslovakia where Alexander Dubcek's "socialism with a human face" is smiling on the world. (Publisher) Recommended by Dee McQueen.

Gone with the wind by Margaret Mitchell. Set against the dramatic backdrop of the American Civil War, Margaret Mitchell's magnificent historical epic is an unforgettable tale of love and loss, of a nation mortally divided and a people forever changed. Above all, it is the story of beautiful, ruthless Scarlett O'Hara and the dashing soldier of fortune, Rhett Butler. (Publisher) Recommended by Sonja Faust.

The Tattooist of Auschwitz by Heather Morris. Lale Sokolov is well-dressed, a charmer, a ladies' man. He is also a Jew. On the first transport from Slovakia to Auschwitz in 1942, Lale immediately stands out to his fellow prisoners. In the camp, he is looked up to, looked out for, and put to work in the privileged position of *Tätowierer* – the tattooist – to mark his fellow prisoners, forever. One of them is a young woman, Gita, who steals his heart at first glance. (Publisher) Recommended by Susie Hall, Sue Warren.

The Nanny by Melissa Nathan (very funny chicklit!) Twenty-three-year-old Jo Green knows that if she has to spend one more night in ultra-provincial Niblet-Upon-Avon she'll go completely bonkers. So she answers an ad in the paper, bids her devoted boyfriend Shaun adieu, and heads off to the big city. With a new job that offers excitement; a cool car; and her own suite with a TV, DVD player, and a cell phone, how can she go wrong? (Publisher) Recommended by Sue Warren.

Spinning silver by Naomi Novak. (Fantasy) A new take on the classic fairy tale Rumpelstiltskin. Miryem is the daughter and granddaughter of moneylenders, but her father is not a very good one. Free to lend and reluctant to collect, he has left his family on the edge of poverty - until Miryem intercedes. Recommended by Pat Pledger. (Review at https://www.readplus.com.au/blog_detail.php?id=9061)

Atlantic black by A.S. Patric. This is a tale of resounding blackness, as a young woman, Katerina Klova travels with her mother on a passenger liner taking them from South America to Europe. Recommended by Elizabeth Bondar.

Shout in the ruins by Kevin Powers. Powerfully written and well crafted, this novel draws together two strands, one set during the cruel times of slavery plantations and the American Civil War and the other, ninety years and more later, as George Seldom sets out on a path toward some kind of atonement. Recommended by Helen Eddy.

In a house of lies by Ian Rankin. A John Rebus novel. Everyone has something to hide. A missing private investigator is found, locked in a car hidden deep in the woods. Worse still - both for his family and the police - the body was in an area that had already been searched, ten years ago. (Publisher) Recommended by Pat Pledger. (Review at https://www.readplus.com.au/blog_detail.php?id=9157)

Happiness for Humans by P. Z. Reizen. *Happiness for Humans* is a joyful, romantic and very funny story, perfect for readers who loved *The Rosie Project* and *Eleanor Oliphant is Completely Fine*. Do you believe in soulmates? Aiden does. So when his colleague, Jen, is dumped unceremoniously by her dreadful boyfriend, Aiden decides to take matters - and Jen's life - into his own hands. (Publisher) Recommended by Karys McEwen.

Before I let you go by Kelly Rimmer. With a 2am phone call, Annie is plunged back into her troubled sister's life, realizing that she is being called upon to help once more as she listens to her sister's despair. Recommended by Elizabeth Bondar.

Merry Happy Valkyrie by Tansy Rayner Roberts. Norse myth and magic collides with a small town Tasmanian Christmas in this festive romantic fantasy! (Australian spec fic, Christmas themed). Recommended by Tehani Croft.

Normal people by Sally Rooney. Connell and Marianne grow up in the same small town in rural Ireland. The similarities end there; they are from very different worlds. When they both earn places at Trinity College in Dublin, a connection that has grown between them lasts long into the following years. (Publisher) Recommended by Dee McQueen.

Sarah's Key by Tatiana de Rosnay. Set during WW2 in France, with the roundup of Jews from Paris. While fiction, it is based on fact, and is from a similar time to **Suite Française** by Irene Nemirovsky. Both great reads! Recommended by Elisabeth Wells.

On the Java Ridge by Jock Serong. Skipper Isi Natoli and a group of Australian surf tourists are anchored off the Indonesian island of Dana. In the Canberra office of Cassius Calvert, Minister for Border Integrity, a federal election looms and a hardline new policy on asylum-seekers is being rolled out. Not far from Dana, the Takalar is having engine trouble. Among the passengers on board fleeing from persecution are Roya and her mother, and Roya's unborn sister. The storm now closing in on the Takalar and the Java Ridge will mean catastrophe for them all. (Publisher) Recommended by Kim Miller.

Preservation by Jock Serong. Based on the true story of the wreck of the Sydney Cove. In a beach not far from the isolated settlement of Sydney in 1797, a fishing boat picks up three shipwreck survivors, distressed and terribly injured. They have walked hundreds of miles across a landscape whose features—and inhabitants—they have no way of comprehending. They have lost fourteen companions along the way. Their accounts of the ordeal are evasive. It is Lieutenant Joshua Grayling's task to investigate the story. (Publisher) Review at https://www.readplus.com.au/blog_detail.php?id=9296 Recommended by Paul Pledger.

Dry by Neal & Jarrod Schusterman. (YA) When the California drought escalates to catastrophic proportions, a group of teens is forced to make life and death decisions in this harrowing story of survival. Recommended by Dee McQueen.

Scythe by Neal Shusterman. YA. In a world where disease, war and crime have been eliminated, the only way to die is to be randomly killed ("gleaned") by professional scythes. Citra and Rowan are teenagers who have been selected to be scythes' apprentices, and despite wanting nothing to do with the vocation, they must learn the art of killing and understand the necessity of what they do. (Publisher) Recommended by Karen Collins, Pat Pledger. (Review at https://www.readplus.com.au/blog_detail.php?id=8430)

Thunderhead by Neal Shusterman. It's been a year since Rowan went off-grid. Hunted by the Scythedom, he has become an urban legend, a vigilante snuffing out corrupt scythes in a trial by fire. Citra, meanwhile, is forging her path as Scythe Anastasia, gleaned with compassion. However, conflict within the Scythedom is growing by the day, and when Citra's life is threatened, it becomes clear that there is a truly terrifying plot afoot. (Publisher) Recommended by Karen Collins, Pat Pledger (Review at https://www.readplus.com.au/blog_detail.php?id=8961)

A Gentleman in Moscow by Amor Towles. On 21 June 1922 Count Alexander Rostov – recipient of the Order of Saint Andrew, member of the Jockey Club, Master of the Hunt – is escorted out of the Kremlin, across Red Square and through the elegant revolving doors of the

Hotel Metropol. But instead of being taken to his usual suite, he is led to an attic room with a window the size of a chessboard. Deemed an unrepentant aristocrat by a Bolshevik tribunal, the Count has been sentenced to house arrest indefinitely. (Publisher) Recommended by Kara Bystrom.

Bannerless by Carrie Vaughan. Philip K. Dick Award 2017. Science fiction. Years after an environmental disaster has devastated the world, killing millions, the Coast Road in the US has developed a thriving culture, where birth control is mandatory and people must earn a banner if they want to have a child. In Haven, Enid has not only earned a banner but is an Investigator, helping to solve problems and mediate when necessary. When there is a suspected murder in another town she is sent to investigate and uncovers more than she was anticipating. Recommended by Pat Pledger. (Review at http://www.readplus.com.au/blog_detail.php?id=8676)

The Children's House of Belsen by Hetty Verolme. During the Holocaust the young Hetty was rounded up by the Nazis and sent for 14 long months to Belsen Concentration Camp. Hetty and her two little brothers were forcefully separated from their parents. (Publisher) Recommended by Sue Warren.

Murderbot diaries, All Systems Red, Artificial Condition, Rogue Protocol, Exit Strategy by Martha Wells (SF, novellas) On a distant planet, a team of scientists are conducting surface tests, shadowed by their Company-supplied 'droid -- a self-aware SecUnit that has hacked its own governor module, and refers to itself (though never out loud) as "Murderbot." (Publisher) Recommended by Tehani Croft, Pat Pledger.

Nowhere child by Christian White. (Horror, mystery) When Kim Leamy is approached by a stranger during a break in her work, he tells her that he believes that she is Sammy Went, a child who went missing 28 years ago. Recommended by Pat Pledger. (Review at https://www.readplus.com.au/blog_detail.php?id=8856)

Shepherd's hut by Tim Winton. Jaxie dreads going home. His mum's dead. The old man bashes him without mercy, and he wishes he was an orphan. But no one's ever told Jaxie Clackton to be careful what he wishes for. (Cover) Recommended by Helen Eddy.

Red Clocks by Leni Zumas. FIVE WOMEN. ONE QUESTION: What is a woman for? In this ferociously imaginative novel, abortion is once again illegal in America, in-vitro fertilization is banned, and the Personhood Amendment grants rights of life, liberty, and property to every embryo. In a small Oregon fishing town, five very different women navigate these new barriers. (Publisher) Recommended by Karys McEwen.

Non Fiction

Working Class boy by Jimmy Barnes. A household name, an Australian rock icon, the elder statesman of Ozrock - there isn't an accolade or cliché that doesn't apply to Jimmy Barnes. But long before Cold Chisel and Barnesy, long before the tall tales of success and excess, there was the true story of James Dixon Swan - a working class boy whose family made the journey from Scotland to Australia in search of a better life. (Publisher). Recommended by Elizabeth Wells.

No friend but the mountains: writing from Manus prison by Behrouz Boochani. In 2013, Kurdish journalist Behrouz Boochani was illegally detained on Manus Island. He has been there ever since. Recommended by Helen Eddy.

Diamonds in the dust by Frauke Bolten-Boshammer. Autobiography of how one woman turned outback dust into a diamond empire. Recommended by Delys Siddle.

Van Diemen's Land by James Boyce. James Boyce has written an enlightening early 'environmental' history of Van Diemen's Land which shows how the convicts were changed by the land and people they encountered. Recommended by Paul Pledger.

The Hate Race by Maxine Beneba Clarke. A powerful, funny, and at times devastating memoir about growing up black in white middle-class Australia. (Publisher) (Made me squirm) Recommended by Crys Mills.

Growing up Aboriginal in Australia edited by Anita Heiss. "This groundbreaking collection will enlighten, inspire and educate about the lives of Aboriginal people in Australia today."(Publisher) Recommended by Crys Mills, Helen Eddy.

Headstrong daughters: inspiring stories from the new generation of Australian Muslim women by Nadia Jamal. Headstrong Daughters takes us inside the lives of Muslim women in Australia today. They are working professionals, mothers, and students. Recommended by Helen Eddy.

Eggshell Skull by Bri Lee. A fiercely intelligent, heartbreakingly honest memoir and feminist call to arms in the tradition of *Fight like a girl*. (Publisher) Recommended by Kara Bystrom.

Shtum by Jem Lester. This book was both enthralling and heart-rending. It is about the relationship of a man with his autistic son, and the same man with his father. It was realistic, gritty and emotional. Recommended by Marie Miegel.

Bookworm : a memoir of childhood reading by Lucy Mangan. A wonderful reminiscence about growing up as a bookworm, the books that delighted her (and the ones that repelled). Wonderfully nostalgic and opinionated. Recommended by Craig Edgman.

Slowhand: The Life and Music of Eric Clapton by Phillip Norman. For half a century Eric Clapton has been acknowledged to be rock music's greatest virtuoso, the unrivalled master of its indispensable tool, the solid-body electric guitar. (Publisher) Recommended by Sue Warren.

Teacher by Gabby Stroud. Teacher is an extremely personal account of how the joys of teaching can be destroyed by the conflicting demands of the educational system. Gabby Stroud is a gifted primary school teacher who cares deeply about teaching, learning and the welfare of her students. The reader is taken into her classroom as she begins her career in the United Kingdom and continues in country New South Wales. We see students from difficult family backgrounds, witness extreme behaviour but also see the light-hearted side of school life. Many situations and feelings expressed by Stroud will resonate with those of us who work in schools. For those who do not work in schools, this memoir is a real eye-opener to what a teacher can encounter on any given day and how it can impact their wellbeing and family life. Recommended by Karen Malbon.

The Pianist by Władysław Szpilma . (Memoir) On September 23, 1939, Wladyslaw Szpilman played Chopin's Nocturne in C sharp minor live on the radio as shells exploded outside a nearby window--so loudly that he couldn't hear his piano. It was the last live music broadcast from Warsaw; that day, a German bomb hit the station, and Polish Radio went off the air. Though he lost his entire family, Szpilman survived in hiding. (Publisher) Recommended by Sue Warren.

Educated by Tara Westover, an amazing true story of growing up in a strict Mormon family and finding a way out into the world beyond. Beautifully written, reflective, honest and the author's resilience is amazing! Recommended by Penny Szentkuti.

