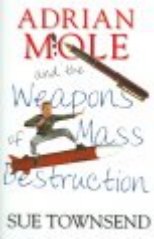
Fiction From Across the Pond

Excited about the television series Downton Abbey? Want to learn more about that small country across the pond where people almost speak our language? This sampling of contemporary novels includes work by some of the best British novelists working today.

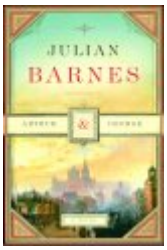
Compiled by: Keith C.



Adrian Mole and the Weapons of Mass Destruction

Sue Townsend To

Loser Adrian Mole turns 35 in this outing. Townsend entertains with her weird humor and take on modern life. Nothing is exempt from her one-liners including weapons of mass destruction. Written in the form of diary entries, Chef A. loses his culinary show and must deal with his children in a cruel but interesting world.



Arthur and George

Julian Barnes Ba

This novel channels the voices of two Englishmen: Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, lawyer and famous mystery writer, and George Edalji, who was accused of mutilating animals. Sir Conor Doyle actually represented him in court. A novel focused on guilt and honor.

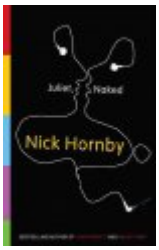
Children of Men

P.D. James James

In this dystopian novel, men?s sperm count drops precipitously, and women can no longer have children. However, twenty-five years later Julian mysteriously becomes pregnant and fifty-year old Theodore Faron must step out of character to involve himself in other people?s lives. An absorbing read that shows humankind at its bleakest and most hopeful.

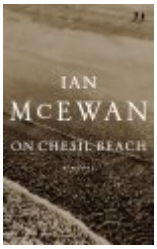
Cloud Atlas: A Novel

Mitchel
This rollercoaster of a novel features linked narratives of a 19th century lawyer, a 1930s composer, a California journalist, a future slave, and a British vanity publisher among others that all have a birthmark in the shape of a comet. A mix of voices, stories, histories and futures that is multidimensional and strives to tell complicated tales of being human.

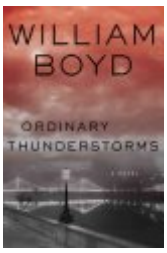


Juliet, Naked
Nick Hornby Hornby
In the dreary seaside town of Gooleness, Annie puts up with a boyfriend who spends all of his free time discussing or listening to the American rock star, Tucker Crowe. After Annie writes a negative review of her boyfriend?s hero, the couple split, and amazingly, the rocker contacts her. A music-world triangle that examines how our obsessions both free and bind us.

Never Let Me Go
Kazuo Ishiguro Ishigur
At thirty-one, Kathy reconnects with other students from her boarding school. But Hailsham was no ordinary institution. There clones were educated with an emphasis on the arts and health?to be organ donors. Now this group of young adults can?t find its place in the world. A novel about expendable lives that are really not at all expendable.



On Chesil Beach
Ian McEwan McEwan
Newlyweds, Florence and Edward begin, a honeymoon by the sea. They discuss their future and very different pasts?she?s a rich violinist, he?s poor man from the country who has managed to earn a history degree. They try to meld their differing sexual and family styles and ideals. This novel focuses on how two people forge a bond shortly before the sexual landscape is revolutionized by the tumultuous 1960s.



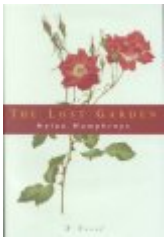
Ordinary Thunderstorms
William Boyd Boyd
Climatologist Adam Kindred visits London for a job interview where he meets a stranger in a restaurant. Afterwards, he visits him at his home ?this is where this literary novel turns into a Hitchcock-like thriller. Someone has stabbed an acquaintance and he is dying. Kindred is the

prime suspect. Follow his descent into the London underground to solve the mystery and save himself.

Strangers

Anita Brookner Brookne

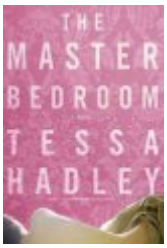
Until she recently retired, Brookner taught art history, but in the summers she took to the pen. In this, her 24th outing, she presents the story of an elderly man whose social circle has shrunk dramatically. She shows how a new friend reawakens him to art and feelings.



The Lost Garden

Helen Humphreys Hu

During World War II, shy gardener Gwen Buchanan leaves her quiet horticultural research station in London, to manage a motley crew of young female partiers at a huge country estate. There she cajoles the women to grow vegetables for the war effort. In the process she discovers a secret garden with a mystery within that deeply connects to her own life. A novel about how life circumstances push us into new, vulnerable territories.



The Master Bedroom

Teresa Hadley Hadley

Kate Flynn, professor of Russian literature, returns home to a village in Wales to care for her senile Mom. Suddenly, she must confront everything that has not gone right with her life. She meets a married man, the brother of an old friend, and simultaneously begins a relationship with his teenage son. A novel about how life?s changes force one to confront both one?s future and one?s past.

The White Garden

Stephanie Barron Barron

American gardening expert, Jo Bellamy, retreats to England, to study the famed garden of Sissinghurst, designed by Vita, Virginia Woolf?s lover. Bellamy?s grandfather has just killed himself, and once in England, Jo, believes there are clues that might reveal why. A spirited gardening romp with interesting literary and historical references.

White Teeth

Smith

Smith?s well-received debut covers the dynamic world of two families in multicultural London. Archie marries a Jamaican woman; they live near his army pal, Samad, a Bengali Muslim. In funny, richly detailed scenes, Smith proves that families, although vastly different in background and culture, share similar goals for their loved ones.

Yellow Dog

Amis Martin Am

Books by this author elicit strong responses from the public and critics, but many of his books, including this one, have won awards. Yellow Dog examines the ?obscenification of life? through stories of five men including King Henry the X. Vivid writing but not for the faint of heart.

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