NOW WE ARE 20

A CELEBRATION OF THE BEST OF THE BEST FROM OUR SECOND DECADE

FOREWORD BY JENNI MURRAY
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Published by Sunshine
Journalist and broadcaster Jenni Murray on the power of writing by women and how ‘Woman’s Hour’ is marking 20 years of the Baileys Women’s Prize for Fiction

One of the many great pleasures of being a presenter of Woman’s Hour is the requirement to read lots of stories written by women. It might be an established author such as Deborah Moggach or Joanna Trollope, or a sparkling new talent – Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie springs to mind. I have to pinch my arm regularly to remind myself how very lucky I am to have such work to do.

Twenty years ago, apart from on Woman’s Hour, fiction written by women barely merited any attention. Reviewers – mostly male – hardly noticed that such books had appeared and, when they did, were frequently sniffy – ‘Aga Saga’ or ‘dull domestic drama’ were terms often applied to some of the most perceptive, innovative and gripping stories being published.

‘Twenty years ago, apart from on Woman’s Hour, fiction written by women barely merited any attention’

I remember so well the excitement when Kate Mosse appeared on Woman’s Hour in 1995 to express her frustration at how neglected female authors were and her delight to be part of setting up a prize – then Orange, now Baileys – to celebrate, reward and publicise the best. The winner would be awarded a prize of £30k – a highly significant amount for a struggling novelist – a boost in sales thanks to the publicity, and a Bessie statuette, designed and donated by the artist Grizel Niven. And we, the book buying readers, would learn what we needed to have on our bedside tables.

I was chair of judges in 2005. Lots of reading and, yes, blood on the table as I and my fellow judges, including Jude Kelly and Jo Brand, argued furiously about our shortlist. We decided – more or less unanimously – on Lionel Shriver’s We Need to Talk About Kevin and I’m hugely proud to have launched a great literary career.
And now, in 2015, Woman's Hour and the Women's Prize for Fiction celebrate those 20 years together. At the end of ten years there was a special prize for the Best of the Best of that first decade. It was won by Andrea Levy for Small Island. In November, another author will be awarded a special edition Bessie as the writer of the Best of the Best of the second decade of the Prize. Woman’s Hour listeners (and presenters) have a lot of lovely re-reading to do. Over two weeks in October, we’ll hear each of the chairs of judges discuss ‘her’ winning novel – this reading guide highlights the full line-up. Woman’s Hour listeners – lovers of good books all – will be asked to vote on the people’s Best of the Best and the people’s chosen novelist will appear on the programme on November 2.

So enjoy this souvenir literary companion, enjoy reading (or re-reading) these great novels and look forward, as I will, to the next ten years of shortlists and winners of the Baileys Women’s Prize for Fiction. I do know, by the way, which would be my Best of the Best, but, independent and unbiased as always, I shan’t be letting on!

Listen to the BBC Radio 4 Woman’s Hour Baileys Women’s Prize for Fiction Best of the Best interviews every weekday, October 19-30, 2015

Excellence, originality, accessibility, diversity: the Baileys Women’s Prize for Fiction (formerly Orange Prize) was set up both to celebrate and to honour great fiction written by women from all over the world. From humble beginnings the Prize has grown in ambition and scope. We've championed works of imagination and creativity, funded literacy and research projects, partnered with libraries, schools, retailers and reading organisations, and put hundreds of exceptional novels into the hands of readers who appreciate them.

‘Ten brilliant novels, ten exceptional authors – the range of work is magnificent’

Now we are twenty. To celebrate, we’re announcing the Best of the Best of our second decade. Ten brilliant novels, ten exceptional authors – the range of work is magnificent, dazzling, inspiring, and reflects the founding principles of the Prize. Most importantly, each winner stands testament to the power of stories to unite us with one another, whoever we are, wherever we live.

Read on to find your Baileys Women’s Prize for Fiction 2006-2015 Best of the Best and tell us which title you picked @BaileysPrize #BestofBest

*(...with apologies to AA Milne)*
Whether virtual tweet-up, workplace meet-up or a souped-up girls’ night out, the modern book club takes many forms. But the formula is always a simple one: all you need, at the heart of it, is great people and a great book. We want to celebrate thrilling, innovative and beautiful stories written by women and how they bring us together. Our must-read discussion guides will help your group make the most of the ten winning books from the second decade of the Baileys Women’s Prize for Fiction. We guarantee that you’ll find fiction to win you over...

‘Stories are the bridge that link us together. What better way to celebrate than to gather with friends and raise a toast to the power of storytelling’
@katemosse

Looking for more book club inspiration? Find The Brilliant Woman’s Guide to a Very Modern Book Club at womensprizeforfiction.co.uk/thisbookclub-guide

#BESTOFBEST
READING GUIDES FOR BOOK CLUBS
Let our discussion points help you and your group choose your Best of the Best from the past decade’s Prize winners
ON BEAUTY
BY ZADIE SMITH

Set in New England and London, ‘On Beauty’ centres around a pair of feuding families – the Belseys and the Kippes – and a clutch of doomed affairs. Putting low morals amongst high ideals, the story questions the nature of beauty and what life can do to love.

DISCUSSION POINTS

WHAT IS BEAUTY?
All of the characters express radically different ideas about the meaning and role of beauty in their lives. What do you think it means, in this novel’s terms, to embrace beauty? What does it mean to be without it?

SEARCHING FOR AN ADULT IDENTITY
What characteristics do the three Belsey children share, and how are they like their parents? Which of their current activities do you see as ‘phases’ in their lives, and which do you think are meant to suggest what they will harden into as adults?

A WOMAN’S BODY
Women’s body issues recur throughout the novel. How do the characters struggle with, or come to terms with, their physical selves? How does someone like Zora, with dueling models Kiki and Clare, feel about her body?

‘With each reading, ‘On Beauty’ reveals new subtleties and virtuoso flourishes of the imagination’
Martha Kearney, chair of judges 2006

‘The Prize made me feel other people at least thought the slog was worthwhile. That’s what prizes do for people who work alone for years on end – it’s a wonderful confirmation that you’re not completely crazy’
Zadie Smith
**DISCUSSION POINTS**

**A TALE OF TWO LOVE STORIES**
The novel is structured in part around two love stories between Olanna and Odenigbo, and between Kainene and Richard. How does Adichie handle romantic and sexual love? Why are these love plots so important to a novel about a war?

**DEALING WITH TRAUMA**
How does being witnesses to violent death change people in the story – Olanna, Kainene, Odenigbo, Ugwu? How does Adichie handle descriptions of scenes of violence, death and famine?

**THE IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL CLASS**
What are the different cultural assumptions – about themselves and others – made by educated Africans like Odenigbo, nouveau-riche Africans like Olanna’s parents, uneducated Africans like Odenigbo’s mother, and British expatriates like Richard’s ex-girlfriend Susan?

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In 1960s Nigeria, a country blighted by civil war, three lives intersect. When the shocking horror of the war engulfs them, their loyalties are severely tested as they are pulled apart and thrown together in ways none of them imagined.

**HALF OF A YELLOW SUN**
**BY CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE**

In 1960s Nigeria, a country blighted by civil war, three lives intersect. When the shocking horror of the war engulfs them, their loyalties are severely tested as they are pulled apart and thrown together in ways none of them imagined.

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‘Hugely readable, engaging, gripping and heart-stoppingly moving’
-Muriel Gray, chair of judges 2007

‘Winning felt like getting just the perfect present. My favourite memory of the evening was going to a corner to call my father in Nigeria, and hearing the singular delight in his voice, while all around me was noise and laughter and goodwill’
-Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie
THE ROAD HOME
BY ROSE TREMAIN

In the wake of his beloved wife’s death, Lev makes his way from eastern Europe to Britain, seeking work to support his daughter back home. London holds out the alluring possibility of friendships, sex, money and, if Lev is lucky, a new sense of belonging.

DISCUSSION POINTS

FOOD AS A MOTIF
How does Tremain illustrate Lev’s journey in terms of food? Why do you think she only begins to describe the food of his own country towards the end?

NEW LIFE IN A DIFFERENT CULTURE
Have you ever lived in another country? If so, how far did your experiences reflect Lev’s? What did you find challenging about establishing a new life in a different culture and did it affect the way you read the novel? If not, do you think you could ever do what Lev did? What would you find hardest to leave behind?

AN IDEALISTIC ENDING
In the end Lev returns to his family and builds a life with his new-found skills and money. Why do you think that the novel has ended in such an idealistic way?

‘A very important book because economic migration is one of the great phenomena of the 21st century’

Kirsty Lang, chair of judges 2008

‘The whole night was memorably good... the best thing was hearing that the judges considered me to be “at the top of my game”. My game is incredibly long, so I should have fallen down by now, but winning the Prize has helped me to stay standing’

Rose Tremain
DISCUSSION POINTS

THE MEANING OF HOME
What does ‘home’ mean to Robert Boughton and his children? What does the Boughton house signify to his family? With whom do they feel most at home?

THE ROLE OF WOMEN
What did Glory’s mother teach her about the role of women? How was the Boughton family affected by the death of its matriarch?

HONESTY, DECEPTION AND INTEGRITY
How do the opposing themes of deception and integrity play out in the novel? Are all of the characters honest with themselves? Which secrets, in the novel and in life, are justified?

‘A powerful book that reminds us of some of the fundamental things in life... Not everything can be tied up in a positive-thinking-life-coaching ribbon’
Fi Glover, chair of judges 2009

‘Winning was a great honour. The Prize is such a wonderful institution. It’s certainly the most elegant, brilliant platform for women’s literature’
Marilynne Robinson
THE LACUNA
BY BARBARA KINGSOLVER

Mexico, 1935. Harrison Shepherd is working in the household of famed muralist Diego Rivera and his wife Frida Kahlo. When exiled Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky arrives, Shepherd inadvertently casts his lot with art and revolution, resulting in a gripping story of identity and loyalty.

DISCUSSION POINTS

WHAT’S IN A NAME?
What do you think the significance of the book’s title is? What does it mean within the context of the novel?

HISTORY REVISITED
What did you think about the portrayal of the historical characters such as Frida Kahlo and Leon Trotsky? Did they seem realistic to you or possibly over romanticised versions? How much artistic licence do you feel an author should have when writing about real events?

DEAR DIARY
Do Shepherd’s diaries feel realistic to you? Does the narrative voice mature with him as he gets older?

‘It’s a book that resonates across the years. Mysterious, tender and compelling’
Daisy Goodwin, chair of judges 2010

‘The best thing about winning was the absolute sisterly solidarity between all the finalists. We all wanted each other to win, and it felt as though we all did’
Barbara Kingsolver
A tiger escapes from the local zoo, padding through the ruined streets and onwards to a ridge above the Balkan village of Galina. His nocturnal visits hold the villagers in a terrified thrall. But for one boy, the tiger is a thing of magic.

DISCUSSION POINTS

ROLE OF SUPERSTITION
What is the role of superstition in The Tiger’s Wife?
Why do the people paint Bis the dog all the time?

THE CONCEPT OF FEELINGS
‘My mother always says that fear and pain are immediate, and that, when they’re gone, we’re left with the concept, but not the true memory.’ Do you agree?

DREAMS AS SYMBOLS
Why, in Dariša’s dream, were the tiger and his wife always eating heads?

‘The brilliance of this book – written by the youngest-ever winner of the Prize – is that it reminds us all that stories never cease to matter’
Bettany Hughes, chair of judges 2011

‘The best thing about winning was the unbelievable honour of being in the company of such incredible writers – both my fellow 2011 finalists, past winners and honourees – whose work I loved’
Téa Obreht
THE SONG OF ACHILLES
BY MADELINE MILLER

Greece in the age of heroes. Patroclus, exiled to the court of King Peleus, befriends the king’s son Achilles. But when Helen of Sparta is kidnapped, Achilles must go to war. Torn between love and fear for his friend, Patroclus goes with him, little knowing the years that follow will test everything they hold dear.

DISCUSSION POINTS

SIGNIFICANCE OF SONG AND MUSIC
What is the significance of song and music in the novel? Why do you think it is titled The Song of Achilles?

PATROCLUS AS NARRATOR
Patroclus is often a self-critical narrator. Consider how other characters in the novel regard him – do they see him in the same way he sees himself? What are the similarities? What are the differences?

REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN
Consider the women of the novel: Thetis, Briseis, Deidameia and, of course, Helen of Troy. How are women represented?

‘Original, passionate, inventive and uplifting. Homer would be proud of her’
Joanna Trollope, chair of judges 2012

‘It’s hard to pick just one memory from the night. I do remember looking out into the audience from the podium and seeing all the people who had been instrumental in bringing the book into the world, and feeling absolutely bowled over with gratitude’
Madeline Miller
MAY WE BE FORGIVEN
BY A.M. HOMES

Harry has always envied his younger brother George, but Harry also knows George is a man with a murderous temper. After an adulterous kiss at Thanksgiving, George finally loses control and the brothers are hurled into entirely new lives, where they must both seek absolution.

DISCUSSION POINTS

FORGIVENESS
All of the characters in May We Be Forgiven are deeply flawed. Who did you empathise with in the novel and why? Who do you think can be forgiven?

THE ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY
At the beginning of the novel Harry sees his nephew and niece as ‘absent children, absent of personality, absent of presence’, because they’re glued to their mobile phones. Later, Harry finds women to have sex with online. What does the novel say about how we live now?

QUINTESSENTIALLY AMERICAN
May We Be Forgiven has been called a quintessentially American novel. How does Homes’s darkling vision of America apply to the UK and how does it differ?

‘A wildly funny descent into purgatory and maybe out again – an American Dream for our time’
Miranda Richardson, chair of judges 2013

‘The best thing about winning the Prize was being chosen by a group of writers and editors from among a wonderful group of women. In many ways that night changed my life – in that I felt validated as an international author, not just a writer from the United States’
A.M. Homes
A GIRL IS A HALF-FORMED THING
BY EIMEAR MCBRIDE

Eimear McBride’s debut tells the story of a young woman’s relationship with her brother, and the long shadow cast by his childhood brain tumour. An intimate insight into the thoughts and chaotic sexuality of an isolated protagonist, it isn’t always comfortable – but is always a revelation.

DISCUSSION POINTS

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

What was your initial response to the style and language of *A Girl is a Half-Formed Thing*? Did this change as you got further into the book?

FROM GIRL TO WOMAN

How does this compare to other depictions of girlhood or coming of age which you have read? What was your response to the character and the decisions she makes in the book?

THE INFLUENCE OF STYLE

*A Girl is a Half-Formed Thing* is written as a stream of consciousness – have you read anything in this style before? Did you find it easy to follow? Did this impact on the content of the book?

‘An unforgettable novel, exhilarating as well as painful… Its language and emotional energy is extraordinary’

Helen Fraser, chair of judges 2014

‘The best thing about winning the Prize was knowing that my book would now probably have the chance of a future life and readership that would never have been possible otherwise. That’s what every writer wants for their work once the last sentence has been finished and, a year and a half later, I’m still pretty surprised about it all’

Eimear McBride
HOW TO BE BOTH
BY ALI SMITH

A novel with two Part Ones: one set in the present, George’s story; the other in the Italian Renaissance, Francesco’s story. A dazzling dual narrative and a gripping tale

DISCUSSION POINTS

BEGINNER’S LUCK?
Some editions of this novel begin with Francesco’s story; some with George’s. It’s the luck of the draw which version you get. How did you begin? How did that affect your impressions of the novel, as an individual or as a group?

AN AUTHENTIC HISTORICAL VOICE
How does the narrative tone in Francesco’s section challenge the conventions of the ‘historical novel’? Why do you think Smith uses the technique that she does? How does her tone and voice connect this section to George’s section?

LOVE, LOSS AND THE POWER OF IDENTITY
George’s mother has died before the novel begins: how does the mother’s absence, and the mysteries connected to that absence, work in the context of the novel both as far as George’s story is concerned and in the book as a whole?

‘Ancient and modern meet and speak to each other in this tender, brilliant and witty novel of grief, love, sexuality and shape-shifting identity’
Shami Chakrabarti, chair of judges 2015

‘All I remember of this night is a gorgeous blur. But the unexpectedly beautiful Grizel Niven statue they give you if you win this Prize is really surprisingly substantial – my favourite moment was this unexpected heft’
Ali Smith
Cocktails and book clubs go together like Charlie and chocolate, Heathcliff and Cathy, Thelma and Louise... But deciding what to serve can sometimes prove as difficult as choosing what to read. One way to toast the occasion and complement flowing conversation is with another classic combination: coffee and liqueur.

People have been mixing these two drinks together since as early as the 1800s. The Swedes added vodka to coffee, creating kaffekask, while the Italians opted for grappa and called it caffè corretto. But it wasn’t until the 1940s that this pairing achieved cult status on a global scale. That’s when Joe Sheridan, a chef at Ireland’s Shannon Airport, first added whiskey to coffee to warm up the passengers disembarking from a Pan Am flying boat one cold evening. When asked what it was, he replied ‘Irish coffee’ and a classic was born.

The next incarnation of this double act came in the 1980s. Word has it that while tending the bar at London’s Soho Brasserie, cocktail guru Dick Bradsell gave a famous model something new to try – a double shot of vodka with very strong coffee. This soon morphed into the espresso martini and became the drink of the decade.

‘It’s an update on the espresso martini. Sweeter in the beginning but finishing with the same richness of the coffee, it results in a more complex drink’

Keila Urzaiz, bartender

The latest contender for the coffee/liqueur crown was imagined in 2014 at The Blind Pig in London’s Soho. While out for dinner with colleagues, Caroline Pay, a creative director, wanted a drink that was similar to an espresso martini, only smoother. She asked the bartender to pair Baileys Original Irish Cream with Smirnoff vodka and a shot of espresso. An instant hit with the table, she christened it the Baileys flat white martini. The modern woman’s cocktail of choice, it’s the perfect accompaniment to any literary gathering. Want to know how to make it? Find out overleaf.

Share your book club stories on Twitter @BaileysPrize #BestofBest
THE BAILEYS FLAT WHITE MARTINI RECIPE

INGREDIENTS PER PERSON
1.8 units of alcohol per serve
50ml Baileys® Original Irish Cream
25ml Smirnoff No 21® vodka
25ml espresso coffee
3 coffee beans (for the garnish)

HOW TO MAKE IT
Fill a cocktail shaker with ice and pour in the ingredients
Give it a good shake and strain into a martini glass
Garnish with the coffee beans

drinkaware.co.uk for the facts

TIP
To create an Alpine version, make the cocktail, freeze it, then blend. Et voilà, the frozen flat white martini

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10 BARS FOR BOOK CLUBBING

In need of a venue? Here are 10 cocktail bars worthy of a modern book club. Plus, they serve flat white martinis – all you have to do is ask

**AETHER & ECHO BELFAST**
Transport your book club back to La Belle Époque and get deep and existential amongst this bar’s thought-provoking surroundings. aetherandecho.com

**THE ALCHEMIST LEEDS**
Renowned for its impeccable service and lively atmosphere, this experimental cocktail bar will lend an element of chic to your meet-up. thealchemist.uk.com

**ALL BAR ONE NATIONWIDE**
These stylish bars are dotted up and down the country. Each offers a relaxed vibe and an abundance of space, making them perfect for gathering even the largest book club. allbarone.co.uk

**THE BUREAU BIRMINGHAM**
Housed in a beautiful historic building, this is the perfect venue for those who want to give their book club a hint of vintage glamour. thebureaubar.co.uk

**THE DEVIL’S ADVOCATE EDINBURGH**
There’s no better place to discuss the latest crime thriller than in this old Victorian pump house, hidden away in the city’s atmospheric Old Town. devilsadvocateedinburgh.co.uk

**DUSK TIL PAWN MANCHESTER**
An insalubrious-looking pawnbroker’s on the outside, a modern-day speakeasy on the inside – this venue really is a story of two halves. twitter.com/dusktilpawn

**THE MILK THISTLE BRISTOL**
Featuring dark wood panelling, leather club chairs and elements of taxidermy, this speakeasy-style lounge oozes atmosphere. milkthistlebristol.com

**THE TEMPEST INN BRIGHTON**
A dozen caves make up this subterranean sea-front bar. Grab one of the snug hideaways or head up to the open-plan first floor and enjoy dramatic coastal views. drinkinbrighton.co.uk/tempest

CELEBRATING 20 YEARS – THE BAILEYS WOMEN’S PRIZE FOR FICTION LIBRARY OF SHORTLISTED AUTHORS 1996 - 2015

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie · Rosie Alison · Kate Atkinson
Margaret Atwood · Kirsten Bakis · Suzanne Berne
Julia Blackburn · Marilyn Bowering · Judy Budnitz
Anna Burns · Rachel Cusk · Jill Dawson · Joolz Denby
Kiran Desai · Emma Donoghue · Anne Donovan
Helen Dunmore · Esi Edugyan · Anne Enright
Ellen Feldman · Aminatta Forna · Jane Gardam
Maggie Gee · Linda Grant · Kate Grenville · Xiaolu Guo
Jane Hamilton · Georgina Harding · Jane Harris
Samantha Harvey · Shirley Hazzard · Emma Henderson
Sheri Holman · A.M. Homes · Chloe Hooper
Samantha Hunt · Tony Huston · Sadie Jones
Pagan Kennedy · Hannah Kent · Barbara Kingsolver
Nicole Krauss · Jhumpa Lahiri · Andrea Levy
Marina Lewycka · Rosina Lippi · Attica Locke
Shena Mackay · Deirdre Madden · Audrey Magee
Hilary Mantel · Valerie Martin · Eimear McBride
Maile Meloy · Pauline Melville · Jane Mendelsohn
Charlotte Mendelson · Anne Michaels · Madeline Miller
Lorrie Moore · Toni Morrison · Éilís Ní Dhuibhne
Heather O’Neill · Téa Obreht · Cynthia Ozick
Ann Patchett · Laline Paull · Annie Proulx · Deirdre Purcell
Marilynnne Robinson · Monique Roffey · Manda Scott
Maria Semple · Kamila Shamsie · Carol Shields
Anita Shreve · Lionel Shriver · Gillian Slovo · Jane Smiley
Ali Smith · Zadie Smith · Elizabeth Strout · Amy Tan
Donna Tartt · Carrie Tiffany · Rose Tremain · Anne Tyler
Sarah Waters · Rebecca Wells · Marianne Wiggins
Kathleen Winter · Patricia Wood
Marking 20 years since the inception of the Baileys Women’s Prize for Fiction (formerly Orange Prize) in 1996, *Now We Are 20* is your essential reading guide to the ten winning novels of the literary award’s second decade. Think of it as the ultimate accompaniment to your very modern book club – just add brilliant friends and a flat white martini!

‘I remember so well the excitement, 20 years ago, when Kate Mosse, frustrated at the neglect of female authors, appeared on ‘Woman’s Hour’ to announce a prize to celebrate, reward and publicise the best women writers. Enjoy this souvenir literary companion, enjoy reading (or re-reading) these great novels and look forward, as I will, to the next ten years of shortlists and winners of the Baileys Prize for Women’s Fiction.’

Jenni Murray, broadcaster and journalist, and 2005 Baileys Women’s Prize for Fiction chair of judges