

Waterstone's Press Release

Strictly embargoed until 0800 Saturday 28th February 2009

Nick Hornby Recommends...

Nick Hornby, author of acclaimed books such as *A Long Way Down* and *High Fidelity*, has become the third author to host The Writer's Table at Waterstone's, a major promotion that allows its curator to reveal some of the books and authors that have shaped and influenced their writing, as well as a few personal favourites.

Hornby, whose bestselling book *Fever Pitch* won the William Hill Sports Book Award, was given complete free rein in choosing each and every book that appears in his selection. His choices cover a myriad of genres, from the classics (*David Copperfield* by Charles Dickens), children's books (*Skellig* by David Almond), SF (*The Sirens of Titan* by Kurt Vonnegut), graphic novels (*Fun Home* by Alison Bechdel) and modern fiction (*The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay* by Michael Chabon). Of course, Hornby's passions of football (*Brilliant Orange* by David Winner) and rock and roll (*Chronicles* by Bob Dylan) are also represented.

"There is barely an area of literature that Nick Hornby does not touch in his selection," said Toby Bourne, Waterstone's head of fiction. "These are obviously the choices of a writer, but also the choices of a keen reader – these are compulsive, unputdownable books that readers will love discovering."

The table will feature in selected Waterstone's stores throughout March as well as at Waterstones.com/writerstable, complete with Nick's handwritten thoughts on each chosen title.

The full list of titles on Nick Hornby's table, are below:

1. *Field Notes From a Catastrophe* by Elizabeth Kolbert

Kolbert talks to the scientists who really know what's going on with our planet, and her conclusions are devastating. A scrupulous, elegant, frightening book.

2. *Samaritan* by Richard Price

All of Richard Price's novels are brilliantly plotted and utterly convincing. This is as gripping as his best, with an ethical dimension thrown in for nothing.

3. *Brilliant Orange* by David Winner

A clever, erudite, imaginative book about... football. Yes, it can be done, but you have to be as original a thinker as David Winner.

4. *This Boy's Life* by Tobias Wolff

Funny, moving and entirely without self-pity, this book taught a whole generation of writers how to approach autobiography.

5. *Sweet Soul Music* by Peter Guralnick

This was one of the all-time top five favourites of Rob Fleming, narrator of High Fidelity, and if it's good enough for him, it's good enough for me. Definitive.

6. *Scenes From a Revolution* by Mark Harris

The sharpest book about the movie-making process that I've ever read. And like all the best non-fiction, it's about a lot more than its apparent subject.

7. *Naples '44* by Norman Lewis

Hilarious, tragic, surreal – a great travel writer's non-fiction version of Catch 22.

8. *What Good are the Arts?* by John Carey

*This book, together with the equally brilliant *The Intellectuals and the Masses*, should help to remove all those stubborn and lazy prejudices you've been having trouble with.*

9. *Spies* by Michael Frayn

A moving, simple, clever, layered novel about the topography of childhood. Michael Frayn is a national treasure and this is, in my opinion, his best book.

10. *Birds of America* by Lorrie Moore

I know, I know, you don't like short stories. How can I convince you that Lorrie Moore's are as rewarding and as memorable as just about any novel you hold dear?

11. *The Child That Books Built* by Francis Spufford

An awe-inspiringly intelligent memoir about our first contact with books – what they did to us, and why they did it.

12. *A Complicated Kindness* by Miriam Toews

A fresh, quirky fictional voice, telling us about a community of which we know nothing. What else do you need from contemporary fiction?

13. *Stasiland* by Anna Funder

Horrrifying, of course, but also weird, and packed with extraordinary narrative incident, this book is a people's history of the 20th century's strangest, cruellest and most ambitious thought control experiment.

14. *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay* by Michael Chabon

A deeply satisfying, brilliantly-imagined epic about twentieth century America, as seen through the prism of its comic books, and the young men who created them.

15. *Random Family* by Adrian Nicole LeBlanc

An important, astonishingly ambitious piece of extended journalism about two young, attractive, winning and doomed young women, as illuminating and compelling as Michael Apted's '7 Up' series.

16. *The Republic of Love* by Carol Shields

A novel about love that is both smart and deeply romantic, and there aren't too many of those. Carol Shields' wise, warm and witty voice is still deeply missed.

17. *Skellig* by David Almond

Refusing to read this book on the grounds that you are not a child makes as much sense as refusing to read crime fiction because you are not a criminal. A deep and lovely book.

18. *The Fingersmith* by Sarah Waters

*Sarah Waters' fiction is serious entertainment, like all novels should be, and *The Fingersmith* has one of the most startling plot twists you'll ever read.*

19. *The World's Wife* by Carol-Ann Duffy

In which Mrs Van Winkle, Mrs Darwin, Mrs Midas and others tell their side of the story, with bitter humour and a weary perspicacity.

20. *The Sirens of Titan* by Kurt Vonnegut

Vonnegut didn't write an ordinary novel, which means that there are a lot of neglected gems. This, which contains a convincingly mundane explanation for why we are all here, is one of my favourites.

21. *Sixty Stories* by Donald Barthelme

Barthelme's short fiction was enormously influential on a whole generation of American writers – it's also funny, unique, otherworldly.

22. *David Copperfield* by Charles Dickens

*It could have been any of them, just about. But this one is right up there with *Great Expectations*: comic genius, manic narrative energy, and some – a lot! – of his most memorable characters.*

23. *Father And Son* by Edmund Gosse

The first misery memoir, but you won't find any others as self knowing, as deeply felt or as well written as this one. A Victorian Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit.

24. *The Accidental* by Ali Smith

A tour-de-force, a novel about the ordinary and the extraordinary, a book that is both experimental and readable... Ali Smith is a true and valuable British original.

25. *The Invisible Woman* by Claire Tomalin

A terrific biography, as absorbing and as acute as a good novel, about the complicated domestic arrangements of our greatest novelist.

26. *The History of Mr Polly* by HG Wells

Wells didn't only write SF – this is a sunny, optimistic comedy about a man who refuses to settle for his lot.

27. *Molesworth* by Geoffrey Williams and Ronald Searle

The only work of comic literature that makes me laugh every time I read it – a comfort and a joy.

28. *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain

A “Children’s Classic”, according to some. Yes, well, that – and one of the best and most imaginative descriptions of what it means to be an American.

29. *Chronicles* by Bob Dylan

A brilliant, angular portrait, of the artist as a consumer of art, and the most thoughtful autobiography of a musician – of a performer in any medium – that I have ever read.

30. *Mystic River* by Dennis Lehane

*Most works of literature, let’s face it, are not so absorbing that you are in danger of walking into lamp-posts while reading them. But *Mystic River* is a work of literature. And you will hurt your head.*

31. *Fun Home* by Alison Bechdel

There have been several wonderful graphic novels published in the last few years, but this is perhaps the richest, and the most moving – it’s as dense and complex as a “proper” book.

32. *The Railway Man* by Eric Lomax

A harrowing, deeply moving memoir, full of an inspirational tolerance and forgiveness. If you don’t weep buckets, then you are a robot.

33. *The Giant’s House* by Elizabeth McCracken

Elizabeth McCracken has written two brilliant novels and a beautiful memoir. This, her first book, is a luminous, heartbreaking modern classic.

34. *Empire Falls* by Richard Russo

An epic, large-hearted, funny, downbeat and altogether magnificent portrait of a dying town, and the people who just about get by there.

35. *Selected Poems* by Sophie Hannah

Funny, melancholy, shrewd and real... Sophie Hannah is the heir to the brilliant Wendy Cope’s throne.

36. *The Wife* by Meg Wolitzer

A razor-sharp, deceptively tough novel about the sexual politics of writing. And if that sounds a bit like a narrow subject, well it shouldn’t – after reading this, you’ll wonder whether fiction is about anything else.

37. *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant* by Anne Tyler

This book changed my life: I didn’t know novels could be as warm, wise, or engaging as this until I picked it up. I’ve been trying and failing to rip Anne Tyler off ever since.

38. *Housekeeping* by Marilynne Robinson

*Robinson’s first novel, written a quarter of a century before *Gi Lead*, her equally dazzling second – a slow, extraordinary, yearning mystical book about the dead, and how they haunt the living.*

39. *The Blind Side* by Michael Lewis

The Blind Side combines tactical analysis with an account of a young sportsman's astonishing life and career. With this and *Moneyball*, Lewis has written the two best sports books of the last five years.

40. *How to Breathe Underwater* by Julie Orringer

As fresh and as accomplished a first book as you could hope to find. Julia Orringer's sad, clear-eyed stories are hard to forget.

Discover more at Waterstones.com/writerstable

Notes for Editors

Nick Hornby is best known for his football confessional, *Fever Pitch* (1992), which won the William Hill Sports Book Award, and a string of bestselling novels including *High Fidelity*, *About a Boy*, *How to Be Good* (2001) and *A Long Way Down* (2005). He has published a novel for teen readers, *Slam*, in 2007. *Fever Pitch*, *High Fidelity* and *About a Boy* have all been filmed, and *A Long Way Down* is currently in production. *Speaking with the Angel* (2000), a collection edited by Nick benefits his eldest son Danny's school Treehouse. The Treehouse Trust is a London-based charity, established in 1997 to provide an 'educational Centre of Excellence' for children with autism. It was set up by a group of parents (including Nick) whose children had recently been diagnosed with autism.

For further information about The Writer's Table, please contact Jon Howells in the Waterstone's Press Office, on 020 8996 4385 / jon.howells@waterstones.com.