

BOOK SETS

Multiple copies of various books are available from Torfaen Libraries for use by Reading Groups in Torfaen. The following sets are currently available.

Title: **The five people you meet in Heaven**
Author: Mitch Albom
Number of books in set: 10

‘All endings are also beginnings. We just don’t know it at the time...’

On his eighty-third birthday, Eddie, a lonely war veteran, dies in a tragic accident trying to save a little girl from a falling cart. With his final breath, he feels two small hands in his – and then nothing. He awakens in the afterlife, where he learns that Heaven is not a lush Garden of Eden but a place where your earthly life is explained to you by five people who were in it. These people may have been loved ones or distant strangers. Yet each of them changed your path forever.

Title: **A crowded marriage**
Author: Catherine Alliott
Number of books in set: 9

There are three people in Imogen Cameron’s marriage – herself, her husband, Alex, and their son, Rufus – and that’s the way she likes it. But that’s all about to change...

When the Camerons hit dire financial straits they’re forced to leave London and accept Eleanor Latimer’s offer of a rent-free cottage on her country estate. Ordinarily a free home in the country is not to be sniffed at but, as Eleanor is Alex’s beautiful and flirtatious ex, Imogen is very sniffy indeed.

And with good reason. Once installed in Shepherd’s Cottage, Imogen’s life is suddenly full to bursting with surly locals, psychotic chickens, a maddening (if handsome) headmaster, mountains of manure, visits from the infuriatingly bossy vet, and Eleanor, who seems to be glued to Alex’s side.

As far as Imogen is concerned, two’s a marriage, three’s a family, and this... well; this is just silly, someone’s got to go. The question is who?

Title: **Case histories**
Author: Kate Atkinson
Number of books in set: 11

Cambridge is sweltering, during an unusually hot summer. To Jackson Brodie, former police inspector turned private investigator, the world consists of one accounting sheet – Lost on the left, Found on the right – and the two never seem to balance.

Jackson has never felt at home in Cambridge, and has a failed marriage to prove it. Surrounded by death, intrigue and misfortune, his own life haunted by a family tragedy, he attempts to unravel three disparate case histories, and begins to realise that in spite of apparent diversity, everything is connected...

Title: **One good turn**
Author: Kate Atkinson
Number of books in set: 10

In Summer, it is the Edinburgh Festival. People queuing for a lunchtime show witness a road-rage incident – a near-homicidal attack which changes the lives of everyone involved: the wife of an unscrupulous property developer, a crime writer, a washed-up comedian. Jackson Brodie, ex-army, ex-police, ex-private detective, is also an innocent bystander – until he becomes a murder suspect.

Title: **The collectors**
Author: David Baldacci
Number of books in set: 10

Annabelle, a beautiful con artist is planning the heist of the century.

Jonathan DeHaven, a shy division head at the Library of Congress, is planning nothing more than a peaceful day amongst his cherished collection. But something fatal is waiting for him in the vaults...

After Jonathan's body is discovered, the members of the Camel Club are determined to investigate this inexplicable death. And it soon becomes clear that there was much more to the librarian than a mild manner and love of books.

While Annabelle flees from the terrifying consequences of her scam, the Camel Club finds itself confronting powerful enemies who will stop at nothing to protect a secret conspiracy – and the code that conceals it – from being revealed...

Title: **Arthur and George**
Author: Julian Barnes
Number of books in set: 11

Arthur and George grow up worlds apart in late nineteenth-century Britain: Arthur in shabby-genteel Edinburgh. George in the vicarage of a small Staffordshire village. Arthur becomes a doctor, then a writer: George a solicitor in Birmingham. Arthur is to become one of the most famous men of his age, while George remains in hard-working obscurity. But as the new century begins, they are brought together by a sequence of events that made sensational headlines at the time as The Great Wyrley Outrages.

With a mixture of intense research and vivid imagination, Julian Barnes brings to life not just this long-forgotten case, but the inner workings of these two very different men. This is a novel in which the events of a hundred years ago constantly set off contemporary echoes, a novel about low crime and high spirituality, guilt and innocence, identity, nationality and race. Most of all it is a profound and moving meditation on the fateful differences between what we believe, what we know and what we can prove.

Title: **Whitethorn Woods**
Author: Maeve Binchy
Number of books in set: 9

Everything is changing in Rossmore. No longer a sleepy Irish town, nowadays it's a prosperous place, so busy that a new bypass has been proposed.

The people of Rossmore are divided, particularly since the road will go right through the Whitethorn Woods and the well dedicated to St Ann – a well thought by some to have spiritual properties, and by others dismissed as a superstition. Well-meaning curate Father Brian Flynn has no idea which faction to support. Neddy Nolan is being offered compensation for his land – but has a personal reason to save the well. Then there's the childless London woman who came to the Whitethorn Woods, begging the saint for help, with the most unexpected consequences...

Title: **The Last Testament**
Author: Sam Bourne
Number of books in set: 10

An Iraqi boy loots an ancient clay tablet from a long-forgotten vault in the Baghdad Museum of Antiquities...

At a rally for the signing of a historic deal between Israel and the Palestinians, an assassin pushes through the crowd towards the Israeli prime minister. Bodyguards shoot the man dead. But in his hand there is no gun: only a blood stained note...

A series of apparently random tit-for-tat killings follows as tensions boil over: Washington calls in star peace negotiator Maggie Costello. With her relationship in trouble and old sins to atone for, Maggie finds herself in an impossible situation, especially when she discovers the murders are not random. Someone is killing archaeologists and historians – those who know the buried secrets of the ancient past.

Menaced on all sides by violent extremists, Costello is plunged into a mystery rooted in the last unsolved riddle of the Bible. The truth could end hostilities – or spark the war to end all wars...

Title: **Restless**
Author: William Boyd
Number of books in set: 13

It is 1939. Eva Delectorskaya is a beautiful 28-year-old Russian émigré living in Paris. As war breaks out she is recruited for the British Secret Service by Lucas Romer, a mysterious Englishman, and under his tutelage she learns to become the perfect spy, to mask her emotions and trust no one, including those she loves most. Since the war, Eva has carefully rebuilt her life as a typically English wife and mother. But once a spy, always a spy. Now she must complete one final assignment, and this time Eva can't do it alone: she needs her daughter's help.

Title: **Promise me**
Author: Harlan Coban
Number of books in set: 9

At 2.17 a.m. Myron Bolitar's mobile phone rings. It's Aimee Biel, a frightened teenager who has called the one adult who had promised to help her if she ever got into trouble. Myron collects Aimee from a cold street corner but she persuades him not to take her home, but to drop her off at an unknown address in the suburbs. And, with a final wave from a darkened porch, Aimee disappears into the night...

Driven by guilt, and the desperation of her family, Myron is determined to find Aimee – whatever the cost. But he doesn't realise just how far people will go to protect the ones they love.

Title: **Close**
Author: Martina Cole
Number of books in set: 7

Patrick Brodie is on the way up. He knows exactly how far he's prepared to go to get what he wants. And he wants it all. Now. Before long, Patrick has become a legend in his own lifetime. Violently.

The kind of women Patrick Brodie is normally attracted to have no illusions, no foolish dreams of marriage, children or, God help him, love. But Lily Diamond is different. Together they are determined that their children will have everything they didn't, no matter what.

But the unthinkable happens, and Lily is left on her own to look after their family in a dangerous world. A world where you can trust no one. The Brodies must stay close to survive. But as everyone knows, your sins will find you out...

Title: **Bitter Fruit**
Author: Achmat Dangor
Number of books in set: 9

The last time Silas Ali encountered the Lieutenant, Silas was locked in the back of a police van and the Lieutenant was conducting a vicious assault on Lydia, his wife. When Silas sees him again, by chance, crimes from the past erupt into the present, splintering the Ali's fragile family life.

Bitter Fruit is the story of Silas, Mikey and Lydia, a brittle family in a dysfunctional society. By turns harrowing, erotic and fearlessly satirical, it is a portrait of modern South Africa that also addresses questions of universal significance.

Title: **Birds without wings.**
Author: Louis De Bernieres
Number of books in set: 13

Set against the backdrop of the collapsing Ottoman Empire, the Gallipoli campaign and the subsequent bitter struggle between Greeks and Turks, *Birds without wings* traces the fortunes of one small community in south-west Anatolia – a town in which Christian and Muslim lives and traditions have co-existed peacefully for centuries.

When war is declared and the outside world intrudes, the twin scourges of religion and nationalism lead to forced marches and massacres, and the peaceful fabric of life is destroyed. *Birds Without Wings* is a novel about the personal and political costs of war, and about love: between men and women: between friends: between those who are driven to be enemies: and between Philothei, a Christian girl of legendary beauty, and Ibrahim the Goatherd who has courted her since infancy. Epic in sweep, intoxicating in its sensual detail, it is an enchanting masterpiece.

Title: **The Cold Moon**
Author: Jeffrey Deaver
Number of books in set: 7

How long does it take to die? TICK
His victims would say forever...TOCK
At each horrific scene he leaves a clock ticking.
He calls himself the Watchmaker.
And it's only a matter of time before he strikes again.

Lincoln Rhyme is the best there is. Physically he may face unimaginable challenges, but mentally, he has no limits. With model-turned-cop Amelia Sachs as his eyes, ears – and heart – Rhyme is on the Watchmaker's trail within seconds.
But he's not the only one gifted with a calculating intelligence. And this time his wits must be sharper than ever, to catch a killer as cold as the moon.

Title: **The memory keeper**
Author: Kim Edwards
Number of books in set: 9

It should have been an ordinary birth, the start of an ordinary happy family. But the night Dr David Henry delivers his wife's twins is a night that will haunt five lives forever.

For though David's son is a healthy boy, his daughter has Down's Syndrome. And in a shocking act of betrayal whose consequences only time will reveal. He tells his wife their daughter died while secretly entrusting her care to a nurse.

As grief quietly tears apart David's family, so a little girl must make her own way in the world as best she can.

Title: **Chart throb**
Author: Ben Elton
Number of books in set: 9

Chart Throb. The ultimate pop quest. Ninety-five thousand hopefuls. Three judges. Just one winner. And that's Calvin Simms, the genius behind the show.

Calvin always wins because Calvin writes the rules. But this year, as he sits in judgement upon the Mingers, Clingers and Blingers whom he has pre-selected in his carefully scripted 'search' for a star, he has no idea that the rules are changing. The 'real' is about to be put back into 'reality' television and Calvin and his fellow judges are about to become ex-factors themselves.

Title: **Middlesex**
Author: Jeffrey Eugenides
Number of books in set: 9

“I was born twice: first, as a baby girl, on a remarkably smogless Detroit day in January of 1960; and, then again, as a teenage boy, in an emergency room near Petoskey, Michigan, in August of 1974.”

So begins the breathtaking story of Calliope Stephanides and three generations of the Greek-American Stephanides family, who travel from a tiny village overlooking Mount Olympus in Asia Minor to Prohibition-era Detroit, witnessing its glory days as the Motor City, and the race riots of 1967, before they move out to the tree-lined streets of suburban Grosse Point, Michigan.

To understand why Calliope is not like other girls, she has to uncover a guilty family secret and the astonishing genetic history that turns her into Cal, one of the most audacious and wondrous narrators in contemporary fiction. Lyrical and thrilling, *Middlesex* is an exhilarating reinvention of the American epic.

Title: **Getting rid of Matthew**
Author: Jane Fallon
Number of books in set: 14

When Matthew, Helen’s lover of the past four years, finally decides to leave his wife Sophie (and their two daughters) and move into Helen’s flat, she should be over the moon. The only trouble is, she doesn’t want him anymore. Now she has to figure out how to get rid of him...

Title: **Human Traces**
Author: Sebastian Faulks
Number of books in set: 10

In the 1870’s, two ambitious boys from different backgrounds, Jacques Rebiere and Thomas Midwinter, find themselves united by a determination to understand how the mind works and whether madness is the price we pay for being human.

As pioneering psychiatrists, their quest takes them from an English county lunatic asylum to the plains of Africa, the lecture rooms of Paris and the mountains of Austria and California. They are guided by Thomas’s devoted sister, Sonia, and by an ex-patient, Katharine, whose arrival exposes profound differences between them. As the concerns of the old century fade and the First World War divides Europe, the two friends are compelled to a tragic revision of all that they have loved and pursued.

Title: **Sweet Obscurity**
Author: Patrick Gale
Number of books in set: 7

At 9 years old, Dido has never known what it's like to be part of a proper family. Eliza, the clever but hopeless aunt who has brought her up, can't give her the normal childhood she craves. Eliza's ex, Giles, wants Dido back in his life, but his girlfriend Julia has other ideas. Then an unexpected new love interest for Eliza causes all four to re-evaluate everything and sets in motion a chain of events which threatens to change all their lives.

Title: **Too close to the Falls**
Author: Catherine Gildiner
Number of books in set: 10

At 9 years old, Dido has never known what it's like to be part of a proper family. Eliza, the clever but hopeless aunt who has brought her up, can't give her the normal childhood she craves. Eliza's ex, Giles, wants Dido back in his life, but his girlfriend Julia has other ideas. Then an unexpected new love interest for Eliza causes all four to re-evaluate everything and sets in motion a chain of events which threatens to change all their lives.

Title: **The secret river**
Author: Kate Grenville
Number of books in set: 10

London, 1806 – William Thornhill, happily wedded to his childhood sweetheart Sal, is a waterman on the River Thames. Life is tough but bearable until William makes a mistake, a bad mistake for which he and his family are made to pay dearly. His sentence: to be transported to New South Wales for the term of his natural life. Soon Thornhill, a man no better or worse than most, has to make the most difficult decision of his life...

Title: **The curious incident of the dog in the night-time**
Author: Mark Haddon
Number of books in set: 7

Fifteen-year-old Christopher has a photographic memory. He understands maths. He understands science. What he can't understand are other human beings. When he finds his neighbour's dog lying dead on the lawn, he decides to track down the killer and write a murder mystery about it. But what other mysteries will he end up uncovering?

Title: **Hurting Distance**
Author: Sophie Hannah
Number of books in set: 10

Three years ago, something terrible happened to Naomi Jenkins – so terrible she never told anyone.

Now Naomi has another secret – her lover, unhappily married Robert Haworth. When Robert vanishes, Naomi knows he must have come to harm. But the police are less convinced, particularly when Robert's wife insists he is not missing.

Naomi is desperate. If she can't persuade the police that Robert is in danger, she'll convince them that he is a danger to others. Then they'll have to look for him – urgently.

Naomi knows how to describe in detail the actions of a psychopath. All she needs to do is dig up her own traumatic past...

Title: **The secret of Crickley Hall**
Author: James Herbert
Number of books in set: 9

Would you stay in a haunted house for more than one night? Would you stay in a place where ghostly things keep happening? Where a cellar door you know you locked the night before is always open the following morning? Where hushed whimpering is heard? Where white shadows steal through the darkness? Where the presence of evil is all around you? Would you? Should you?

The Caleighs did, but they had their reasons. They should have known better though. As the terror mounts, they begin to regret their decision. As the horror rises, they realize their very lives are at risk...and so is their sanity. For the secret of Crickley Hall is beyond all nightmares...

Title: **The school for husbands**
Author: Wendy Holden
Number of books in set: 10

Sophie's not happy with her husband. Mark works late, never phones and leaves all the housework and childcare to her. She's also sure he's up to something with his sexy publishing colleague. Things come to a head and she moves back to her parents. Her mother never liked Mark anyway. Desperate to save his marriage, Mark enrolls at the 'School for Husbands', a residential college which transforms pathetic partners into husbands from Heaven. Classes include love skills, sparkling conversation and the finer points of chocolate. But will this be enough to reunite him with Sophie? Especially now a rich old flame is after her...

Title: **Relentless**
Author: Simon Kernick
Number of books in set: 9

3 o'clock. It's a normal Saturday afternoon. You're with the kids in the garden when the phone rings.

It's your best friend from school. Someone you haven't seen for a few years. It should be a friendly call making arrangements to see each other again, catch up on old times.

But it's not.

This call is different. Your friend is speaking quickly, panting with fear, his breaths coming in tortured, ragged gasps. It is clear that someone is inflicting terrible pain on him.

He cries out and then utters six words that will change your life forever...the first two lines of your address.

Title: **Lisey's story**
Author: Stephen King
Number of books in set: 10

Every marriage has two hearts, one light and one dark. Lisey knew it when she first fell for Scott. And now he's dead, she knows it for sure.

Lisey was the light to Scott Landon's dark for twenty-five years. As his wife, only she saw the truth behind the public face of the famous author – that he was a haunted man whose bestselling novels were based on a terrifying reality.

Now Scott has gone, Lisey wants to lock herself away with her memories. But the fans have other ideas. And when the sinister threats begin, Lisey realises that, just as Scott depended on her strength – her light – to live, so she will have to draw on his darkness to survive.

Title: **The gilded chamber**
Author: Rebecca Kohn
Number of books in set: 11

Esther's story is one of the most dramatic in the Bible: a renowned beauty, she used her feminine wiles to capture the heart of a king and so win the deliverance of her people from the threat of death. *The Gilded Chamber* creatively reworks the famous story to show how this young girl came to be in the harem of King Xerxes and how her path to womanhood enabled her to save a nation and find peace.

This is a tale of strength, seduction and survival, of the solidarity of women, and its descriptions of the Persian palace and the secrets contained within those walls will hold you spell bound to the final page.

Title: **Marshmallows for breakfast**
Author: Dorothy Koomson
Number of books in set: 7

Kendra Tamale has found two reasons to face up to her past. When Kendra Tamale returns to England from Australia she rents a room from Kyle, a separated father of two, and begins a new job. She's looking forward to a fresh start and a simple life. Kyle's six-year-old twins, Summer and Jaxon, have other ideas and quickly adopt Kendra as their new mother – mainly because she lets them eat marshmallows for breakfast. Kendra eventually becomes a part of their lives, even though she's hiding a painful secret that makes her keep everyone – especially children – at arms length. Then Kendra bumps into the man who shares her awful secret, and everything falls apart: she can't sleep, she can't eat, she's suspended from work, and the kids are taken away by their mother. The only way to fix things is to confess to the terrible mistake she made all those years ago. But that's something she swore she would never do...

Title: **The historian**
Author: Elizabeth Kostova
Number of books in set: 11

Late one night, exploring her father's library, a young woman finds an ancient book and a cache of yellowing letters addressed ominously to 'My dear and unfortunate successor'. Her discovery plunges her into a world she never dreamed of – a labyrinth where the secrets of her father's past and her mother's mysterious fate connect to an evil hidden in the depths of history.

Title: **Sign of the Cross**
Author: Chris Kuzneski
Number of books in set: 7

A Vatican priest is found murdered on the shores of Denmark – nailed to a cross in the shadow of Hamlet's castle. He is the first victim in a vicious killing spree that spans the world. Each horrific murder exactly mirrors the crucifixion of Christ...

Meanwhile, deep in the Roman catacombs of Orvieto, an archaeologist uncovers an ancient scroll dating back two thousand years. The scroll, he knows, holds the key to a dark and treacherous secret that will rock the very foundations of the Church. But only if he can decipher its lost meanings – and only if he can live long enough to reveal them.

The enemies of the truth know no law of man...

Title: **The namesake**
Author: Jhumpa Lahiri
Number of books in set: 9

Gogol is named after his father's favourite author. But growing up in an Indian family in suburban America, the boy starts to hate the awkward name and itches to cast it off, along with the inherited values it represents. Determined to live a life far removed from that of his parents, Gogol sets off on his own path only to discover that the search for identity depends on much more than a name.

Title: **The other side of the bridge**
Author: Mary Lawson
Number of books in set: 13

Arthur and Jake: brothers, yet worlds apart. Arthur is older, shy, dutiful, and set to inherit his father's farm. Jake is younger and reckless, a dangerous man to know. When Laura arrives in their 1930s rural community, an already uneasy relationship is driven to breaking point...

Title: **Aloft**
Author: Chang-Rae Lee
Number of books in set: 13

After Jerry Battle's wife Daisy died, it was Rita who rescued him and virtually brought up his two children. Yet only Jerry is baffled when Rita storms off, finding the title 'almost stepmother' somewhat feeble after two decades of devotion. In fact, for such a nice guy, Jerry can wreak an amazing amount of havoc. Next in line for his roughshod ways is a female colleague at the travel agency, who, to her regret, loves him too. Now life is about to deal Jerry his toughest hand yet. With his ailing father yearning to flee his 'Ivy Acres Life Care Centre' and his son teetering on bankruptcy, Jerry's daughter is going to bestow on him a father's worst nightmare.

Title: **A small island**
Author: Andrea Levy
Number of books in set: 9

It is 1948, and England is recovering from a war. But at 21 Nevern Street, London, the conflict has only just begun. Queenie Bligh's neighbours do not approve when she agrees to take in Jamaican lodgers, but with her husband, Bernard, not back from the war, what else can she do?

Gilbert Joseph was one of the several thousand Jamaican men who joined the RAF to fight against Hitler. Returning to England as a civilian he finds himself treated very differently. Gilbert's wife Hortense, too, had longed to leave Jamaica and start a better life in London. But when she joins him she is shocked to find London shabby, decrepit, and far from the city of her dreams. Even Gilbert is not the man she thought he was.

Title: **A French affair**
Author: Susan Lewis
Number of books in set: 7

When Natalie Moore is killed in a freak accident in France her mother – the very poised and elegant Jessica – knows instinctively there is more to it. However, Natalie's father – the glamorous, high-flying Charlie – is so paralysed by the horror of losing his daughter, that he refuses even to discuss his wife's suspicions.

In the end, when their marriage is rocked by yet another terrible shock, Jessica decides to go back to France alone in search of some answers. When she gets to the idyllic vineyard in the heart of Burgundy she soon finds a great deal more than she was expecting in a love that is totally forbidden and a truth that will almost certainly devastate her life...

Title: **The photograph**
Author: Penelope Lively
Number of books in set: 9

One day, whilst searching in a cupboard, Glyn finds a sealed envelope with the words 'Don't Open – Destroy' scrawled on it by his wife, Kath. Compelled by curiosity to ignore her instruction, he breaks the seal to find a photograph showing Kath holding hands with another man. Suddenly this one act of betrayal – hidden, concealed for many years – obsesses Glyn as he tries to get to the root of Kath's infidelity. But what other lives will be torn apart as he recklessly delves into the past, and what is the truth about Kath?

Title: **The savage garden**
Author: Mark Mills
Number of books in set: 14

Tuscany, 1958. Behind a villa in the heart of Tuscany lies a Renaissance garden of enchanting beauty. Its grottoes, pagan statues and classical inscriptions seem to have a secret life of their own – and a secret message, too, for those with eyes to read it.

Young scholar Adam Strickland is just such a person. Arriving in 1958, he finds the Docci family, their house and the unique garden as seductive as each other. But post-War Italy is still a strange, even dangerous, place and the Doccis have some dark skeletons hidden away in their past.

Before this mysterious and beautiful summer ends, Adam will uncover two stories of love, revenge and murder, separated by 400 years...but is another tragedy about to be added to the villa's cursed history?

Title: **Astonishing splashes of colour**
Author: Clare Morrall
Number of books in set: 8

Kitty Wellington, the narrator of Clare Morrall's absorbing and sure-footed first novel, has been brought up in a large family by her painter father. Surrounded by older brothers, she has no real recollection of either her mother, who was killed in a car crash, or her sister, who ran away from home.

Title: **The house at Riverton**
Author: Kate Morton
Number of books in set: 13

A story of love, mystery, and a secret history revealed.
Summer 1924. On the eve of a glittering house party, by the lake of a grand English country house, a young poet takes his life. The only witnesses, sisters Hannah and Emmeline Hartford, will never speak to each other again.
Winter 1999. Grace Bradley, ninety-eight, one-time housemaid at Riverton Manor, is visited by a young director making a film about the poet's suicide. Ghosts awaken and old memories – long consigned to the dark reaches of Grace's mind – begin to sneak back through the cracks. A shocking secret threatens to emerge, something history has forgotten but Grace never could.

Title: **An evening of long goodbyes**
Author: Paul Murray
Number of books in set: 8

Acclaimed as one of the funniest and most assured Irish novels of recent years, *An evening of long goodbyes* is the story of Dubliner Charles Hythloday and the heroic squandering of the family inheritance. Featuring drinking, greyhound racing, vanishing furniture, more drinking, old movies, assorted Dublin lowlife, eviction and the perils of community theatre, Paul Murray's debut novel is a tour de force of comedic writing wrapped in an honest-to-goodness tale of a man – and a family - living in denial...

Title: **The vanishing act of Esme Lennox**
Author: Maggie O'Farrell
Number of books in set: 11

Edinburgh in the 1930s. The Lennox family is having trouble with its youngest daughter. Esme is outspoken, unconventional and repeatedly embarrasses them in polite society. Something will have to be done. Years later, a young woman named Iris Lockhart receives a letter informing her that she has a great-aunt in a psychiatric unit who is about to be released. Iris has never heard of Esme Lennox and the one person who should know more, her grandmother Kitty, seems unable to answer Iris's questions. What could Esme have done to warrant a lifetime in an institution? And how is it possible for a person to be so completely erased from a family's history?

Title: **The Dante club**
Author: Matthew Pearl
Number of books in set: 8

The literary geniuses of the Dante Club – poets and Harvard professors Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Dr Oliver Wendell Holmes, James Russell Lowell and publisher J.T.Fields – are finishing America's first translation of *The Divine Comedy*. The powerful old guard of Harvard College wants to keep Dante in obscurity and the members of the Dante Club must fight to keep their sacred literary cause alive. But their plans fall apart when a series of murders erupts through Boston and Cambridge. Only this small group of scholars realises that the gruesome killings are modelled on the descriptions of Hell's punishments from Dante's *Inferno*. With the police baffled, lives endangered and Dante's literary future at stake, the Dante Club must shed its sheltered literary existence and find a way to stop the killer.

Title: **The tenderness of wolves**
Author: Stef Penney
Number of books in set: 11

1867, Canada. As winter tightens its grip on the isolated settlement of Dove River, a woman steels herself for the journey of a lifetime. A man has been brutally murdered and her seventeen-year-old son has disappeared. The violence has re-opened old wounds and inflamed deep-running tensions in the frontier township – some want to solve the crime; others seek only to exploit it.

To clear her son's name, she has no choice but to follow the tracks leaving the dead man's cabin and head north into the forest and the desolate landscape that lies beyond it...

Title: **Daddy's girls**
Author: Tasmina Perry
Number of books in set: 8

The Balcon sisters are London's paparazzi darlings. Serena, the country's most beautiful actress, Venetia the glamorous designer, Camilla the rising political star and Cate the feisty magazine editor.

But money doesn't buy you love. When their aristocratic and tyrannical father Oswald Balcon is found dead, the finger of suspicion points towards his glamorous daughters. Suddenly we find that beneath the ritzy façade of the Balcon family lies a web of deceit and betrayal that hides a thirty-year-old secret which threatens to destroy them all.

From the sun drenched beaches of Mustique to Manhattan's elite society circuit. From the exclusive fashion houses of Milan to the star-studded streets of Cannes, the Balcon sisters play out their lives in a whirl of glitz and the ultra chic. But as tragedy and danger stalks every one of them, the scene is set for a stunning climax.

Title: **Mercy**
Author: Jodi Picoult
Number of books in set: 7

When Jamie Macdonald killed his wife, he knew he might face a life sentence. But what was life in a world without Maggie?

The case divides the small town of Wheelock. James Macdonald has confessed to premeditated murder – Murder One. For his cousin Police Chief Cameron Macdonald, there's no question this man should be arrested and tried – family blood ties or no.

But for Cameron's wife Allie, it's not so clear-cut. She loves her husband more than life itself. If he were suffering and asked for her help to die, she knows she would do anything for him. Now, for the first time in their marriage, she finds herself set against Cam, siding with Jamie and wondering if what he says is right: that in a relationship, there's always one who loves more.

Title: **Vernon God Little**
Author: D B Pierre
Number of books in set: 9

The riotous adventures of fifteen-year-old Vernon Gregory Little in small-town Texas and beach-front Mexico mark one of the most spectacularly irreverent, satirically acute and critically acclaimed debuts of the 21st century so far. The only novel to be set in the barbecue sauce capital of central Texas, Vernon God Little suggests that desperate times throw up the most unlikely of heroes.

Title: **The personal shopper**
Author: Carmen Reid
Number of books in set: 9

Meet Annie Valentine: stylish, savvy, multi-tasker extraordinaire.

As a personal shopper in a swanky London fashion store, Annie can re-style and re-invent her clients from head to toe. In fact this, this super-skilled dresser can be relied on to solve everyone's problems...except her own.

Although she's a busy single mum to stroppy teen Lana and painfully shy Owen, there's a gap in Annie's wardrobe – sorry, life – for a new man. But finding the perfect partner is turning out to be so much trickier than finding the perfect pair of shoes.

Can she source a genuine classic? A lifelong investment? Will she end up with a mistake from the sale rail, who'll have to be returned? Or maybe, just maybe, there'll be someone new in this season who could be the one...

Title: **The water's lovely**
Author: Ruth Rendell
Number of books in set: 10

'Weeks went by when Ismay never thought of it at all. Then something would bring it back or it would return in a dream. The dreams began in the same way. She and her mother would be climbing the stairs, following Heather's lead through the bedroom to what was on the other side, not a bathroom in the dream but a chamber floored and walls in marble. In the middle of it was a glassy lake. The white thing in the water floated towards her, its face submerged, and her mother said, absurdly, "Don't look!"'

The dead man was Ismay's stepfather, Guy. Nine years on, she and her sister, Heather, still live in the same house in Clapham. But it has been divided into two self-contained flats. Their mother lives upstairs with her sister, Pamela. And the bathroom, where Guy drowned, has been demolished.

Ismay and Heather get on well. They always have. They never discuss the changes to the house, still less what happened that August day. But now, with painful inevitability, hidden truths start to emerge.

Title: **Two Lives**
Author: Vikram Seth
Number of books in set: 11

Two Lives is the story of a century and of a love affair across a racial divide. It tells of the extraordinary lives of Vikram Seth's great-uncle Shanti, brought up in India and sent to Berlin in the 1930s to study, and of his great-aunt Henny,

whose German-Jewish family took Shanti in as a lodger. What follows is an astonishing tapestry of India, the Third Reich and the Second World War, Auschwitz and the Holocaust, Israel and Palestine, post-war Germany and modern Britain.

Title: **1599. A year in the life of Shakespeare**
Author: James Shapiro
Number of books in set: 11

How did Shakespeare go from being a talented poet and playwright to become one of the greatest writers who ever lived? Here at last is an intimate history of Shakespeare, following him through a single year that changed not only his fortunes but the course of literature.

Title: **The dust diaries**
Author: Owen Sheers
Number of books in set: 13

When Owen Sheers discovers a book in his father's study he stumbles upon the life of an obscure relative: Arthur Cripps, lyric poet and maverick missionary to Rhodesia. Compelled by the description of Cripps' extraordinary life in Africa, Sheers embarks on a journey through contemporary Zimbabwe in an attempt to better understand Arthur's devotion to the country, the legacy of a hidden love at the heart of the story and the dramatic, often bloody, differences that echo across the years.

Title: **We need to talk about Kevin**
Author: Kevin Shriver
Number of books in set: 10

Shortly before his sixteenth birthday, Kevin Khatchadourian kills seven of his fellow high-school students, a cafeteria worker, and a teacher. He is visited in prison by his mother, Eva, who narrates in a series of letters to her estranged husband, Franklin, her account of Kevin's upbringing.

Title: **Toast**
Author: Nigel Slater
Number of books in set: 9

Toast is Nigel Slater's award-winning story of a childhood remembered through food. Whether relating his mother's ritual burning of the toast, his father's dreaded Boxing Day stew or such culinary highlights of the day as Arctic Roll and Grilled Grapefruit (then considered something of a status symbol in Wolverhampton), this remarkable memoir vividly recreates daily life in sixties suburban England.

Nigel's likes and dislikes, aversions and sweet-toothed weaknesses form a fascinating backdrop to this incredibly moving and deliciously evocative portrait of childhood, adolescence and sexual awakening.

Title: **The accidental**
Author: Ali Smith
Number of books in set: 9

Arresting and wonderful, *The Accidental* pans in on the Norfolk holiday home of the Smart family one hot summer. There, a beguiling stranger called Amber appears at the door bearing all sorts of unexpected gifts, trampling over family boundaries and sending each of the Smarts scurrying from the dark into the light.

Title: **Salmon fishing in the Yemen**
Author: Paul Torday
Number of books in set: 10

Why does Dr Alfred Jones feel as though something is missing in his life? He has many reasons to be content. His job as a fisheries scientist is satisfactory, and he has just celebrated his twentieth wedding anniversary.

When he is asked to help create a salmon river in the highlands of the Yemen, Fred rejects the idea as absurd. But the proposal catches the eye of several senior British politicians. And so Fred finds himself forced to figure out how to fly ten thousand salmon to a desert country – and persuade them to swim there...

As he embarks on an extraordinary journey of faith the diffident Dr Jones will discover a sense of belief and a capacity for love that surprise himself and all who know him.

Title: **Frankie & Stankie**
Author: Barbara Trapido
Number of books in set: 9

Dinah and Lisa are growing up in 1950s South Africa, where racial laws are tightening. They are two little girls from a liberal family – big sister Lisa is strong and sensible, while Dinah is weedy and arty. At school, the sadistic Mrs Vaughan-Jones provides instruction in mental arithmetic and racial prejudice. And then there's the puzzle of lunch break. "Would you rather have a native girl or a koelie to make your sandwiches?" a classmate asks. But Dinah doesn't know, because it's her Dad who makes them. As the shadows of apartheid lengthen, Dinah journeys through childhood and adolescence and the minefields of boys and university in this vibrant and irresistible novel.

Title: **How to talk to a widower**

Author: Jonathan Tropper

Number of books in set: 13

When Doug married Hailey – beautiful, smart and ten years older – he left his carefree Manhattan life to live in the suburbs with her and her teenage son, Russ. Three years later, at 29, Doug has been a widower for twelve months and just wants to drown himself in self-pity and Jack Daniels. But his family has other ideas...

Russ is furious with Doug for not adopting him, and has fallen in with a bad crowd. Claire, Doug's irrepressible, pregnant twin sister, has left her husband and, uninvited, moved in with Doug. And their sister Debbie is determined to have the perfect wedding, at any cost.

Soon, Doug finds himself trying to forge a relationship with Russ and reconnect with his own eccentric family, while reluctantly edging back into the complicated world of dating...

Title: **The night watch**

Author: Sarah Waters

Number of books in set: 10

Tender and tragic, set against the turbulent backdrop of wartime Britain, *The Night Watch* is the extraordinary story of four Londoners: Kay, who wanders the streets in mannish clothes, restless and searching. Helen, who harbours a troubling secret... Viv, glamour girl, recklessly loyal to her soldier lover... and Duncan, an apparent innocent, struggling with demons of his own.