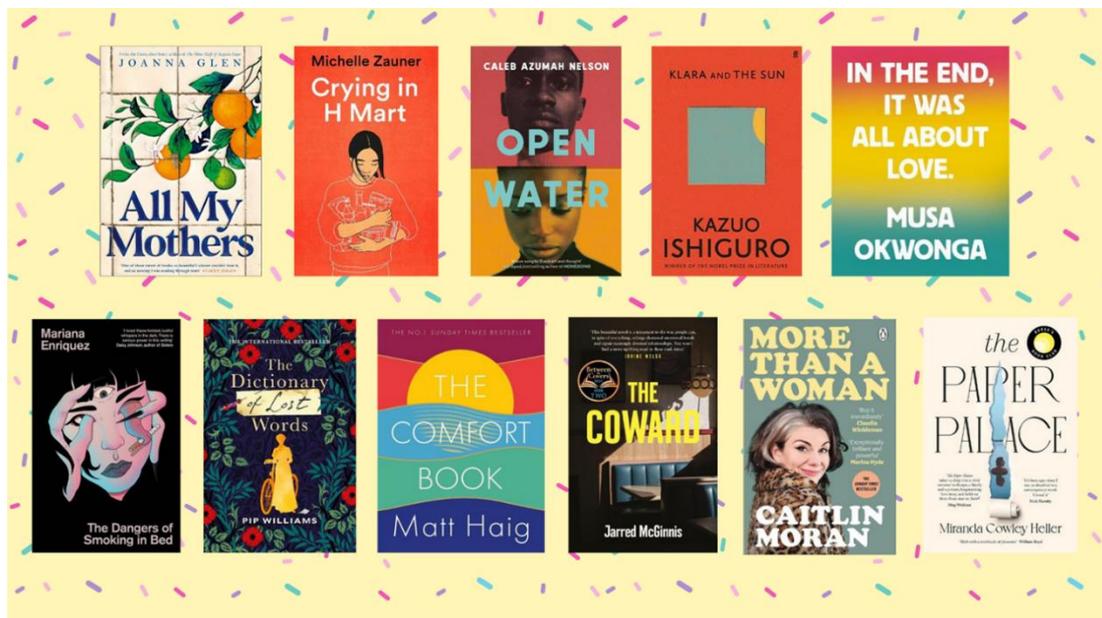


The Reading Agency's Books of the Year! Adults



At The Reading Agency, we have read a lot of brilliant books over the past year; books that have made us laugh, cry and get through those challenging lockdown months. Members of our team have picked the book that stood out to them and shared a few words on why they loved it. We hope you find some inspiration for your next read, or perhaps spot a few titles you have enjoyed yourself! Tell us on social media by tagging @readingagency and using #BooksOfTheYear.

***The Dangers of Smoking in Bed* by Mariana Enriquez, translated by Megan McDowell (Granta)
ISBN: 9781783786718**

If feminist horror stories are your thing, this one is for you! Enriquez's short stories of ghosts, curses and witches are combined with the horrors of poverty, violence and human cruelty in the Argentinian capital. Each story is uniquely creepy and macabre and will get so under your skin that you'll want to sleep with the light on... – Zoe S

***The Paper Palace* by Miranda Cowley Heller (Viking)
ISBN: 9780241470718**

Reminiscent of Donna Tartt and Meg Wolitzer, this novel follows the 24 hours after a woman has an affair with her childhood best friend while her husband and mother are in the next room, as well as flashbacks through the decades leading up to that moment. It's so good I didn't want it to end and is possibly now one of my favourite books ever. – Kathryn

***Klara and the Sun* by Kazuo Ishiguro (Faber and Faber)
ISBN: 9780571364879**

Kazuo Ishiguro returns with his eighth novel to explore what it really means to be human and what it means to love. A beautiful dystopian science fiction story, it made me laugh and cry; it was wonderfully evocative and I am now working my way through Ishiguro's other seven novels! – Hayley

***All My Mothers* by Joanna Glen (The Borough Press)**

ISBN: 9780008410582

The story of one woman's search for her 'real' mother, this novel explores the many forms that motherhood and friendship can take. It's an uplifting and heart-warming novel with a wonderful sense of place. – Kate

***Open Water* by Caleb Azumah Nelson (Viking)**

ISBN: 9780241448779

My choice is the debut novel from a writer who grew up just down the road from me, in south east London. Nelson tells a story of class, race, loss and young love, and his lyrical prose is infused with the rhythms of jazz and hip hop. If you like the sound of some of the tracks he describes in this book, there's also an *Open Water* Spotify playlist to brighten up your day! – Helen

***The Dictionary of Lost Words* by Pip Williams (Vintage)**

ISBN: 9781784743864

Set in Oxford in 1901, the book follows Esme, daughter of one of the editors of the first Oxford English Dictionary. Over time she realises some words are considered more important than others and that words and meanings relating to women's experience often go unnoticed. She begins to collect these words for another dictionary: The Dictionary of Lost Words. Definitely not your usual historical fiction, the author uses the pretext of the creation of the first Oxford English Dictionary, which is depicted with impeccable accuracy, to talk about gender and social equality, activism and justice in a way that feels more relevant than ever. There is great character development, too! – Isabella

***In The End, It Was All About Love* by Musa Okwonga (Rough Trade Books)**

ISBN: 9781912722938

Blending memoir, fiction and a sprinkling of poetry, this is a pocketbook of power, love and hope. As a bisexual black British writer turns 40, the age their father was when they died, they make a huge life change and move to Berlin in a search to find home, love and in many ways themselves. The move is not an easy one and memories come to haunt them as they face racism on the streets and love affairs that fizzle out. Yet what remains at the heart is just how the heart carries on as we do, as hope does. It is a phenomenal book. – Simon

***The Coward* by Jarred McGinnis (Canongate)**

ISBN: 9781838851538

Auto-fiction about the experience of Jarred, who became a wheelchair user after a car accident that meant he could not walk again. Forced to return home to live with his estranged father, they both struggle to undo the damage of the past and find a way forward. This is one of the most powerful novels I can remember reading in years – uncomfortable at times, and strangely humorous at others. I found myself drawn to Jarred and his story and felt very privileged to have been allowed such an intimate look into someone else's experience. I would recommend this book to everyone. – Karen M

***The Comfort Book* by Matt Haig (Canongate)**

ISBN: 9781786898296

For me it was exactly what it said on the title: words of wisdom from someone that knows the difficulties and struggles of not being able to cope. In situations where you are or have been in a dark place, it is very comforting to know that someone else really understands what you were going through and what helped them at the time – even if it was an extract from a book, a favourite food, a movie, some personal thoughts. I love that Matt tries out different things too, from fiction, to children’s books, to self-help. – Jenny

***More Than a Woman* by Caitlin Moran (Ebury)**

ISBN: 9781529102772

As ever it feels like Caitlin can see into my heart and soul. This book may be my bible for the next 10 years of my life. So insightful, hilarious and very emotional. – Rebecca

***Crying in H Mart* by Michelle Zauner (Pan Macmillan)**

ISBN: 9781529033779

This debut book from the musician also known as Japanese Breakfast is a beautifully written memoir about loss, identity, and grief – and how inherent food is to all of it. See her essay of the same name on the *New Yorker* website for an evocative insight. – Whitney