

My favourite books

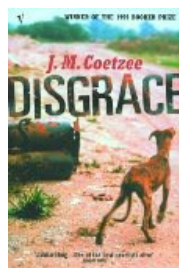


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MY FAVOURITE BOOKS

S J Watson (BSc Physics, 1992) is author of the international bestseller

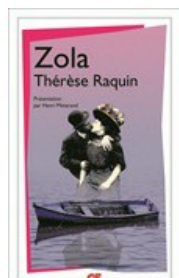
*Before I go to Sleep*, now a film starring Nicole Kidman and Colin Firth. His new book *Second Life* is out in 2015.



**Disgrace, J M Coetzee** - Set in post-apartheid South Africa, *Disgrace* follows a poetry professor who is forced to resign after seducing one of his students. He retreats to his daughter's farm on the Eastern Cape and there confronts a country still riven with racial tension. The writing is sparse and brutal, and the resulting book devastating.



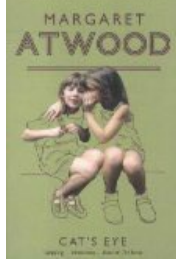
**Stasiland, Anna Funder** - A compelling picture of life in East Germany under the Stasi (the secret police), who at one point had one informant for every six people. Funder recounts her experiences as she meets both the victims and enforcers of the regime, and struggles to understand an organisation that would steal people's underwear to record their smell.



**Therese Raquin, Émile Zola** - Set in Paris, and first published in 1867, this is the story of a woman, unhappily married to her first cousin, who embarks on an affair. When she and her lover kill her husband, far from freeing them, the murder sees them gradually lose everything. The novel was called 'putrid' by a critic of the time, and there can be no higher recommendation.



**Strangers on a train, Patricia Highsmith** - The first novel from the creator of Tom Ripley, and already all of Highsmith's trademarks are here. The book is a tightly-plotted psychological thriller following architect Guy Haines as he attempts to extricate himself from the psychopathic Bruno, a stranger with whom he has inadvertently entered into a deadly pact.



**Cat's Eye, Margaret Atwood** - Almost any of Atwood's novels deserve a place on this list, but I've chosen her most autobiographical novel. It follows controversial painter Elaine Risley as she returns to Toronto for a retrospective show. She finds herself reflecting on her childhood, and in particular her bullying by the charismatic and cruel Cordelia, an experience which coloured the rest of her life. If that sounds dry, don't be put off; *Cat's Eye* is beautiful and remarkable.

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