



International Women's Day 2022

DIS Book Recommendations

In celebration of IWD on 8th March, we asked DIS staff to recommend their favourite books by female authors. These are their recommendations.

I Capture the Castle, by Dodie Smith - I love the first sentence of the book, possibly the best start that a book can have: "I write this sitting in the kitchen sink...."

Girl, Woman, Other, by Bernardine Evaristo - I read this in about 3 days as I couldn't put it down, so beautifully written and so full of life. As one review put it, 'a love song to modern Britain and black womanhood.'

Algorithms of Oppression, by Safiya Umoja Noble - It is an eye-opener into the world of bias in search engine results which shows the need for more inclusive thinking by Google engineers.

Lives of Girls and Women, by Alice Munro - Her short stories eloquently capture the familiar and extraordinary in the ordinariness of women's lives. Not just this volume, but all of her collected short stories. Alice Munro is a gem!

A Still Life, by Josie George - This is a book I read recently, and it's really stayed with me. It's an autobiography written by a woman with chronic illness, describing how she lives and what she sees in the constrained spaces she can get to. It sounds gloomy, but it's so full of joy and wonderful descriptions of the tiny details we never notice -- Josie George is inspirational, so a perfect choice for International Women's Day! As the blurb says, "against a world which values progress and productivity above all else, Josie sets out a quietly radical alternative: to value and treasure life for life itself, with all its great and small miracles."

Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus, by Mary Shelley (1818) - There are many books that could be suggested, both directly related to Digital Humanities and entirely unconnected. The influence of Frankenstein is immense: Mary Shelley, pretty much invented science fiction with this book, all the remarkable because she was still a teenager at the time, and it's a superb story as well.

Hark a Vagrant, by Kate Beaton - It makes me laugh out loud and she has a really funny take on everything. It's a book of cartoons, based on events from history.

The Right to Sex, by Amia Srinivasan - I read this recently and she talks about sexual politics in 2022 ("Men's rights activism", incels, the Me Too movement etc.) I was really amazed at how much is going on and how nuanced her thoughts were.

The Seventh Horse and Other Stories of Leonora Carrington - It's a book of surrealist short stories. I'm still not sure what some of them mean, but they capture a genuinely dream-like mood (and feel as if they're ancient myths that have always existed).

Mr. Nobody a Novel, by Catherine Steadman - Catherine Steadman explores the peculiarities of the mind in a mesmerising and chilling tale of mystery, harboured secrets and fear. If medical-style psychological thrillers give you a buzz, then you must read Mr. Nobody

The Lottery and Other Stories, by Shirley Jackson - If you are up for chilling subjects and supernatural themes, The Lottery and Other Stories is a perfect collection of Jackson's short horror stories. It is an easy yet provocative read.

To Kill a Mockingbird, by Harper Lee - To Kill a Mockingbird is irresistibly witty and profoundly touching. Told from a perspective of a girl in the American South in the 1930s, the story is about growing up, love, friendship, moral strength, fear, racial discrimination and longing for justice. It beautifully portrays how important it is to persevere in being humane...

Geek Love, by Katherine Dunn - an incredible and often marginalised American author, more well known now for her articles on Boxing than anything else. There is a lot of beauty amongst the ugliness in this novel but a warning, it is quite an 'extreme' story, not for the faint hearted. The 'Geek' of the title refers to the early 20th century concept of the circus geek, not to someone who is a fan of videogames. This is for fans of transgressive fiction by novelists like Chuck Palahniuk but Dunn's writing is better!

Let It Go and So to Speak, both by Dame Stephanie Shirley - Dame Stephanie Shirley's life story is most inspiring, and profits from her new book 'So to Speak' go to her Autism charity: <https://www.steveshirley.com/so-to-speak/>