From One Reader to Another
An invitation to read internationally

To celebrate the tenth anniversary of its Writers in Translation programme, English PEN is teaming up with The Reading Agency and Free Word to invite book groups to read and discuss titles from the World Bookshelf, a unique online showcase of the most exciting contemporary literature available in English translation.

There are over 100 books on the World Bookshelf but here is a suggested reading list to get you started:

- The Yacoubian Building by Alaa Al Aswany (Egypt, Arabic)
- Dreams from the Endz by Faïza Guène (France, French)
- Arab Jazz by Karim Miské (France, French)
- Compartment No.6 by Rosa Liksom (Finland, Finnish)
- The Lady from Tel Aviv by Rabai al-Madhoun (Palestine, Arabic)
- Vango: Between Sky and Earth by Timothée de Fombelle (France, French)
- The Devil’s Workshop by Jachym Topol (Czech Republic, Czech)
- In the Sea There Are Crocodiles (for younger readers) by Fabio Geda (Italy, Italian)
- Bronze and Sunflower (for younger readers) by Cao Wenxuan (China, Mandarin)
- How the Soldier Repairs the Gramophone by Saša Stanišić (Bosnia-Herzegovina, German)
- The Lights of Pointe-Noire by Alain Mabanckou (Congo, French)
- The Goddess Chronicle by Natsuo Kirino (Japan, Japanese)
- Allah Is Not Obliged by Ahmadou Kourouma (Ivory Coast, French)
- The Iraqi Christ by Hassan Blasim (Iraq, Arabic)
- Morning Sea by Margaret Mazzantini (Italy, Italian)
- Sworn Virgin by Elvira Dones (Albania, Italian)
- A Perfect Crime by A Yi (China, Mandarin)
- The End of Days by Jenny Erpenbeck (Germany, German)
- The Sound of Things Falling by Juan Gabriel Vásquez (Colombia, Spanish)
- The Whispering City by Sara Moliner (Spain, Spanish)

Share your thoughts about these books by leaving a comment on the website or by getting in touch on Twitter: @englishpen, @readingagency, @FreeWordCentre
A Perfect Crime by A Yi

On a normal day in provincial China, a bored high-school student goes about his regular business. But he’s planning the brutal murder of his only friend, a talented violinist. He invites her round, strangles her, stuffs her body into a washing machine and flees town. On the run and without remorse, the student is initially anxious, but having outsmarted the authorities the allure of danger soon takes hold again. As her alerts the police to his whereabouts, the cat-and-mouse game begins anew with the stakes rising to ever higher levels. A Perfect Crime is both a vision of China’s heart of darkness – the despair that traps the rural poor and the incoherent rage lurking behind their phlegmatic front – and a technically brilliant excursion into the claustrophobic realm of classic horror and suspense.

About the author

A Yi was born in 1976. After spending five years as a police officer, he left to become the editor-in-chief of the bi-monthly literary magazine Chutzpah. He has written two collections of short stories, Grey Stories and The Bird Saw Me, some of which have been published in Granta and the Guardian. He was nominated for the People’s Literature Short Stories prestigious award for Top Twenty Literary Giants of the Future in 2010. A Perfect Crime was published in China in 2011. He lives in Beijing.

About the translator

Anna Holmwood translates literature from Chinese and Swedish to English. She was awarded one of the first British Centre for Literary Translation mentorship awards in 2010 and has since translated novels, countless short stories for publication and samples for agents and rights sellers. She is currently working on a major series of Chinese martial arts novels by Jin Yong for MacLehose Press. In 2011 she co-founded the Emerging Translators’ Network to support early career translators, and was elected to the UK Translators Association committee in 2012. She lives in China.

For discussion

1. A Perfect Crime invites comparisons to Albert Camus’s The Outsider. How do the two books differ and what are their similarities?

2. Is the main character simply a cold-hearted killer?

3. How important is it that the book takes place in China?

4. Are there any passages that strike you as insightful, even profound?

5. If you could ask the author a question, what would you ask?