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
Bronze and Sunflower by Cao Wenxuan

When Sunflower, a young city girl, moves to the countryside, she grows to love the reed marsh lands – the endlessly flowing river, the friendly buffalo with their strong backs and shiny round heads, the sky that stretches on and on in its vastness. However, the days are long, and the little girl is lonely. Then she meets Bronze, who, unable to speak, is ostracized by the other village boys. Soon the pair are inseparable, and when Bronze's family agrees to take Sunflower in, it seems that fate has brought him the sister he has always longed for. But life in Damaidi is hard, and Bronze's family can barely afford to feed themselves. Will the city girl be able to stay in this place where she has finally found happiness?

About the author

Cao Wenxuan is one of China's most important children's writers and is often referred to as China's very own Hans Christian Andersen. Many of his books have been bestsellers, including Thatched Cottage and Red Gourd, and his work has been translated into French, Russian, Japanese, Korean and English. Cao Wenxuan has won several of China's most prestigious awards for children's literature, including the Song Qingling and Bing Xin prizes.

About the translator

Helen Wang has written and edited multiple books and articles, and has also been Curator of East Asian Money at the British Museum. Her translations for children include Jackal and Wolf by Shen Shixi, Pai Hua Zi and the Clever Girl by Zhang Xinxin (a graphic novel for children set in 1960s Beijing), short fantasy story Dragonworld by Zhang Xinxin and Galloping Horses by Xu Zechen.

For discussion

1. Bronze and Sunflower is a book aimed at younger readers. What do you think adult readers might gain from reading it?
2. Is the presence of the Cultural Revolution subtle or obvious and in what ways does it impact the story as a whole?
3. What themes does Cao Wenxuan explore? How does he use symbols to reinforce these themes?
4. What comparisons are drawn between urban and rural life? Are these comparisons pertinent outside China?
5. Who do you sympathise with more, Bronze or Sunflower? How would you describe the relationship between them?