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
Compartment No.6 by Rosa Liksom

A sad young woman boards a train in Moscow. Bound for Mongolia, she's trying to leave a broken relationship as far behind her as she can. Wanting to be alone, she chooses an empty compartment – No.6. Her solitude is soon shattered by the arrival of a fellow passenger: Vadim Nikolayevich Ivanov, a grizzled, opinionated and foul-mouthed ex-soldier, 'a cauliflower-eared man in a black working-man's overcoat and a white ermine hat'. Vadim fills the compartment with his long and colourful stories, recounting his sexual conquests and violent fights in lurid detail. As their train cuts slowly through the wintry Russian landscape, a grudging kind of companionship grows between the two inhabitants of Compartment No.6 and the girl realises that if she works out how to listen, Vadim's stories may just contain lessons for her.

About the author

Rosa Liksom was born in 1958 in Lapland, Finland, to a family of farmers and reindeer breeders. A renowned painter, cartoonist, writer and filmmaker, her books have been translated into more than 15 languages. After living in Kristiania, Copenhagen, where she wrote her first novel, Norway, Iceland, Paris, Brezhnev-era Moscow and various squats and communes throughout Europe, she returned to Helsinki, Finland, in 1987. She won the 2011 Finlandia Prize for Compartment No. 6.

About the translator

Lola Rogers is a Finnish-to-English literary translator living in Seattle. She has contributed translations of fiction, non-fiction and poetry to a variety of journals and anthologies, and has translated numerous novels, including True by Riikka Pulkkinen, which was a Shelf Unbound best book of 2012, and Purge by Sofi Oksanen, chosen as a best book of 2010 by the California Literary Review, The Sunday Times and others. Other translations include works by Pasi Jääskeläinen, Johanna Sinisalo and Rosa Liksom. She is a founding member of the Finnish–English Literary Translation Cooperative.

For discussion

1. Why do you think the ‘sad young girl’ is unnamed and her male companion, Vadim, who is also the only other character we hear from, named?
2. The girl and Vadim are apparently opposites; what other unlikely pairs have you met in novels?
3. How do the two characters interact with each other and do they learn anything from one another?
4. How do the girl’s poetic observations contribute to the context of the book (set in Soviet Russia)?
5. What, if there is one, is the message of the book?