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
Raised by a strange nanny in Sicily, Vango grows up with one friend, a priest Zefiro, who lives in a monastery hidden from sight. On reaching adulthood, Vango decides to follow in Zefiro's steps, but at the moment he is taking his holy orders at Notre Dame in Paris he is falsely accused of a crime and has to go on the run. This is a breathless and highly cinematic story that follows Vango travelling by Zeppelin across Europe from Stromboli to Nazi Germany, from Scotland to the Soviet Union, climbing the rooftops of Paris, crossing the paths of arms traffickers, crooked policemen, Russian spies and even Stalin.

About the author
Timothée de Fombelle is a French author and playwright. He has recently been recognized for his novels Toby Lolness and Vango, and their sequels. His plays, which include Le Phare, Je danse toujours and Rose Cats, have been translated into many languages.

About the translator
Sarah Ardizzone is an award-winning translator from French. She won the Marsh Award in 2005 for her translation of Daniel Pennac's Eye of the Wolf and the Scott-Moncrieff Prize in 2007 for Faïza Guène’s Just Like Tomorrow. Her translations of picture books include Marjolaine Leray’s Little Red Hood, Mr Leon’s Paris by Barroux and the Amnesty-endorsed I Have the Right to Be a Child.

For discussion
1. What is the effect of starting the novel in media res, halfway through Vango's story rather than at its beginning?
2. The novel is set between the two world wars. What is the significance of this setting? Discuss the way in which real historical figures (Hugo Eckener, Stalin, etc) are interwoven into de Fombelle's fictional narrative.
3. 'Vango was no ordinary orphan. He was heir to a world that had been engulfed.' Who is Vango? What does he represent?
4. Sarah Ardizzone's translation was widely praised in reviews of the English-language edition. What do you think the challenges of translating Vango might have been and how did Sarah overcome them?
5. Vango: Between Sky and Earth has a sequel, Vango: A Prince Without a Kingdom. Did the book make you want to read on to find out what happens next to Vango?