

Suggested Reading List for Australia

Books

Fiction:

Cloudstreet (*Tim Winton*)

Tim Winton's funny, sprawling saga is an epic novel of love and acceptance, an Australian classic and perennial winner of reader polls to name Australia's favourite book. It's the story of two rural families – the Lambs and the Pickles – who, after separate family calamities, find themselves sharing a great, breathing, shuddering house on Cloud St in Perth. For twenty years, they roister and rankle, laugh and curse until the roof over their heads becomes a home for their hearts. Winner of the Miles Franklin and NBC Awards in Australia, *Cloudstreet* is a celebration of people, places and the unique rhythms of Australian life. Also an award-winning TV mini-series (trailer here) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xQMOa7vXRjY&feature=youtu.be>

Picnic at Hanging Rock (*Joan Lindsay*)

Joan Lindsay's haunting period novel is a work of fiction, but it is such a part of the Australian imagination many Australians believe it to be a real-life mystery. On St Valentine's Day in 1900, a group of young women from an exclusive Victorian private school go on an excursion to isolated Hanging Rock, deep in the Australian bush. The excursion ends in tragedy when three girls and a teacher mysteriously vanish after climbing the rock. Only one girl returns, with no memory of what has become of the others. Also made into a much-loved movie in 1975 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x05QuAhpq6o&feature=youtu.be> and more recently a television series.

Jasper Jones (*Craig Silvey*)

An instant classic on its publication in 2009, when it was acclaimed as Australia's answer to *To Kill A Mockingbird*, Craig Silvey has created a combination of rite of passage novel and Australian gothic crime story. Late on a hot summer night at the end of 1965, Charlie Bucktin, a precocious and bookish boy of thirteen, is startled by an urgent knock on the window of his sleep-out. His visitor is Jasper Jones, an outcast in the regional mining town of Corrigan. Rebellious, mixed-race and solitary, Jasper is a distant figure of danger and intrigue for Charlie. So when Jasper begs for his help, Charlie eagerly steals into the night by his side, terribly afraid but desperate to impress. In a simmering summer where everything changes, Charlie learns why the truth of things is so hard to know, and even harder to hold in his heart. Also adapted for the screen in a charming 2015 film <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ti0XVYcRR4s&feature=youtu.be>

Voss (*Patrick White*)

Voss is the best-known novel by Patrick White, winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1973, when the Nobel Committee praised White's "epic and psychological narrative art which has introduced a new continent into literature." Set in nineteenth-century Australia, this a sweeping novel about a secret passion between the explorer Voss and the young orphan Laura. As Voss is tested by hardship, mutiny and betrayal during his crossing of the brutal Australian desert, Laura awaits his return in Sydney, where she endures their months of separation as if her life were a dream and Voss the only reality. Marrying a sensitive rendering of hidden love with a stark adventure narrative, [Voss](#) is a novel of extraordinary power and virtuosity from a twentieth-century master.

The Bodysurfers (*Robert Dewe*)

Set among the surf and sandhills of the Australian beach – and the tidal changes of three generations of the Lang family – this bestselling collection of short stories is an Australian classic. These stories vividly evoke the place of the coast in the Australian psyche, with the scent of suntan oil, the sting of the sun and a lazy sensuality, all the while hinting at a deep undercurrent of suburban malaise. From the moment of its publication in 1983, these poignant and seductive stories marked a major change in Australian literature and the nation's sense of itself.

NON-FICTION

In a Sunburned Country (*Bill Bryson*)

This 2000 travelogue about Australia by best-selling travel writer Bill Bryson (published in the UK as *Down Under*) describes Bryson's travels by rail and road throughout Australia, his conversations with people from all walks of life about the country's history, geography, and unusual fauna and flora. A very entertaining and still relevant read spiced with Bryson's wry impressions of the life, culture and amenities in each locality.

The Fatal Shore (*Robert Hughes*)

An epic history of Australia's founding out of the suffering and brutality of Britain's convict transportation system. Hughes, the long-time art critic of *Time* magazine, also addresses the historical, political and sociological reasons that led to British settlement.

Places We Swim (*Dillon Seitchilk-Reardon*)

From lap pools to ocean pools, rockpools to hot springs, *Places We Swim* covers the breadth of Australia, bringing you the 60 best places to swim, dive, jump, paddle and float around the country. You'll discover just what makes each swimming spot unique, learn the best time to go, gain some useful local knowledge and find out the best things to see and do in the area. With destinations ranging from the neighbourhood city pool to remote outback waterfalls, this book is a celebration of not just these magnificent swimming spots, but of the diverse landscapes and communities that make up Australia.

Films

In addition to the film and TV adaptations mentioned above:

Storm Boy (*1976*)

The classic Australian film from 1976, based on a children's book by Colin Thiele, has been remade in 2019, starring Geoffrey Rush.

Australia (*2008*)

Australia, Baz Luhrmann's epic romantic historical drama set during World War II stars Nicole Kidman and Hugh Jackman.

The Sapphires (*2012*)

A musical comedy loosely based on the true story of four indigenous Australian women who form a music group named The Sapphires, and travel to [Vietnam](#) in 1968 to sing for the troops.