

Have you Read?

SCIENCE FICTION BY WOMEN AUTHORS

Victoria Marklew is from Jenkintown, Pennsylvania.

Science fiction at its best uses other worlds and realities to reveal new truths about what it means to be human. My bookcases are full of science fiction tales (along with a hefty dose of mystery and historical works); perhaps, as an expat Brit living in America, I am drawn to stories of strange worlds?! With Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* taking Hulu and social media by storm, this is a list of some of my favorite science fiction novels penned by women.

Woman on the Edge of Time

By Marge Piercy



I discovered this novel as a college student back in the late 1970s. Now considered a feminist classic, it tells the story of

Connie, a woman struggling to survive in contemporary times who is shown what may be humanity's future. This utopian society includes a profoundly different relationship between men and women and child rearing, and it may not come about if Connie does not keep fighting in the here and now.

Grass

By Sheri S. Tepper



The planet of Grass is the only human-colonized world not to have fallen victim to a galactic plague. What is it about the aloof families who live there that keeps them immune? And just what goes on in their ritualistic "hunts"? Science fiction with a mystery, this beautifully written novel literally made me gasp out loud when I got to the reveal partway through,

which describes what the families actually ride to their hunts. As she learns the truth about the alien life form of Grass, the protagonist also comes to a new understanding of herself.

The Fifth Season

By N. K. Jemisin



In the first novel in The Broken Earth Series, Jemisin excels at slowly building her world and its characters, with each added layer bringing new insight and complexity to the tale. She is such a compelling writer that you quickly believe in her portrayal of a world where humans can control earthquakes and where nothing is quite what it seems. The second book in this series was every bit as good as the first, and I can't wait to see where she takes the story next.

The Left Hand of Darkness

By Ursula LeGuin



A science fiction classic and all the more impressive for being so far ahead of its time. LeGuin's tale of future humanity and other worlds is an exploration of the essence of the human condition, focusing on the concept of gender and the role it plays in human identity.

Feed

By Mira Grant



This first novel in The Newsflesh Trilogy brings a fresh take to the somewhat overdone postzombie apocalypse theme, with an emphasis on the ways that future media and independent news shape the public's perception. Political shenanigans are as key to the plot as is the need to avoid the walking dead.

Grant's descriptions of the day-to-day ways that people try to minimize the risk of infection are spot on, and the backstory of how the plague came about is deeply disturbing for being so plausible.

Blackout (and sequel All Clear)

By Connie Willis



Willis explores the contradictions and risks of time travel through the tale of a handful of academics from 2060 and their travels to England at the start of the Second World War in 1939. Their story continues with *All Clear*, set in London at the height of the Blitz. These deeply felt and evocative portrayals of a place and time are as much historical dramas as they are novels about time travel.

Planetfall

By Emma Newman



Set 22 years after the establishment of a new human colony, this novel gradually reveals the truth both about the colony's founding and the protagonist's inner turmoil. A book about secrets and how they can distort our lives, the novel also features a compelling main character and a devastatingly empathetic depiction of mental illness.

Assassin's Apprentice

The Farseer Trilogy, Book 1

By Robin Hobb



Hobb is one of the best contemporary fantasy writers around. Her series of novels centering on the chameleon character of the Fool, starting with *Assassin's Apprentice*, adds a hefty dose of political intrigue and character

development to the tropes of sword and sorcery fantasy. The Fool is a compelling character who appears in a number of Hobb's novels and has a profound impact on all whose lives he crosses.

The Sparrow

By Mary Doria Russell



Human explorers travel to the world of Rakhat and make contact with a new species. They end up intervening in ways both heroic and disastrous, with profound consequences for all concerned. The novel and its sequel are at times a harrowing but intensely emotional exploration of the nature of good and evil and of what motivates us, along with how limited our perceptions can be.

Seed to Harvest

By Octavia Butler



The four novels that make up the collection called Seed to Harvest do not make for easy reading. By turns disturbing and elegiac, powerful and funny, the novels take us from ancient Africa to humanity's far future to tell the story of immortal telepaths who live on the fringes of society. An exploration of race, power, and the meaning of family that is both unsettling and mesmerizing, this was a collection I couldn't put down.

FICTION AND NONFICTION FAVORITES

Diana Robey is from Chesapeake Beach, Maryland.

In the Time of the Butterflies

By Julia Alvarez



A fictionalized account of three sisters who dared to defy Rafael Trujillo, the former brutal dictator of the Dominican Republic between the 1930s and the 1950s. Their courage in the face of

great danger is unequalled. Alvarez's writing is literature at its best.

The Feast of the Goat

By Mario Vargas Llosa



Vargas Llosa is one of the finest Latin American authors around. Another great book on the danger that Trujillo posed to one specific woman. Trujillo, the Goat, also "feasted on his country financially and psychologically."

The Killer Angels

By Michael Shaara



The best fictionalized account of the Battle of Gettysburg. Both Yankee and Rebel generals come alive on the pages, and the interactions between these generals and the ways they waged war will astound you.

Fahrenheit 451

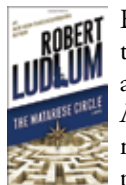
By Ray Bradbury



A must-read for all book lovers. Though Bradbury wrote this novel in the 1950s, it has startling parallels to aspects of life in the 21st century. It is a disturbing read about control of knowledge and ideas when the government burns the books that contain them.

The Matarese Circle

By Robert Ludlum



Early Ludlum novels are tightly written, fast-paced, and intriguing. *The Matarese Circle* is such a novel and is impossible to put down. All the ingredients are here for American-Soviet spy intrigue à la Cold War and KGB.

The Poisonwood Bible

By Barbara Kingsolver



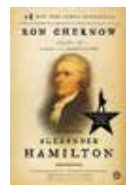
A fascinating story about an American missionary who takes his family to Africa as he works to convert the people in a village to Christianity. His

wife and four daughters suffer tremendously from primitive conditions and an unknown culture but, most of all, at the hands of their uncompromising, harsh missionary husband and father. One of the best books I have ever read.

NONFICTION

Alexander Hamilton

By Ron Chernow



During this fascinating read of one of our country's founders, I discovered that I knew very little about Alexander Hamilton. Chernow writes in an engaging style that keeps you turning the pages. Outstanding writing!

A Spy Among Friends

Kim Philby and the Great Betrayal

By Ben MacIntyre



A gripping biography of a double agent for the British and the Soviets, Kim Philby, during the Cold War. The book leaves you wondering: how could someone betray his home country of England with no qualms whatsoever?

Hellhound on His Trail

The Stalking of Martin Luther King, Jr.

By Hampton Sides



I could not put this book down. Sides relates hour by hour, day by day, the account of finding James Earl Ray, Martin Luther King's killer, and bringing him to justice.

Dead Wake

The Last Crossing of the Lusitania

By Erik Larson



An account of the sinking of the Lusitania. It seems impossible that so many people knew about the dangers of German submarines but that no one heeded the warnings. ■