

A Healing Touch

The books chosen for this list are linked by themes of healing, and the many forms it can take. They go way beyond stories in which people fall ill and get better (or die); there is a deeper and wider exploration of the nature of healing going on here. These books deal with characters who have been damaged by illness, injury, or the many emotional blows that life can deal. But this does not mean a list chock full of depressing books. On the contrary, there is much here that is surprisingly life-affirming.

Use this list to bring a bit of solace into your reading life. Share the trials and tribulations of the people within the pages and allow yourself the time to reflect on your own. This could be the inspiration you've been seeking for a while.

Read the introductions to each book and decide for yourself. Be generous, be daring – you can always swap the book for something else if it's not your cup of tea. But if you don't try... you'll never know!

Grace Notes by Bernard MacLaverty

A story about post-natal depression written by a man? Yes, it is possible, and it's both moving and beautifully delivered. This is an invitation into a period of Catherine's life when things aren't going well. There is much that she needs to come to terms with: her difficult relationship with her family back in Ireland; her work as a composer; motherhood and the love she feels for her daughter. Her journey from darkness into some kind of healing is completely absorbing and unexpectedly life-affirming.



Cold Mountain by Charles Frazier

This is the amazing story of a couple separated by war. First, it follows Inman, a wounded Confederate soldier, as he makes the perilous journey across the mountains to his home; and then Ada (neither wife nor widow) as she struggles to keep the farm going in her husband's absence. As a reader you desire the reunion as much as they do; it's crucial to the emotional and physical healing of both characters. Will they meet again? You'll have to borrow the book to find out.



The Last Time I Saw Mother by Arlene J Chai

Caridad lives in Australia but is called home to the Philippines by a letter from her mother. This begins an absorbing story told through the voices and experiences of four women from the same Philippine family. The past is an open wound; their memories of personal tragedy and sacrifice, as well as the horror of war during the years of Japanese occupation, are still raw and painful. But healing and a kind of inner peace come as they share their stories and their feelings with each other and with the reader.

In the Heart of the Garden by Helene Wiggin

The garden at Friddy's Piece cottage has been tended for over a thousand years. It could tell a great many stories of the women who have nurtured the soil and in doing so have found comfort and solace; inspiration and refuge within its walls. From Fritha, scared by personal tragedy, to Iris, troubled about her uncertain future, there are lives just waiting to be discovered within these pages. The perfect antidote to the stresses of modern living.



A Touch of... Get a sneak preview of ten great reads

Stuck for what to read next? Maybe you fancy trying something new but don't know where to start. **A Touch of** is a great way for readers who use large print, Braille or audio books to find that good read everyone is looking for. Whether you're choosing for yourself or for someone else who can't get to the library, **A Touch of** gives you a sneak preview of tempting possibilities. There are ten different booklists in the series, including A Touch of Terror, A Touch of Mischief, A Ticklish Touch and Touching Infinity.

A Healing Touch features books available in large print and tells you which ones you can get in audio and Braille as well. If you prefer to start from what's available in audio or Braille, please ask for the ten **A Touch of** samplers which give you friendly introductions and a short extract from each book to listen to or touch read.

RNIB Available from RNIB Talking Book Service

NLB Available from NLB in Braille

calibre Available from Calibre Cassette Library

 Available in audio through public libraries

If you would like more information about the services to readers offered by these organisations please ask a member of library staff. If you have internet access, you can check out www.nlbuk.org



Birthday Letters by Ted Hughes

Grief lasts a long time. When his estranged wife, the poet Sylvia Plath, committed suicide in 1963, Ted Hughes remained silent. Nearly forty years later, as he knew he neared his own death, and when scholars and feminists had been arguing for years over his responsibility, Hughes blew the squabbling away with this extraordinary collection of poems. Never mind if you've never tried poetry before; this is pure emotion, raw and sophisticated at the same time.

NLB

One Step Beyond by Chris Moon

Chris Moon had his right leg and right hand blown off by a landmine in Mozambique. This is his personal account of the events leading up to his injury and his subsequent journey back to health. He comes across as a likeable guy, happy to share both his achievements and his setbacks with an easy, good humour and refreshing honesty. You won't get through the last few pages without reaching for the tissues.

Veronika Decides to Die by Paulo Coelho

translated by Margaret Jull Costa

What can we do for those who see no purpose in life and try to end it? This story follows the after-effects of Veronika's attempted suicide. It'll make you think about life, death and life again as it turns into a celebration of what we live for. Paulo Coelho writes short books, almost fables, which have inspired readers from all over the world. If you prefer practical to spiritual comfort, you may be interested to know that this book actually changed the law regarding mental illness in Coelho's home country of Brazil.

East of the Mountains by David Guterson

This is the story of a dying man who makes one last trip home, through breathtaking landscapes, to the place of his birth. The writing is beautiful, deeply evocative of places and emotions. You also learn much about Ben Given's past life and how he feels about his approaching death. Expect elements of an adventure story, but also a moving read which rejects sentimentality in favour of something much more heartening.

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Through a Glass, Darkly by Jostein Gaarder

This is an unusual little book. Simply written and refreshingly child-like, it tells of Cecilia's slow journey towards death. The last weeks of her life are spent in conversation with Ariel, an angel. Together they talk about life – both the trivia and the big issues – and they go skiing and sledging. Banish any thoughts that this is a morbid read. It might make you cry, but the overall message is one of hope rather than despair.

Iris: A Memoir of Iris Murdoch by John Bayley

This is John Bayley's moving and loving testament to his wife – the author, Iris Murdoch. Divided simply into 'Then' and 'Now', it recalls their meeting, courtship and marriage with great tenderness, and then goes on to describe daily life, in the late 1990s, when Iris eventually succumbed to Alzheimer's. The healing here is in this remarkable celebration of love, undimmed by the ravages of illness and the demands of round-the-clock care. Bayley looks for neither accolades nor sympathy; he just tells it as it is.

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A Touch of...

A Healing Touch

A Healing Touch offers you a short, but sensitive, encounter with ten very different books. You may welcome the chance to reflect on the nature of health (both of the body and the mind) or you may be seeking some kind of inspiration. Either way, this selection is just what the doctor ordered...

A Touch of... Get a sneak preview of ten great reads