

A Touch of Reality

The books chosen for this list are all about real life – but that’s where the similarity ends. There are some books that give a recognisable picture of day-to-day existence, as experienced by ordinary people, but show you the hidden tensions lying underneath. Others take in a much wider landscape – both geographically and historically, uncovering a ‘distant’ or ‘lost’ reality that many of us know little about. And, then there are those that explore the reality at the heart of things – here you’ll find gritty autobiography as well as fascinating fiction.

Use this list to bring real life into your reading life. This is your chance to pick a reality that appeals to you most and experience what it really feels like to be there.

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!

Telling Liddy by Anne Fine

Bridie, Heather, Stella, and Liddy are sisters and, in the absence of parents, they must stick together. Husbands, children and work all know their place in the hierarchy. Blood is thicker than water, after all. This is a family saga with attitude. It sucks you into the maelstrom of a family crisis, chews you up and spits you out the other end. Powerful stuff but well worth the emotional investment.

RNIB **NLB** **calibre**

Angela’s Ashes by Frank McCourt

A memoir of a miserable, Irish, Catholic childhood spent in poverty in the reeking slums of Limerick. On the surface, it seems an unbearably bleak story; but underneath the pain and despair there’s a richness of language, and a resilience of spirit that makes you want to read on. In the end, it’s the irrepressible humour, bubbling up unexpectedly, and the authentic voice of young Frankie that makes this story special.

RNIB **NLB** **calibre**

Falling Leaves by Adeline Yen Mah

This is an absorbing and very readable account of the life of a child growing up in China during the rise and establishment of Communism. It’s Mah’s bad luck that she’s born a girl and worse – that she’s the fifth daughter. This condemns her to a life of abuse and neglect. At times it’s hard to believe this is painful fact and not fiction. But Mah is a survivor; read her story and celebrate her remarkable life.

RNIB **NLB**

The Farmer Wants a Wife by Maeve Haran

A tabloid sensation, for all the wrong reasons, Flora Parker escapes the city and its sleazy values. She returns to the comfort zone of her childhood, her aunt and uncle’s farm. But the stark reality of country living – the falling quotas and the mounting debt – hits Flora like a bucket of cold water. A fast, easy read which gives an insight into the pressures of modern farming, but with plenty that is light and frothy.

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 Touch of Reality 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



One Bright Child by Patricia Cumper

Gloria Clare Cumper (the author's mother) was born in Jamaica, but educated in England. On her arrival, she soon learns a lot of things about prejudice – chiefly that she will always have to be twice as good as everyone else in order to be considered half as good. But if that's what it takes, Gloria is prepared to do it. This is warm, fast-moving story that captures the cross-currents of race and class in 1950s' Britain very well.

RNIB

Mason's Retreat by Christopher Tilghman

The wealthy Mason family leave Britain, and almost certain financial ruin, for a new start in the USA. Their ultimate destination is the Retreat, a dilapidated farm on the Chesapeake Bay. This book offers a powerful evocation of a specific time (the 1930s) and place (Maryland) through a family coping with change. The nuances of family dynamics are described in detail, so much so, you almost feel you're there, alongside the family, as they adapt to their surroundings, their neighbours and a different way of living.

Never Far From Nowhere by Andrea Levy

This is the voice of raw and angry reality and will make you remember things about being a teenager you'd probably rather forget. Olive and Vivien are sisters, born to Jamaican parents on a London council estate, but their experience of life is very different. Clever, passionate and honest – Andrea Levy tells growing up like it is.

The Queen of Whale Cay by Kate Summerscale

Truth, they say, is stranger than fiction; you wouldn't believe the life of Marion 'Joe' Carstairs if it was in a novel. When she died at 93, few remembered her but this pacy portrait brings her right back to life. Speedboat racer, heiress, a cross-dressing cigar-smoking lesbian who lived a bohemian life in the 20s and then ruled her own Caribbean island in the 30s and 40s – this is a reality we don't often hear about.



City Girl by Patricia Scanlan

This tale of three friends from Dublin proved such a success, it spawned a whole new genre of 'City Girl' writing. Grittier than the later versions such as Bridget Jones, these girls deal with unwanted pregnancy, secret drinking and ways to break out from the routine of kids and work. It's fast paced and full of intrigue and romance; get comfy on the sofa and enjoy.

RNIB

The God of Small Things by Arundhati Roy

This is a family saga with a difference. Rahel and Estha are twins born into the family business – Paradise Pickles and Preserves – in Southern India. But when their lonely mother falls in love with an Untouchable, things start to go wrong. You'll get completely caught up in this rich and funny story; it may take you far from your own life but into the centre of your understanding.

NLB **calibre**

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A Touch of Reality offers you a down-to-earth experience with ten very different books. You may opt for life as you know it, or you may be drawn towards life as it happens to someone else, far away. Either way, this is your opportunity to jump into someone else's shoes...

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