



BOOK EXTRACT

Title:	Celebrities' Favourite Books: In aid of the Alzheimer's Society
Author:	Jeff Thorburn
Foreword by:	Princess Alexandra
Publication Date:	20 March 2009
Page Extent:	150
ISBN:	1-906358-63-X
ISBN 13:	978-1-906358-63-1
Book Type:	Hardback
Classification:	General Interest
Price:	£9.99

JEFFREY ARCHER *WRITER*

I'm afraid it is impossible for me to name just one favourite book, so here is a list of my all-time favourites:

DISRAELI by Robert Blake

Disraeli is for me a political hero, and this particular biography is written with such style and academic muscle that I remain in awe of the author.

THE DIAMOND AS BIG AS THE RITZ by F Scott Fitzgerald

A wonderful set of short stories; whimsically written by a great storyteller and, what's more, when you have finished with them, you can turn to **BERNICE BOBS HER HAIR**.

REUNION by Fred Uhlman

As a gentile, this short book gave me an insight into the problems of being a Jewish child in 1930s Germany, which I find much more poignant than many long films on the holocaust.

NELSON by Christopher Hibbert

My biggest hero - warts and all; this award-winning biography is also a page-turner. I also came to have an understanding and sympathy for his mistress.

DUVEEN by S N Behrman

This is the story of the amazing art collector and dealer, Joseph Duveen, and his association with Bernard Berenson; were they a couple of crooks, or just good businessmen?

THE THIRTY-NINE STEPS by John Buchan

Still the master at telling a simple story, so it's "unputdownable"; the sort of book that even snobby critics have to admit is a good read.

JANE ASHER

ACTRESS

My favourite book is **THE BLACK PRINCE** by Iris Murdoch. She has to be one of my favourite writers in any case, and this particular novel was written at a time when she was at the height of her powers. (Having just written that sentence, I am amazed to realise that I have picked someone who – famously – developed Alzheimer’s later in her life. The fact that I chose this particular author, and that this book is raising funds for the Alzheimer’s Society, is sheer coincidence: I chose her and the novel purely from my personal love for her work).

Iris Murdoch was, of course, a brilliant philosopher, and she always slipped some wonderfully philosophical observations into her writing. Later in her career she took this much further, and I always suspected that the early and mid-career novels were only part of a semi-planned progression towards her real purpose – to teach us all the complexities of philosophical thought.

THE BLACK PRINCE was written at a time when she was at her most accessible and entertaining, and the gloriously cynical humour and brilliantly observed and described range of human behaviour is a joy to read. It also contains one of the best ever descriptions of the moment of falling (or the realisation that you have already fallen!) in love.

EILEEN ATKINS

ACTRESS/WRITER

I have so many favourite books that it’s really impossible to choose. When I was about eight, my favourite book was **THE WIND IN THE WILLOWS** by Kenneth Grahame. Then in my teens it was **ANNA KARENINA**, Tolstoy’s great love story. In my thirties I was mad about Ford Maddox Ford’s **THE GOOD SOLDIER** subtitled **A TALE OF PASSION** and in between and since, I have of course adored every book of Jane Austen’s and most of Charles Dickens’ - my favourites of his being **GREAT EXPECTATIONS** and **DAVID COPPERFIELD**.

There are many modern writers I like as well: William Boyd; Elizabeth Jane Howard (particularly **THE CAZALET QUARTET**); and Joanna Trollope and Philip Roth to name but a few. But if I had to choose one book, then it would have to be by Virginia Woolf; not one of her novels, although I think both **TO THE LIGHTHOUSE** and **MRS DALLOWAY** are sheer magic, but her diaries which can be bought in a shortened form (there are actually many volumes), edited by Olivier Bell, called **A MOMENT’S LIBERTY**. What you get are the day-to-day thoughts of a witty, wildly imaginative, extremely funny, clever, immensely curious observer of life. You will never think again, ‘Oh, Virginia Woolf, wasn’t she the one who went mad and put stones in her pockets and drowned herself?’ Well, yes she did do that when she was fifty-nine, but she’s not remotely depressing to read; she’s huge fun and illuminates one’s own view of life.

You can dip in and out of the book as well, so on a dreary day you can say to yourself, ‘I think I’ll just read a few pages of Virginia.’ I swear to God you’ll put the book down feeling much better.