

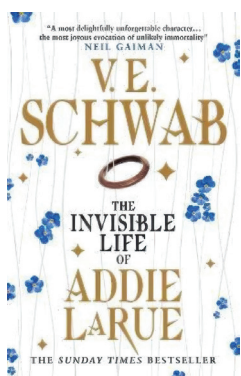


Six of the best

As we move between the dark winter evenings and the lighter days of spring, Archer writer Amaya Shankardass recommends six of her favourite reads.

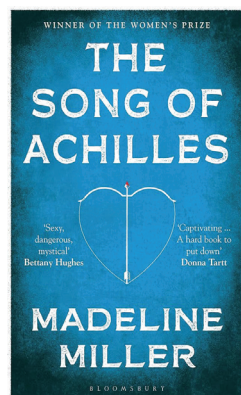
All The Light We Cannot See, by Anthony Doerr

This novel weaves together the captivating stories of a blind French girl, a German boy, and a German sergeant major as they navigate the events of World War Two. From its first chapter, the story is beautifully painted through vivid, faultless writing. To see the evolution of the war through young eyes on both sides of the battlefield is not only moving but enlightening, and proves a testament to Doerr's literary skill. It is undoubtedly one of my favourite books. "Open your eyes... and see what you can do with them before they close forever."



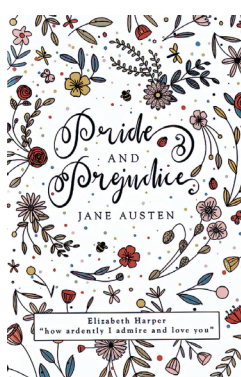
The Invisible Life of Addie LaRue, by V.E. Schwab

On the night of her wedding, Addie LaRue realises that she cannot bind herself to an unremarkable, repetitive life. Leaving her rural village of Villon-Sur-Sarthe, she strikes a deal with a dark god to escape her fate, and is granted immortality. The only downside? Upon leaving one's sight, she fades from memory. Like Anthony Doerr, V.E. Schwab delivers Addie's story with a singular elegance and passion. Last year, I re-read this book before each of my GCSE English Language exams, for inspiration! "Do you know how to live three hundred years?... The same way you live"



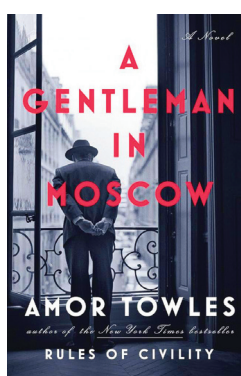
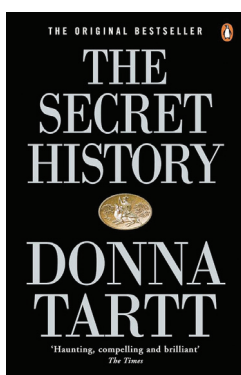
The Song of Achilles, by Madeline Miller

Through the perspective of Patroclus, an exiled prince, Madeline Miller retells the events leading up to and during the Trojan War. After initially befriending Achilles, Prince of Phthia, the relationship between the two men develops into something much deeper, until Achilles is forced to leave for war. Unable to leave his side, Patroclus follows him, instigating a heart-breaking story which questions the cost of glory. Tear-jerking and moving, this novel is perfect for those looking for an emotional escape. "Perhaps it is the greater grief... to be left on Earth when another is gone."



Pride and Prejudice, by Jane Austen

If you enjoyed the latest Bridgerton series, then why not try the book that inspired the author Julia Quinn? Elizabeth Bennet initially finds herself despising the rich, disagreeable Mr Darcy. However, their relationship evolves as personal growth leads her to overcome her prejudice and him his pride. With enemies-to-lovers, scandals, lavish balls and comedy,



what's not to like? "There is no enjoyment like reading! How much sooner one tires of anything than of a book!"

Home and family for a Londoner in Lusaka

By Ruth Anders

East Finchley has been home to some very creative writers, and The Archer recently met another, local resident Rachel Davies, who has just published a book of poems called *Life, In Shorts*.

When Rachel applied to work with Voluntary Service Overseas in 2007, she was posted to Zambia and, knowing nothing about the country, she moved to Siavonga on the north shore of Lake Kariba. Rachel learned to cook from scratch there, despite the limited food available, even learning how to kill her own chicken!

After returning to England a year later, she realised that she had left part of her heart there. Around 14 years passed before she and her husband and two children, aged seven and nine, returned to spend 12 months split between Siavonga and the country's capital Lusaka. They returned to East Finchley last summer.

Life in Africa

Back in London, alongside being a poet and busy mum, Rachel is a life and leadership coach. She acknowledges that her time in Africa has affected her profoundly.

Rachel told The Archer: "I started writing these poems as

a way of processing what I was experiencing throughout our move. It was helpful to record our very different life, watching my children running barefoot, holding on to the sides of cars with the wind in their hair, and spending their days playing outdoors with some rope, sticks and their imaginations.

"I was also reflecting on what 'home' means: identity, parenting, difference, privilege and inequality. Here in London life is all about Things, but I believe that the richness of life lies in simplicity and appreciating what we have."

These themes run through her anthology, a delightful collection of 47 poems featuring anything from the local currency 'kwacha' and Lusaka traffic to village life and the environment.

Rachel added, "My hope is that this collection offers a small insight into what it means to be outside our comfort zone, and that this might encourage all of us, myself included, to explore more." Here's a taster:



Two worlds: Rachel Davies reflects on a life spent between Zambia and north London

Life

The crow of the cockerel as the grasshoppers chirrup, a sound mind-breakingly loud for their small bodies. A leaf falls. The sun tickles the tops of the trees, moving slowly to cast its light across the grass path, rays caressing everything they touch before the later scorch – the burn in the heat of the day – but gentle now. Soft early morning, as the dreams of a billion creatures float in the air. Centuries of life on life on red earth. Dust.

The eBook of *Life, In Shorts* can be found at <https://amzn.eu/d/8hmuoIz>

The Secret History by Donna Tartt

This modern classic follows six Classical Greek students as their ambitions and intellectual pursuits lead them down a wild path. Donna Tartt subverts the stereotypical murder mystery to construct a novel that explores themes of morality, perfection, and evil. I would particularly recommend it if you enjoyed *The Picture of Dorian Gray* or are studying any of the Classics. "Beauty is terror. Whatever we call beautiful, we quiver before it."

A Gentleman in Moscow by Amor Towles

Towles tells the story of a Russian aristocrat sentenced to a lifetime of house arrest within a hotel. His interactions with hotel staff and guests, across three decades, unmask the political and social upheavals of Soviet Russia. Whilst I haven't finished reading it, the originality and philosophical themes underpinning the novel already convince me that it will be one of my favourites. "It was, without question, the smallest room that he had occupied in his life; yet somehow, within these four walls the world had come and gone."

Do you have a favourite reading list? Send your mini reviews to us and we'll consider the best and most interesting for publication. Email news@the-archer.co.uk

The prince and the orphan

By Lynn Winton

There must be many East Finchley households who already have one of Ros Freeborn's creations in their home: she has built her lampshade company Papershades into a thriving business and has brought a colourful assortment to her stall at East Finchley Festival in recent years.

Now you can have something by Ros on the bookshelves too, as she has written a historical novel based on the real characters of King George III and his illegitimate son Frederick Blomberg, called *Prince George and Master Frederick*.

The facts are little known and fascinating. In 1765 a four-year-old orphan boy is taken to the royal palace in Richmond to be a playmate for three year old Prince George, son of King George III and Queen Charlotte.

Diametrically opposed in temperament and character, they go on to live wildly different lives but remain devoted to each other until death.

Their lives are well chronicled and Ros cleverly interweaves fact and fiction into a



Royal connections: Ros has uncovered a little-known story from the life of George III

compelling novel. Who was Frederick Blomberg and how do we know his parentage? What was Ros's own family connection that drew her in to embark on this endeavour? The book reveals all.

Prince George and Master Frederick is published by Alliance and available now.