The Devil's Dictionary
by Ambrose Bierce

A celebrated journalist in his lifetime, Ambrose Bierce's began circulating his own sardonic, mischievous definitions of words in his various columns for San Francisco newspapers. Over several years these were then compiled and expanded into entries for a mock dictionary originally published as The Cynic's Word Book.
One of the most popular satirical works of American literature, The Devil's Dictionary - here published in its most complete 1911 version - brilliantly lays bare the hypocrisies of American society and displays a razor-sharp wit to rival that of Bierce's contemporary Mark Twain.

The corrosive insights of Bierce seem as bitter and fresh as ever. He handles words with delicious precision." - The Daily Telegraph

Author Bio

Ambrose Bierce was one of the leading men of letters in 19th-century America. Among his most important books were The Devil's Dictionary and Tales of Soldiers and Civilians
The Expedition of Humphry Clinker
by Tobias Smollett

Presented through an ingeniously overlapping and intertwining series of letters written by six very different characters, The Expedition of Humphry Clinker is the story of Squire Matthew Bramble and his family's journey across England and Scotland. From the gouty hypochondriac squire eager to take the waters in various spa towns to his malapropistic sister Tabitha, who is keenly looking for a husband, the characters recount their own experiences, desires and particular version of events, and in doing so introduce the reader to the extraordinary exploits of the ostler Humphry Clinker.

Full of decadence, drunkenness and debauchery, and littered with double entendres, bawdy puns and scatological references, The Expedition of Humphry Clinker, published only a few months before Smollett's death, is a biting and sharply observed satire of the luxury and licentiousness of eighteenth-century society.

Author Bio

Tobias Smollett (1721-71) was a Scottish poet and novelist famed for his picaresque novels The Adventures of Roderick Random, The Adventures of Peregrine Pickle and The Expedition of Humphry Clinker.
A Funny Sort of Minister
by Dominique Demers, illustrated by Tony Ross

At a train station on her way to meet her friends Marie and Leo to recover her pet rock, Madame Charlotte accidentally picks up the Prime Minister's elephant-hide bag instead of her own. As it contains important documents and the politician is due to make an important speech on children's education, Miss Charlotte - hoping that she might get a ministerial job out of this - embarks on a quest to track him down.

Along the way, Miss Charlotte cannot help making speeches on behalf of the country's leader and putting her own original twist on his boring children's policy, while attracting at the same time the attentions of the media and the secret service.

Author Bio

A former professor and journalist in her native Canada, Dominique Demers is the successful author of over fifty books for children, young adults and adults.
The Government Inspector
by Nikolai Gogol

The mayor and local officials of a small provincial town in Russia have got it made: corruption is rife and they have all the power. Yet, when they learn that an undercover government inspector is about to make a visit, they face a mad dash to cover their tracks. Soon, the news that a suspicious person has recently arrived from St Petersburg and is staying in a local inn produces a series of events and misunderstandings that lead to a hilarious denouement. Often quoted as Russian literature’s greatest comedy, The Government Inspector is a trenchant satire of the corruption, greed and stupidity of petty officialdom, and the crowning achievement of Gogol’s skills as a playwright.

Author Bio

One of the leading figures in nineteenth-century Russian literature, Nikolai Gogol (1809-52) is best known for his satirical masterpiece, Dead Souls, and humorous plays and short stories such as The Government Inspector and The Overcoat, written in a highly original and often experimental style.
Kim
by Rudyard Kipling, illustrated by Ian Beck

Kimball O'Hara, the orphaned son of an Irish soldier, spends his childhood on the bustling streets of Lahore, begging and running errands in order to survive. One day he meets an old Tibetan lama, and he decides to accompany him on his travels across the Indian subcontinent. After falling into the hands of his father's old regiment, however, Kim is separated from the lama and sent away to school. There, his natural flair for espionage is spotted, and he is soon catapulted among the majestic peaks of the Himalayas to play his part in the secret service's confrontation with Russia, the so-called Great Game™.

With its peerless evocation of the teeming cities, breathtaking landscapes and diverse cultures of late-nineteenth-century India, Kim is widely considered to be Kipling's masterpiece and one of the greatest novels written in the English language.

Author Bio


Notes

Promotion
A Little Princess
by Frances Hodgson Burnett, illustrated by Peter Bailey

When Sara Crewe is brought from India to attend Miss Minchin's boarding school for girls in London, she arrives looking rather like a princess, with trunks full of the finest clothes. Yet, despite having her own pony and carriage, private room and personal maid, Sara is never a snob to her fellow pupils. Instead, she is kind, thoughtful and generous, and soon she is friends with all the girls there.

But when the terrible news of her father's death and failed financial investments arrives, Sara is suddenly left a penniless orphan. She is allowed to stay at the school, but as a servant, and the cruel Miss Minchin starves and ill-treats her. Faced with day after day of endless, exhausting work, Sara relies on her friendships and her imagination to get her through the misery of her circumstances. However, when Mr Carrisford and his assistant Ram Dass arrive from India and move in next door to the school, and warm blankets and delicious food mysteriously begin to appear in Sara's little room in the attic, it looks like her life is about to change for ever.

Author Bio

Frances Hodgson Burnett, (November 24, 1849 - October 29, 1924) was an English-American playwright and author. She is best known for her children's stories, in particular The Secret Garden, A Little Princess, and Little Lord Fauntleroy. Peter Bailey contributed to The Kingfisher Book of Scary Stories from Kingfisher.
Loveless Love
by Luigi Pirandello

In 'The Waves', a young man falls dangerously in love with his tenant downstairs who is about to get married; in 'The Signorina', a woman, disillusioned with her suitor's inability to declare his feelings, is prompted to make a rash decision that she will regret for ever; in 'A Friend of the Wives', a wedding organizer, the unattainably beautiful Pia, leaves a trail of destruction among her closest friends.

In this collection of stories - Pirandello’s first published work of fiction - the master of Italian modernism dissects the causes and the effects of passions that are either dimly felt or unrequited, ultimately raising doubts about the very nature and existence of love, while foreshadowing at the same time the themes and the psychologically nuanced characters that he will later develop in his more famous works.

Author Bio

Born in Sicily, Luigi Pirandello (1867-1936) studied as a philologist before becoming an acclaimed writer of both drama and fiction. One of the most innovative and influential playwrights of the last century, he is best known for his comic masterpiece Six Characters in Search of an Author, and was the winner of the 1934 Nobel Prize for Literature.
The Monk
A Romance
by Matthew Gregory Lewis

A masterpiece of the Gothic genre, The Monk tells the story of the Capuchin friar Ambrosio and his fall from grace through desire, greed and lust. Published anonymously and favourably reviewed at first, the novel was later so widely and raucously denounced for its perceived licentiousness, blasphemy and corrupting influence that Lewis had to remove controversial passages from future editions. Unsurprisingly, amidst this furore, the book was immensely popular with the reading public.

Suffused with eroticism and focusing on the corrupting influence of power, The Monk pioneered a shocking new form of Gothic novel, where elements such as mob violence, incest and brutal murders replaced the gentler horrors of earlier practitioners of the genre such as Horace Walpole and Ann Radcliffe.

The Monk was so highly popular that it seemed to create an epoch in our literature." - Sir Walter Scott

Author Bio

Matthew Gregory Lewis (1775-1818) is best known for his Gothic novel The Monk, which caused a sensation and led to its author to being known as Monk' Lewis for the remainder of his life.
Celebrations
by Alan Burns

Celebrations, Alan Burns's third novel, brings the inherent violence and oppression so apparent in Europe after the Rain into the setting of a family-owned factory, where social hierarchies, legal structures and humiliation keep the workers in line.

By bringing the differences between workers sharply into focus, Burns creates a choking atmosphere of oppression and exploitation - heightened and upended by his trademark aleatoric style, peppering with seemingly random headlines and offcuts the text, which has not lost any of either its relevance or its acerbic bite in the intervening years.

Favourable reviews... made me think I could 'be myself' and 'go for it'. Thus Celebrations might loosely be called 'more extreme' than Europe... the leaps between the images are greater, the juxtapositions bolder, the risks crazier, and so on." - Alan Burns

"By far the best experimentalist in the country." - in Ian McEwan's Sweet Tooth

"Alan Burns's novels deserve the attention of serious readers." - David W. Madden

"One of the two or three most interesting new novelists working in England." - Angus Wilson

Author Bio

A trained lawyer, Alan Burns (1929-2013) became a celebrated novelist and playwright, loosely associated with the 1960s British experimental circle of writers led by B.S. Johnson. He is best known for Europe after the Rain (1965), Celebrations (1967), Babel (1969) and Dreamerika! (1972)
The Canterbury Tales
by Geoffrey Chaucer

And specially from every shires ende
Of Engelond to Cauterbury they wende,
The hooly blisful martir for to seke,
That hem hath holpen whan that they were seke."

Assembling at the Tabard Inn in Southwark, twenty-nine pilgrims begin their journey to Canterbury Cathedral. To entertain themselves on their long road, their host suggests that they regale each other with stories, with the teller of the best tale set to earn a free supper.

The pilgrims correspond to all sections of medieval society, from the crusading knight to the drunken cook, and their tales span a range of genres, including the comic ribaldry and deception of 'The Miller's Tale' and the story of chivalry and courtly romance told by the Franklin. Unfinished at the time of his death, The Canterbury Tales is widely regarded as Chaucer's masterpiece and one of the greatest and most influential works in English literature.

Author Bio

Considered the father of English literature, Geoffrey Chaucer (c.1340-1400) led a fascinating life that included being imprisoned and ransomed in France and embarking on a host of diplomatic missions that took him across Europe and exposed him to new literary influences. Best known for Troilus and Criseyde and The Canterbury Tales, Geoffrey Chaucer was the first poet to be buried in Westminster Abbey.
The Vindications
by Mary Wollstonecraft

Written as a passionate riposte to Talleyrand's report to the French National Assembly, in which he declared that women needed only a domestic education, A Vindication of the Rights of Woman attacked the traditional view of decorative femininity and deplored the educational restrictions and the mistaken notions of female excellence that degraded women and kept them in a state of "slavish dependence". Indeed, independence, "the grand blessing of life", was at the heart of Wollstonecraft's philosophy, and it is a mark of the profound influence of her words that Virginia Woolf, writing almost a century and a half later, could state that "her originality has become our commonplace".

As a companion piece, this volume also includes A Vindication of the Rights of Men - an earlier influential pamphlet advocating republicanism and social equality. The two Vindications, taken together, showcase Wollstonecraft's rhetorical talents, as well as her brilliance and depth of thought as an anti-establishment polemist and social reformer.

"We hear her voice and trace her influence even now." - Virginia Woolf

Author Bio

Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-97) was a writer, philosopher and pioneering advocate of women's rights. A Vindication of the Rights of Woman (1792), one of the trailblazing works of feminism, argued for educational equality between the sexes, and remains her best-known work.
Moll Flanders
by Daniel Defoe

Born in Newgate Prison to an incarcerated mother, Moll Flanders is compelled from earliest childhood to make her own way in the world and to live off her wit and beauty. Her desire to climb the rungs of society leads her through a tangled web of incest, adultery, prostitution, deception and theft, before she is eventually transported to the New World for her crimes. Presented as Moll's autobiography, and published anonymously, the novel, through its self-made protagonist, highlights the intricacies and double standards of Moll's contemporary society, and offers an irresistible and evocative insight into both the drawing rooms and seedy back alleys of seventeenth-century England.

Among the few English novels which we can call indisputably great." - Virginia Woolf

Author Bio

Daniel Defoe was the author of Moll Flanders and Robinson Crusoe
THE OWL AND THE PUSSYCAT
AND OTHER NONSENSE POETRY

BY
EDWARD LEAR

The Owl and the Pussycat and Other Nonsense Poetry
by Edward Lear

Written for the poet John Addington Symonds's young daughter Janet while she was ill and confined to her bed, 'The Owl and the Pussycat' sees the two enamoured animals sail away in a boat for a year and a day / To the land with the bong tree grows”, where they get married.

Long considered one of the nation's favourite poems, it is combined here with other memorable examples of what Lear called "nonsense songs", such as 'Calico Pie' and 'The Duck and the Kangaroo', as well as with nonsense stories, cookery, botany and alphabets, in a collection that transports adults and children alike to the extraordinary world of Edward Lear's imagination.

"His nonsense is not vacuity of sense: it is parody of sense, and that is the sense of it." - T.S. Eliot

Author Bio

Edward Lear was born in London in 1812, the youngest of twenty-one children, and from the age of fifteen earned his living as an artist. He spent much of his life traveling, and was a noted landscape painter and naturalist of his day. He died in Italy in 1888.
Prosecco
The Wine and the People Who Made it a Success
by Luigi Bolzon

Following in the footsteps of other illustrious Italian gastronomic successes - from pizza to pasta, from mozzarella to Parmesan and mortadella - Prosecco is the most recent made in Italy product to have colonized the world. But what is its history, and how did it come to be a global phenomenon? Luigi Bolzon retraces the origins of Prosecco’s immense popularity back to the story of the Italian emigrants who left their country in the second half of the nineteenth century and the experiences of those who, knowingly or not, were most instrumental in cementing Prosecco’s reputation in the UK and worldwide. Peppered with anecdotes and containing a rich tapestry of direct testimonies from the protagonists of Prosecco’s ascent in the world of wines, Bolzon’s book delves deep into the Italian soul to offer an insightful look behind the production and the continuing success of Britain’s most loved bubbly.

Author Bio

Luigi Bolzon has been selling wines across the world for the last thirty years, working for some of the largest wine-making companies and tirelessly promoting Prosecco in the Asian, American and European markets. He lives in Windsor with his wife and two daughters.
Buster
by Alan Burns

Buster was the first, and arguably the most traditional, work of fiction by Alan Burns - dating from before his aleatoric style developed into cutting up", but displaying early examples of the trademark disjointed, brisk and biting style which earned him a cult following. Imbued with autobiographical sentiment, the novel shows a young man's upbringing during World War II and his disillusioned vision of the post-war world.

Never before published in standalone volume form since its original publication in the inaugural New Writers anthology in 1961, Buster is characteristically succinct and of huge literary merit, but in its autobiographical and pre-aleatoric style it provides, perhaps more importantly, a key to understanding the rest of Burns's works.

"Alan Burns's novels deserve the attention of serious readers." - David W. Madden

"One of the two or three most interesting new novelists working in England." - Angus Wilson

Author Bio

A trained lawyer, Alan Burns (1929-2013) became a celebrated novelist and playwright, loosely associated with the 1960s British experimental circle of writers led by B.S. Johnson. He is best known for Europe after the Rain (1965), Celebrations (1967), Babel (1969) and Dreamerika! (1972)
The founding father of modern Russian literature, Alexander Pushkin has exerted - through his novel in verse *Eugene Onegin*, his plays, his short stories and his narrative poetry - a long-lasting influence well beyond the borders of his motherland. A slightly lesser-known, but by no mean less important aspect of his writing is his vast production of shorter verse, a genre at which he excelled and arguably still remains unsurpassed. This volume, part of Alma's series of the complete poetic works of Alexander Pushkin, collects the poems Pushkin wrote during his exile in Mikhaylovskoe and his subsequent return to St Petersburg, at a time when he was working on *Eugene Onegin* and many others of his most celebrated works, and includes some of his lyrical masterpieces, such as 'To -' - arguably the most famous love poem in the Russian language - 'A Flower', 'St Petersburg' and 'My Autograph', each presented in a verse translation opposite the original Russian text. Enriched with notes, pictures and an appendix on Pushkin's life and works, this will be essential reading for anyone wishing to delve deeper into the Russian bard's genius.

**Author Bio**

Alexander Pushkin (1799-1837) was a dramatist and poet, penning such influential works as *Eugene Onegin* and *Boris Godunov*. He is now considered the father of modern Russian literature.