

## How to be well read : a guide to 500 great novels and a handful of literary curiosities

Sutherland, John, 1938-, author

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### Abstrak

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<b>ABSTRACT</b><br>

As the annual flood of published novels grows ever greater, it's a hard a job to keep up, let alone sort the wheat from the chaff. Fortunately, literary sleuth and academic John Sutherland is on hand to do precisely that. In the course of over 500 wittily informative pieces he gives us his own very personal take on the most rewarding, most remarkable and, on occasion, most shamelessly enjoyable works of fiction ever written - the perfect reading list for the would-be literary expert. His taste is impressively eclectic. An appreciation of Apuleius' *The Golden Ass* - arguably the first-ever novel - is followed by a consideration of Ian Fleming's *Goldfinger*. *The Handmaid's Tale* is followed by *Hangover Square*, *Jane Eyre* by *Jaws*. There are imposing Victorian novels, entertaining contemporary thrillers and everything in between, from dystopian works to romance. The flavour of each is brilliantly evoked and its relative merits or demerits assessed. At the same time, John Sutherland shows how the work fits into a broader context - whether that of the author's life or of other books from the same genre or period. And he offers endless snippets of intriguing information: did you know, for example, that the Nazis banned *Bambi* or that William Faulkner wrote *As I Lay Dying* on an upturned wheelbarrow; that Voltaire completed *Candide* in three days, or that Anna Sewell was paid GBP20 for *Black Beauty*? Encyclopedic and entertaining by turns, this is a wonderful dip-in book, whose opinions will inform and on occasion, no doubt, infuriate. It is also effectively a history of the novel in 500 or so bite-sized pieces.

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As the annual flow of novels grows ever greater, it's a hard job to keep up, let alone sort the wheat from the chaff. Fortunately John Sutherland is on hand to do precisely that for you, and in 500 wittily informative essays he introduces you to the very best of the world's fiction. There are imposing Victorian novels, entertaining contemporary thrillers and everything in between, from spy novels to romance. In each case a sense of the flavour of the novel is brilliantly evoked and a compelling case made for why it should be a candidate for the bookshelf or bedside table.