Happy Autumn!

As the weather turns cold and the days get shorter, we love nothing more than snuggling into a thick blanket with an equally thick book. Though, of course, there’s always room for the short-and-sweet books, too – we don’t discriminate! You know you’ve got the perfect evening when you find a little bit of leftover Easter chocolate to accompany your reading…

In this edition of the newsletter, we’ve got lots of literary news, including information on the Stella Prize and their exciting new venture, Stella Circles; a peek into the Mount Dandenong Bookmarks group; book reactions from group members and staff; and a few fantastic giveaways!

And remember – if you see any books in here that take your fancy, give us a call on 03 9652 0620 and we can add them to your list for the year!

Literary News

Günter Grass, award-winning author, dies age 87

The Nobel Prize-winning novelist, social critic and public intellectual Günter Grass died this week in his native Germany. He was hailed for his inventive 1959 novel, *The Tin Drum* [B70], which has been a firm favourite with our groups and is available in the CAE Book Groups catalogue.

Grass dealt with disillusionment and the challenges of building a post-Nazi society in the 1960s and ‘70s. He was considered by many as ‘his country’s moral conscience’ and he pushed Germans to confront the ugly aspects of their history; the world was therefore stunned at his 2006 revelation that he had been a member of the Waffen-SS during the Second World War.

Long-time publisher and friend, Gerhard Steidl, said he and Grass had shared their final schnapps a few days before while working on Grass’ most recent book. A ‘literary experiment’ fusing poetry with prose, it is scheduled to be published later this year.

2015 Stella Prize

The Stella Prize is a major literary award celebrating Australian women’s writing, and the third Stella Prize winner will be announced soon at an awards night in Melbourne. We are extremely excited about this year’s ‘stellar’ shortlist!

The Book Groups team was delighted to attend the inaugural award night in 2013 where Carrie Tiffany won the prize for *Mateship with Birds* [B2159], a book which quickly became a favourite among Book Groups members. We have managed to score an invitation to this year’s event too, and are looking forward to meeting the shortlisted authors.
The six finalists explore themes of identity, family, displacement and belonging, with distinctly Australian resonances. Two of the books are debut works, highlighting the enormous talent of Australian women writers.

**Stella Prize Giving Circles: Support Australian Women’s Writing**

Love books by women? Want to support wonderful writing by Australian women, and ensure your book club will have great books to read in years to come? If you’re passionate about books and reading, and appreciate the importance of literature, creating a Giving Circle to donate to the Stella Prize is the perfect opportunity to support women writers.
Existing book clubs may like to designate one meeting per year to read a Stella longlisted or shortlisted book, and arrange a collective donation to the Stella Prize in the name of your book club. All Stella Circle donations received go directly to raising the annual prize money awarded to the Stella Prize-winner. Make a difference to our literary culture and become part of history by securing the recognition and the future of Australian women’s literature.

Visit our website for more information or email us at: info@thestellaprize.com.au

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2015 Man Booker International Prize

The Man Booker International Prize is awarded every two years and recognises a writer’s achievement in fiction, either for books originally published in English or for those widely available in English translations. Judges consider a writer’s body of work rather than a single novel, and one of the finalists announced this March is Indian-born Amitav Ghosh, whose novel Sea of Poppies was shortlisted for the 2008 Man Booker prize.

*Sea of Poppies* [B2017] is available in the Book Groups catalogue, along with Ghosh’s 2004 novel *The Hungry Tide* [B1883]. The prize winner will be announced in May – who are you backing for the win?

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Group Spotlight

Mount Dandenong Bookmarks

We began our group in 1995 at my home in Kalorama and are now starting out on our 20th year together. After my husband’s death, I shifted to a retirement village and I wondered if our group would continue but, as they have done for twenty years, they still come to my home. I have been Secretary for that time, too. We have read some wonderful books and had great discussions, and each month we take it in turn to review the book. We are now all grandmothers and continue to enjoy our CAE group.

Thanks Joan for sending in your picture, and congratulations on your twenty years together. We love putting faces to the names of our groups, and it is a pleasure to be able to peek into your meetings.
Group Reactions

From Rice to Riches
by Jane Hutcheon
[B1819]

This book promoted a lively discussion among our group, several of whom had visited China in the last three decades. We saw the book as more than a ‘journalistic memoir’ but as a well-written account of a period of great and continuing change in a country rapidly resuming its’ place among dominant world powers. The book facilitated a satisfying exchange of our feelings and knowledge about China.

Malvern: Botanical

The Other Side of the Bridge
by Mary Lawson
[B2003]

This book was a thought-provoking start to our year, and was enjoyed by all. Mary Lawson writes with simple but powerful language and her ability to portray the strength and frailty of human nature is wonderful. The storyline unfolds through the interesting interaction of the characters, and the differences between the brothers and their influence on other characters are compelling. Lawson combines setting, storyline and characters into a very memorable read.

Tatura 1

The Chosen
by Chaim Potok
[B121]

We really enjoyed this book! It gave us a good introduction to Jewish life in America, and the different points of view among the groups. It was an interesting study of relationships, including father-son and friendships.

Seaford Shortfalls
**Saturday**  
by Ian McEwan  
[B1911]

And what a Saturday it was! In a word, we thought it was brilliant, and we had a lengthy discussion covering most of the questions in the notes. There were highly detailed descriptions, such as the squash match and lots of medical language, and we were impressed with McEwan's research and his ability to depict these. We highly recommend this book.

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**A Short History of Tractors in Ukrainian**  
by Marina Lewycka  
[B1893]

An interesting read that provided a few laughs, whilst covering some challenging themes. Great insight into immigrants and the challenges they face through various generations, especially in contemporary times. The family relationships and dynamics involved in the process of dealing with ageing parents made for lots of discussion amongst our group members.

Benalla: Northo Bookends
What Staff Are Reading...

Signe is reading…

*Seize the Day*  
by Marie de Hennezel  
[B2143]

I enjoyed how de Hennezel used a personal touch to bring you in to people’s lives. This was an emotional read, and interesting to see how she approaches the ‘taboo’ subject of death to make it easier to talk about. It’s a short book, but packs a real, heartfelt emotional punch and there’s so much in it that I’m still thinking about.

Rob is reading…

*The Snowman*  
by Jo Nesbo  
[B2154]

What a great book! I’m a big fan of Scandinavian crime fiction, but this was my first time reading Jo Nesbo. I was so engrossed in the twists, some of which were really shocking and kept me interested the whole way through. The characters were well-rounded and the sense of place was vivid. I’m keen to see the film version, and I’ll definitely be reading the author’s other books.

Khadija is reading…

*Gilead*  
by Marilynne Robinson  
[B1963]

*Gilead* has been on my ‘to read’ list for a while, and when I found out that Robinson has just published a companion novel, *Lila*, I wanted to read this 2005 Pulitzer winner first. I am fascinated by secluded American country towns in literature and the characters that come out of them. Knowing that Robinson gives us further insight in her new book into the story of the Reverend’s wife is fascinating – I’m really looking forward to staying in the world of Gilead for a little longer!
Giveaways

Film

Testament of Youth

World War One biopic Testament of Youth stars Kit Harrington (Game of Thrones) and will be released nationwide in select cinemas on the 23rd of April. Thanks to our friends at Transmission Films, we have ten double passes to give away!

Testament of Youth is a powerful story of love, war and remembrance, based on the First World War memoir by Vera Brittain, which has become a classic testimony of that war from a woman’s point of view. A searing journey from youthful hopes and dreams to the edge of despair and back again, it’s a film about young love, the futility of war and how to make sense of the darkest times.

Click here to view the trailer!

Email us at bookgroups@cae.edu.au with the subject header Testament of Youth, and tell us why you would like to win! Include your name, postal address, CAE Book Group name and group ZZ code in the email body. Entries close Friday 24th April 2015 and winners will be notified.

Fallout

To celebrate the release of Fallout on iTunes and other digital platforms this April, we are giving away five voucher codes to buy the film online!

Following the atomic destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, internationally acclaimed novelist Nevil Shute powerfully and precisely predicted the devastating impact of nuclear proliferation in one of the most important anti-war novels of the 20th century, On the Beach. The author’s life is chronicled in this feature documentary, which considers the enduring resonance of On the Beach.

Director Lawrence Johnston explores the writing of Shute’s novel and the making of the famous movie version (which Shute famously hated), which brought Hollywood to Melbourne in the form of producer and director Stanley Kramer, and actors Ava Gardner and Gregory Peck.

Click here to view the trailer!

Email us at bookgroups@cae.edu.au with the subject header Fallout, and tell us why you would like to win! Include your name, postal address, CAE Book Group name and group ZZ code in the email body. Entries close Friday 24th April 2015 and winners will be notified.

Each winner will be entitled to one free download of the film and will be able to download from the following digital platforms: iTunes, Google, Dendy, Fetch, PSN, Xbox Live.
**Books**

*The Anchoress*  
**by Robyn Cadwallader**

From a remarkable new Australian author comes *The Anchoress*, a story set within the confines of a stone cell measuring seven paces by nine. Tiny in scope but universal in themes, it is a wonderful, wholly compelling fictional achievement.

Set in the twelfth century, *The Anchoress* tells the story of Sarah, who at the age of seventeen chooses to become an anchoress, a holy woman shut away in the village church. Fleeing the grief of losing a much-loved sister in childbirth and the pressure to marry, she decides to renounce the world, with all its dangers, desires and temptations, and to commit herself to a life of prayer and service to God. But even the thick, unforgiving walls of her cell cannot keep the outside world away, and it is soon clear that Sarah's body and soul are still in great danger...

Telling an absorbing story of faith, desire, shame, fear and the very human need for connection and touch, *The Anchoress* is both mesmerising and thrillingly unpredictable.

*Courtesy of Harper Collins Publishers*

*The Family Men*  
**by Catherine Harris**

When you’re born into a dynasty of champions, any sin will be forgiven so long as you maintain the winning streak. But what if that’s not the life you want?

Harry’s success as a footballer is predestined, the territory that comes with a superstar father, and all the Club asks in return is loyalty and the occasional code of silence. But when his hometown media scrum dredges up an old scandal of his father’s, and Harry becomes embroiled in one of his own, he starts to question the reality behind the glittering facade of the trophies he wins and the pretty young things who mob him.

With piercing insight, *The Family Men* subverts the usual choices between winning and losing, guilt and innocence, courage and cowardice. Is true honour to be found in forging your own path or staying loyal to your pack?

*Courtesy of Black Inc.*

We have one copy of each title to give away! Email us at bookgroups@cae.edu.au with the subject header of the title, and tell us why you would like to win! Include your name, postal address, CAE Book Group name and group ZZ code in the email body. Entries close Friday 24th April 2015 and winners will be notified.