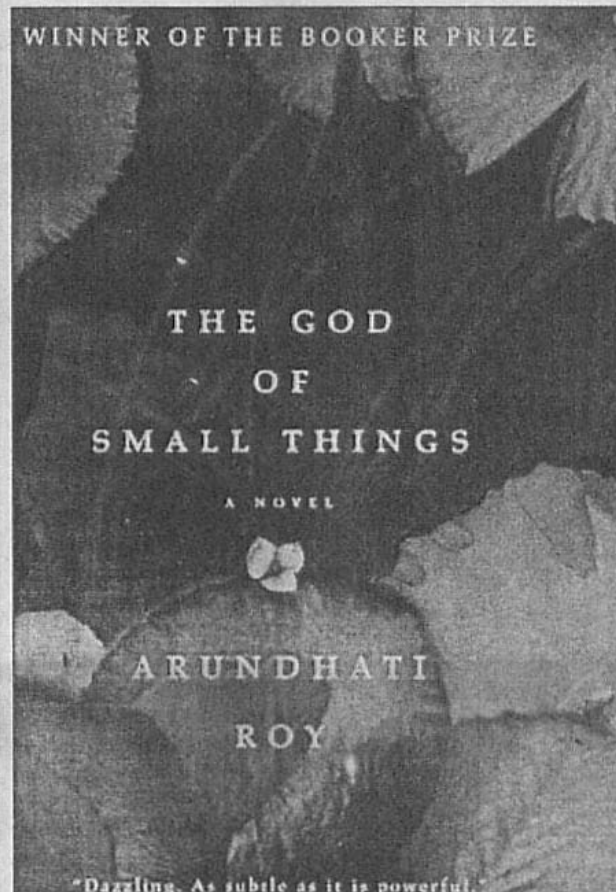
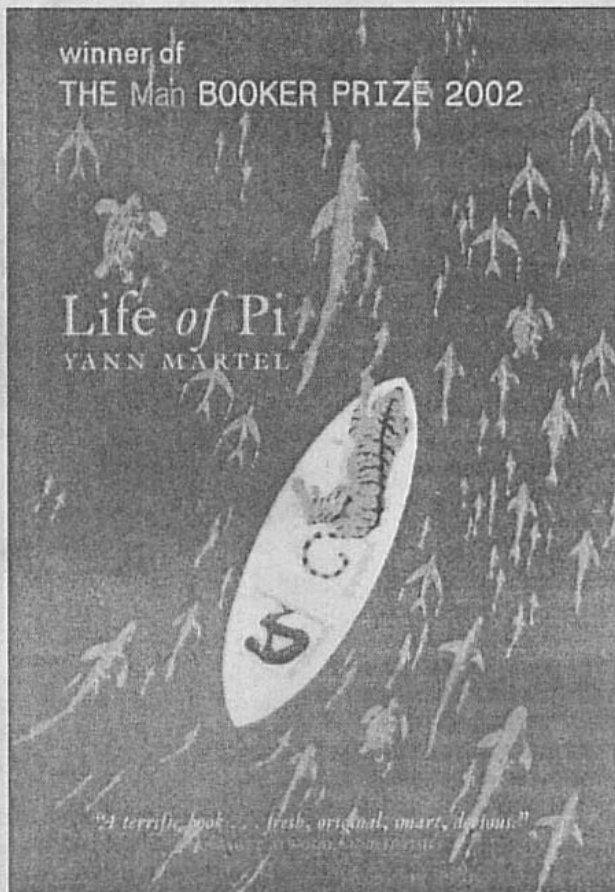
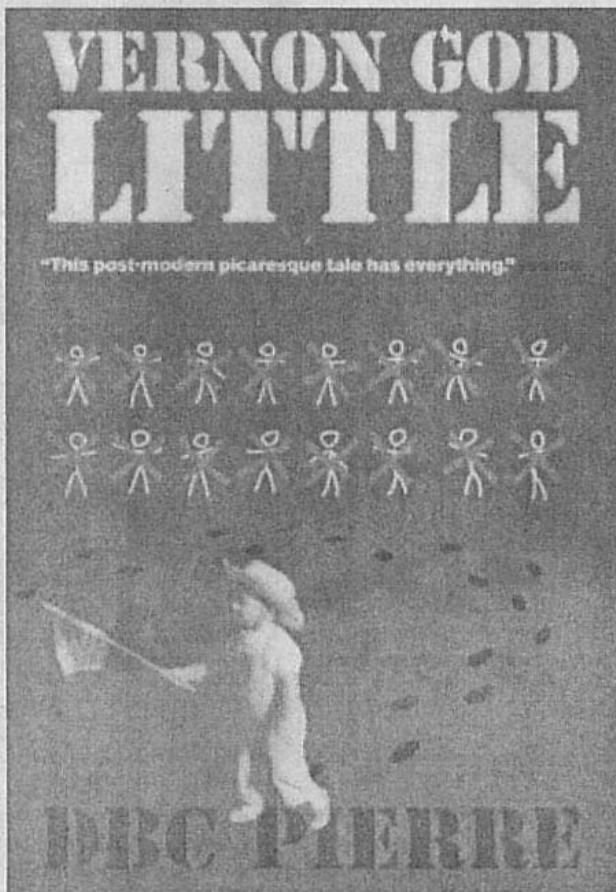


Bag that booker!



EVERY year, hundreds of books are written and published for avid readers of the world. Out of these there is always a handful that create a tremendous impact and leave behind a distinctive mark on the minds of their readers. Many different organizations have taken the initiative to honour the talent of these writers and pay a tribute to them, by awarding them various prestigious awards. The Man Booker Prize for Fiction is one such award which represents the very best in contemporary fiction. One of the world's most distinguished awards, it continues to be the pinnacle of ambition for every fiction writer.

Short excerpts of some of the most memorable awardees are as follows:

Vernon God Little: Winner of the 2003 Man Booker Prize

Vernon God Little, DBC Pierre's debutant novel, bagged the Booker Prize in 2003. The story is told to us by Vernon Gregory Little, the fifteen year old narrator and the main protagonist of the novel. Vernon is an ordinary school-going teenager from the small town of Texas. His normal life revolves around school, games, getting into trouble and a mother who is concerned about everything else but him. When his best friend, Jesus, goes on a murder spree at the high school before turning the gun on himself, Vernon's life takes a sharp turn. The town needs a living scapegoat. They unanimously decide that Vernon must have been

an accessory. So Vernon ends up right in the firing line for a traumatized small town, an absurdly unjust justice system and an incredibly powerful media frenzy, all looking for someone to blame.

This hilarious but tragic story is focused mainly on the wrongs of the western society: guns and violence, high school slayings, teenage alienation, truth and lies, dysfunctional family bonds, the justice system and the frightening power of the media. The author successfully manages to bind the reader to every page of this book, as he sets the life of his main character on stake. Through his humorous and sometimes harsh approach the subtly takes our general view of the world and gives it a good hard irreverent shake. One of the best aspects of the novel is definitely Vernon Little himself. Despite being such a naive, unlikable, hormone-addled teenager, he is full of hilarious, cynical wise-cracks and one cannot help but love him.

Life of Pi: Winner of the 2002 Man Booker Prize

Yann Martel's prize-winner *Life of Pi* tells the story of an Indian boy, Piscine Molitor Patel, self-christened as Pi. He grows up in Pondicherry, a small area in southern India which was once a part of French India. The first part of the novel tells us about Pi's childhood as the son of the zookeeper in Pondicherry. Growing up in the zoo, Pi learns a lot about animals. Through his animal-loving protagonist, Yann Martel subtly drives in the love for animals, both penned and wild, into

his readers.

The first section of the novel ends with Pi and his family leaving India for Canada. The zoo closes down and the animals are sent to different zoos all around the world. The family and many of the animals board a Japanese cargo ship for their passage to Canada. Pi is 16 and embarking on the trip to a new life. Unfortunately, it wasn't the life he expected. The ship sinks and Pi is cast adrift in a lifeboat with only a zebra, a hyena, an orangutan, and a huge Bengal tiger named Richard Parker as his companion. Soon the tiger has dispatched all but Pi. Trying hard to push the constant fear of Richard Parker aside, Pi develops a strong will-power and determination to survive and find land.

Yann Martel has made the story of Pi's 227 day-long voyage very different from the usual. This nearly impossible expedition has been illustrated in such a way that it will make anyone "believe in the soul-searching power of fiction" as pronounced by the Los Angeles Times.

The God of Small Things: Winner of the 1997 Man Booker Prize

The God of Small Things tells the story of one much fractured family from Ayemenem, a small town at the southernmost tip of India. Through her unique style of writing the writer Arundhati Roy gradually unfolds the secrets that lie behind the miseries of the different characters of the novel.

The story revolves mainly around Rahel and Estha, fraternal twins whose emotional connection to one another is stronger than that of most siblings. They thought of themselves as though they were a rare breed of Siamese twins, physically separate, but with joint identities. Their childhood household hums with hidden antagonisms and pains that only family members can give one another. Ammu, the twins' mother, is a divorcee who has fled her husband's alcoholism and impossible demands. A woman with a streak of wildness that the children dread would be their undoing, the brave and good-natured Ammu still stands out to be someone whom you will end up admiring.

The story reveals itself not in traditional narrative order, but in jumps through time, wending its way through Rahel's memories and attempts at understanding the hard fate dealt her family. The family's tragedy revolves around the death of Sophie Mol, the twins' cousin. This unfortunate event leads to a series of other misfortunes that dawn upon each individual character of the novel, leaving them shattered and devastated.

The God of Small Things is a must read. This book has appealed to numerous readers, if not for the simple but heart-rending tale it tells, but definitely for the captivating style of writing and the enchanting play of words that Arundhati Roy shapes up her novel with.

By Nusrat Khandker

Shawdesh

"WHERE you serious all this time," said she. "After all this years you're asking me whether I was serious or not," I replied back. There was a long silence. I heard someone sobbing on the other side before the phone went dead. It was the last time I heard the voice of the person, whom I so dearly loved.

As I got into our Toyota Corolla, my dear ones gathered around the car. Some were passing last minute advise to me. "After the checking go straight into the boarding room. Don't wander around. You don't want to miss your flight do you." My aunts, uncles, cousins, friends, neighbours and even the buas, all looked disheartened. It was the first time I realised how fond these people were of me. Yes, I agree I was some times not in good terms with some of

them, but my occasional smiles were probably enough to make them take the effort of coming to see me off. My cat rubbed against my legs. I picked her and hugged her goodbye. She never made a single purr, nor did she try to wriggle out of my hands, it was too much for her. Her eyes told me what she was going through..... It was too much for me as well.

As I neared the Zia International Airport, my cell-phone vibrated. It was a text message. It only said "It is not possible for me to hear your voice at the moment. Just praying for your safe journey and all the best." It was my best mate, Moin. I was about to call him, but thought otherwise. I felt weird. I leaned back and rested my head, I felt miserable. It was the worst I ever felt in my entire 14 years life.

A few of my cousins came with me to the air-

port. All their various attempts to make me smile went in vain. After half an hour, an uncle of mine who was a customs' officer, informed me that it would be wise if I went inside the departure lounge. It was time to say goodbye to my cousins.

I succeeded in holding back my tears. However, my glistening eyes said enough and my cousins bid farewell to me. I had my boarding pass in my hand. I stepped into the EK219, I glanced back to get a glimpse of my beloved homeland, my motherland, "jar shathej kotto sriti jorie ache," leaving her was a painful one.

I pressed my face against the glass of the jumbo jet. The plane took off. The view was getting obscure every second, until I could see no more of my dear motherland.

By Omer Mushahed Chowdhury

