

Books that changed lives – LGBT History Month – Feb 2015

As part of the celebrations and events held around Lancashire to mark LGBT History Month 2015, attendees were asked to share book titles around the theme '**books that changed lives**'. Several titles were submitted and also by members of the LGBT Network.

Moon Tiger, Penelope Lively. Penguin Modern Classics, 2006

- *A book I return to periodically....each time I read it I find it as powerful as ever and deeply moving on so many levels. It is a strong reminder never to take anyone for granted and not to dismiss or belittle our older members of society by making assumptions about their lives, feelings, amazing experiences, convictions and their energies. Just read it...you will see exactly where I am coming from....*

How far can you go, David Lodge. Vintage, 2011

- *As a lapsed Catholic, I/we know the burden of guilt. Some shake it off and live fulfilling lives..others don't! This humorous take on Catholicism is recommended to all faiths...and none!*

How to be both, Ali Smith. Hamish Hamilton, 2014

- *Not sure if it will change my life as I am reading this as I write but it is vividly written with a powerful content...and I have no idea how it is going to end! I've been in Renaissance Italy in 1470 and contemporary Britain. It has been a luxury for the senses with fantastic descriptions of frescoes being painted in a masterly manner by a woman who had to lose her female identity so she could train as a painter. There is also lots of relationships, remembering, honesty, integrity and emotional intelligence.*

Oranges are not the only fruit, Janette Winterson. Vintage (Reprint), 2014

- *I have very fond memories of this book, how it inspired me and actually had a bearing on a major life change. I first became aware of it after watching the BBC drama based on the book in the early 1990's. At the time I was struggling with my own sexuality and even though I wasn't from a strong religious background, I could totally relate to the feelings and situations the little girl had been in. I was totally lost in the story and it took me back to my own childhood being from a very strict family and some similar conversations that had taken place. At this time I was married, trapped and very unhappy. It wasn't long after this that, my marriage ended, I became me and never looked back!
I once met Janette Winterson many years later and actually thanked her for helping me to 'come out', she smiled and said 'You are welcome!'*

Tales of the City, Armistead Maupin. Black Swan, 1984 (new ed.)

- *I am not sure if it changed my life but it did help me with regards to my sexual orientation and for the first time I felt that I understood the person I was and my life to be...especially as I lived in a country village at the time.*

When Hitler stole pink rabbit, Judith Kerr. Harper Collins, 2008 (new ed.)

- *This book was a kind of awakening in my childhood when I realised that the Second World War was far more complex than the war films had led me to believe. I started to understand the devastating impact prejudice and persecution can have on people's lives and went on to learn about the full horrors of the Holocaust as I grew up. I feel this book helped to shape my character as a child as it encouraged me to empathise with and relate to Anna, the little girl, and her family, and how empathy is so important in combating prejudice and persecution. It is also a brilliantly optimistic book and despite the topic..full of laughs!*

Feel the fear and do it anyway, Susan Jeffers. Vermillion, 2007 (new ed.)

- *I read this as a young mum with lots of ambition and no confidence in my abilities, and as someone for whom the thought of public speaking was terrifying. I was giving advice to patients – I was a mental health nurse at the time, and as I was researching good books to recommend, I decided that I ought to read them first so at least I could recommend them with some knowledge and authority. This book changed my life because it made me realise that fear was both natural and could be overcome. It is only through facing anxiety provoking situations that real growth can take place, so I started to consider doing what I needed and wanted to do in life, and ask myself 'how would a confident person do this?'. And hey presto, before too long, I was the confident person. I have never again not done something I really wanted to do because I was too scared to do so.*

Anything we love can be saved, Alice Walker. The Womens Press, 1999 (new ed)

- *This book really had an impact on me. When I was in my early 20s I was bought it as a gift by a woman I very much looked up to and admired. This book raises lots of issues, questions about women's lives globally and offers many interesting arguments for what I think is right. Most importantly it showed me how that individual actions can make a difference.*

The Handmaid's Tale, Margaret Atwood. Vintage, 1996 (new ed.)

- *Understanding patriarchy!*

Body of evidence, Patricia Cornwell. Sphere, 2011 (pbk)

- *A lesbian in 'real life' who famously had an affair with a female FBI agent*

Jane Eyre, Charlotte Bronte. Penguin Classics, 2006

- *This book inspired me to join the Bronte Society 30 years ago*

The Female Eunuch, Germaine Greer. Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2006

- *This book explained to me why this world was so weird and UNFAIR!*

Our bodies, ourselves, Boston Womens Health Collective. Simon and Schuster, 1976

- *Taught me how to orgasm and not to be ashamed of my body*

Patience and Sarah, Isabel Miller. Arsenal Pulp Press, 2006 (new ed.)

- *A refreshing story that uplifts the lesbian soul*

Stone butch blues, Leslie Feinberg. Firebrand Books, US, 1993

- *A heart wrenching account of the lives of butch and femme women in pre-modern America*

My name is Sappho, Martha Rofheart. Putnam, 1974

- *A book about Sappho of Lesbos...a right on woman!*

Arabian Nights, Annabel Williams-Ellis, illustrated by Pauline Baynes. Blackie, 1957

The Vagina Monologues (play), Eve Ensler. 1996

- *Very empowering stories of female sexuality and abuse recovery*

Wide Sargasso sea, Jean Rhys. Penguin Modern Classics, 2000 (new ed.)

- *...chosen because Jane Eyre freaked me out and I could identify with Bertha*

Choices, N. Toby. No details found