

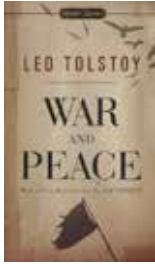
Book Case

Professor Peter Stanton considers six of his favourite books.

You can get information from books, or enjoy characters, plots, or places. Yet there can also be a physical pleasure in the act of reading, the joy taken from words well chosen, quite separate from their meaning.

WAR AND PEACE

For me, this represents the greatest pleasure that reading can provide. Do not be intimidated by its length, the flow of language makes it pass surprisingly quickly, and you soon get used to the Russian names. Its control of character and plot over such a huge canvas is unmatched.



PARADISE LOST

Milton had a magnificent 'ear' for the English language. His is poetry that cries out to be read aloud, to enjoy the sound



of it as much as its sense. Shakespeare has many such moments as well, but sadly we have cared less and less as time has gone by about beauty of expression. Since Milton, probably only Keats had such musicality.

PG WODEHOUSE

An apparently effortless evocation of a latter day Eden, mixed with consistent, gentle humour. He is one of the funniest writers in the language. Any of his books would serve, but I would probably choose one of those set at Blandings Castle- an idyllic setting and a splendid array of characters ranging from the eccentric to the barking mad.



PRIDE AND PREJUDICE

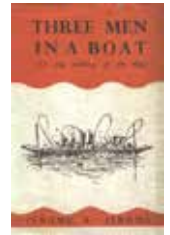
A trite choice but it is Austen's masterpiece. From the most famous opening line in English, its elegant style never falters. It wears its subtle criticism of the mores of the social class it describes very lightly, but



the subversion is everpresent beneath the gentle humour. Austen was an astute critic of the world in which she lived.

THREE MEN IN A BOAT

Unlike my other choices, this was a one-off success for the author. On the peg of a travelogue of a Thames rowing trip is hung a consistently accurate satire of the foibles of human nature. Witty and urbane, it is splendidly evocative of leisured life in late Victorian England.



LORD JIM

I marvel at the command of English by a man who did not learn it until he was in his 20s. Both the prose and ideas are complex in this most intensely psychological drama about a man's struggle to overcome his internal demons, but when it comes to describing the sea Conrad waxes lyrical. Few have written with such love about the mariner and his medium.

