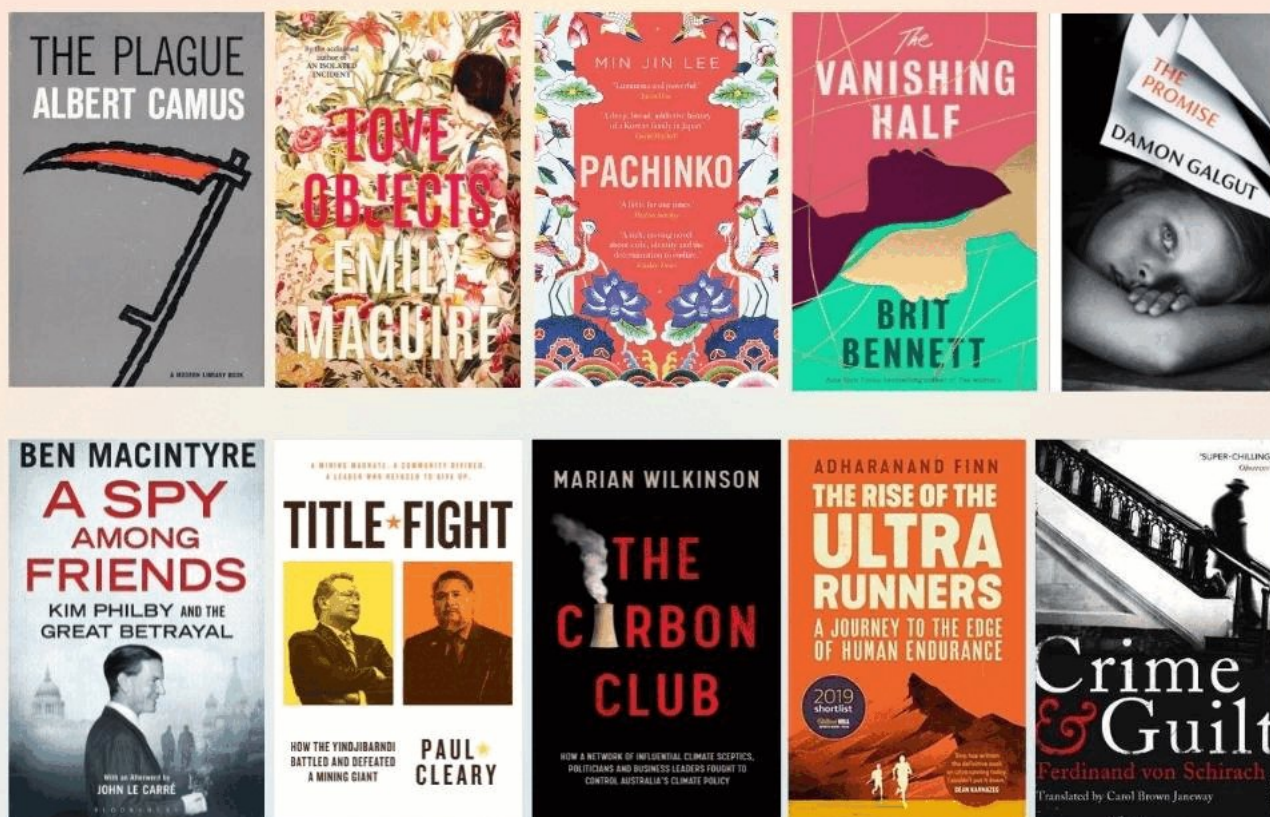


SEE PAGE 6

The Age

The Age staff share their favourite books and shows of 2021

DECEMBER 26, 2021



The Age staff share the books and TV shows that brought them comfort, laughter and a welcome escape from the news – and what's next on their to-read piles.

Nick McKenzie, investigative journalist, Graham Perkin journalist of the year

Favourite book: I enjoyed Ben MacIntyre's [A Spy Among Friends](#) about the defector Kim Philby.

MacIntyre merges narrative non-fiction about the world of intelligence with Le Carre-style prose and British humour. Take his description of a former British spy chief: "He rode with the hounds, mixed with royalty, never missed a day at Ascot, drank a great deal and kept his secrets buttoned up behind a small, fierce moustache. He preferred women to men, and horses to both."



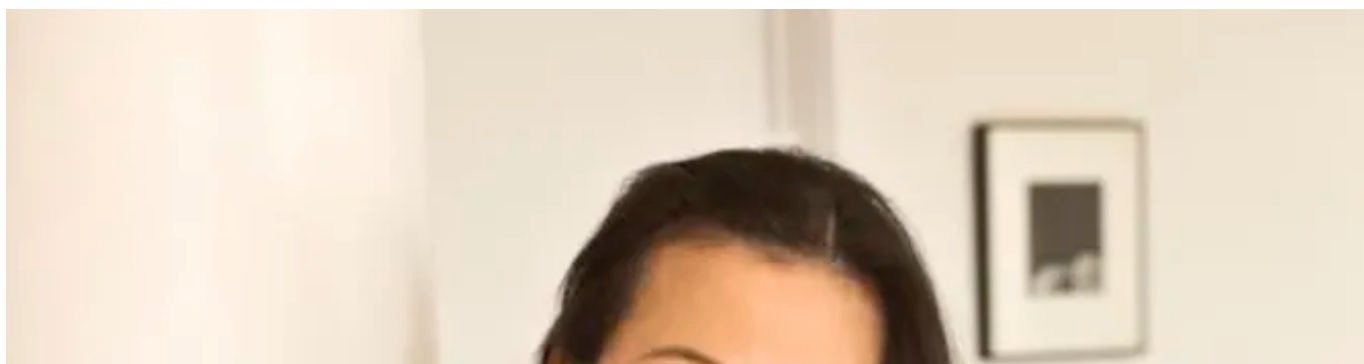
Investigative journalist Nick McKenzie got a laugh or two out of *Succession* - more than he might get out of his summer reading choice. HBO/FOXTEL

Favourite TV show: I loved [Vigil](#) and [Succession](#) on TV. Both make for terrific escapism with enough hints of reality to keep you engaged. *Succession* is also hilarious.

Summer read: I'm finally reading *Anna Karenina* by Leo Tolstoy, and not only because I'm sick of pretending to have read it! The first few chapters are captivating and far more accessible than I expected.

Sumeyya Ilanbey, state political reporter

Favourite book: [Pachinko](#) by Min Jin Lee, a historical novel that follows a Korean family that migrate to Japan and documents their experience of poverty and racism. It is a story that encapsulates the immigrant experience, and the struggles of three generations of a Korean family who are treated as second-class citizens in Japan. It opened my eyes to a history I was not familiar with.





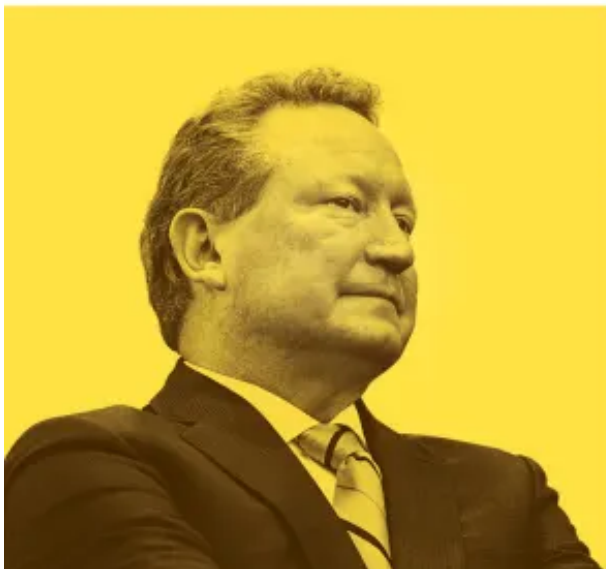
Pachinko by Min Jin Lee (pictured) was one of state political reporter Sumeyya Ilanbey's favourite reads of the year.
ELENA SEIBERT

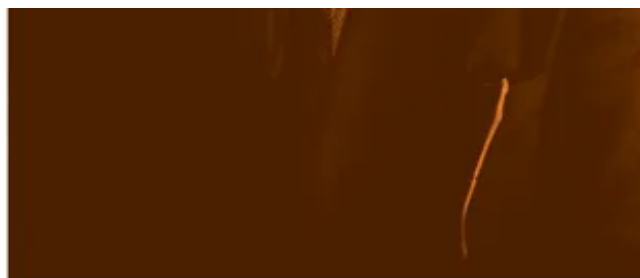
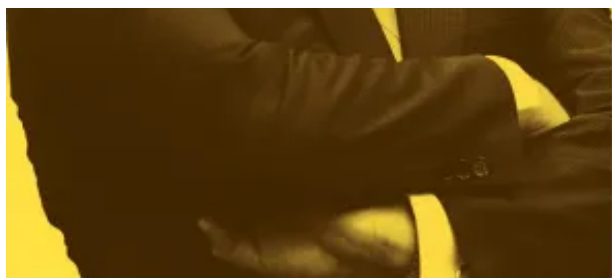
Favourite TV show: [Total Control](#) on the ABC. I don't watch many TV shows or movies, but *Total Control* brought to life everything we saw this year that was wrong with state and federal politics: backroom factional deals, the mistreatment of female politicians and candidates, and the lack of diversity in our parliaments.

Summer read: I'm looking forward to [Rogue Forces](#) by ABC journalist Mark Willacy, one of only a few reporters in this country to have exposed war crimes in Afghanistan.

Jack Latimore, Indigenous affairs journalist

Favourite book: Easily [Title Fight](#) by Paul Cleary – hugely relevant in light of the destruction of Juukan Gorge. This was a brave write-up from Cleary, who was inspired by the defiance and 17-year fight of the Yindjibarndi peoples against the money and might of the Fortescue Metals Group. *Title Fight* is forensically researched and absolutely captivating, which perhaps isn't something readers automatically expect from a book involving big mining.





Paul Cleary's book *Title Fight* was an easy pick for book of the year for Indigenous affairs reporter Jack Latimore.

Favourite TV show: *Foundation* on Apple TV. The coruscating eye and mind of Isaac Asimov rendered for the screen has been done impressively well, which is to say that it looks damn fine and the pacing for such a grand narrative feels right. Special mention goes to *Curb Your Enthusiasm* Season 11, episodes three and four – classic Larry comedy set-up, classic *Curb* storyline intersections.

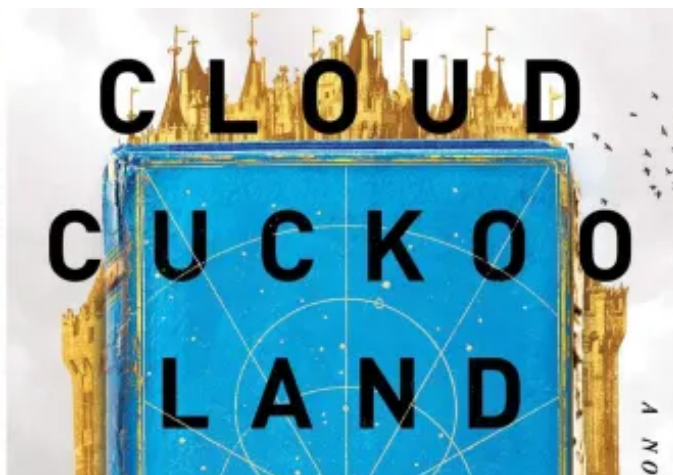
Summer read: *This All Come Back Now*, an anthology of First Nations speculative fiction edited by Mykaela Saunders. I am looking forward to its release early in the new year. Blackfullas invented speculative fiction and this is the first time that the work of established and emerging Blak writers working in speculative fiction has been brought together in an anthology.

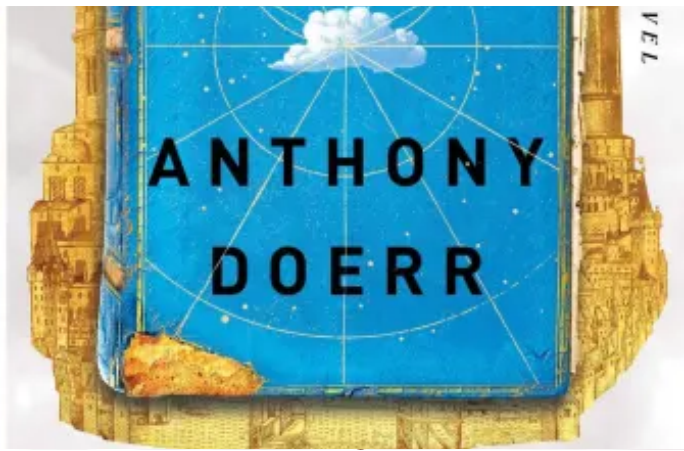
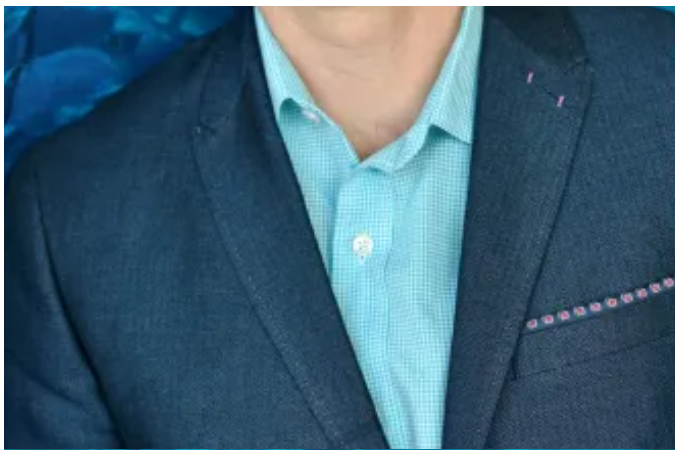
Adele Ferguson, investigative business journalist

Favourite book: *Carbon Club* by Marian Wilkinson. One of the country's top investigative journalists exposes an unholy alliance between climate deniers and sceptics, politicians and corporate giants using their might to put up roadblocks to ensure Australia remained a laggard when it comes to climate change policy. The research is sensational and the writing compelling. It's a must-read for anyone who wants to know what's really going on.

Favourite TV show: I binge-watched four seasons of *Goliath* on Amazon Prime that stars Billy Bob Thornton as a lawyer who is fearless and flawed. His strong sense of social justice puts him up against some powerful and corrupt organisations.

Summer read: I'm looking forward to reading Pulitzer prize-winner Anthony Doerr's *Cloud Cuckoo Land*. The novel is set in ancient times so promises good escapism. I love a well-written novel, and this one has had rave reviews.





Investigative business reporter Adele Ferguson is looking forward to reading *Cloud Cuckoo Land* by Anthony Doerr. ULF ANDERSEN; SUPPLIED

Shane Wright, senior economics correspondent

Favourite book: *The Rise of the Ultra Runners: A Journey to the Edge of Human Endurance* by [Adharanand Finn](#). When you think you can't finish the Saturday five-kilometre parkrun, tuck into this book about the fastest growing challenge in running, the ultra marathon. Published in 2019, I only just got around to reading this book by a journalist who gets asked by his editor to take on the 165km Oman Desert Marathon. It follows his journey to eventually run the pinnacle of ultra-running, the UTMB.

Favourite TV show: The final season of [The Expanse](#) on Amazon Prime started earlier this month, and it is just as engrossing as its previous five seasons. A mix of sci-fi, horror, war and political drama, it draws you in with well-crafted characters and a plotline unafraid to treat viewers as adults. Throw in actors such as Shohreh Aghdashloo, and you've got a perfect package of long-form TV.



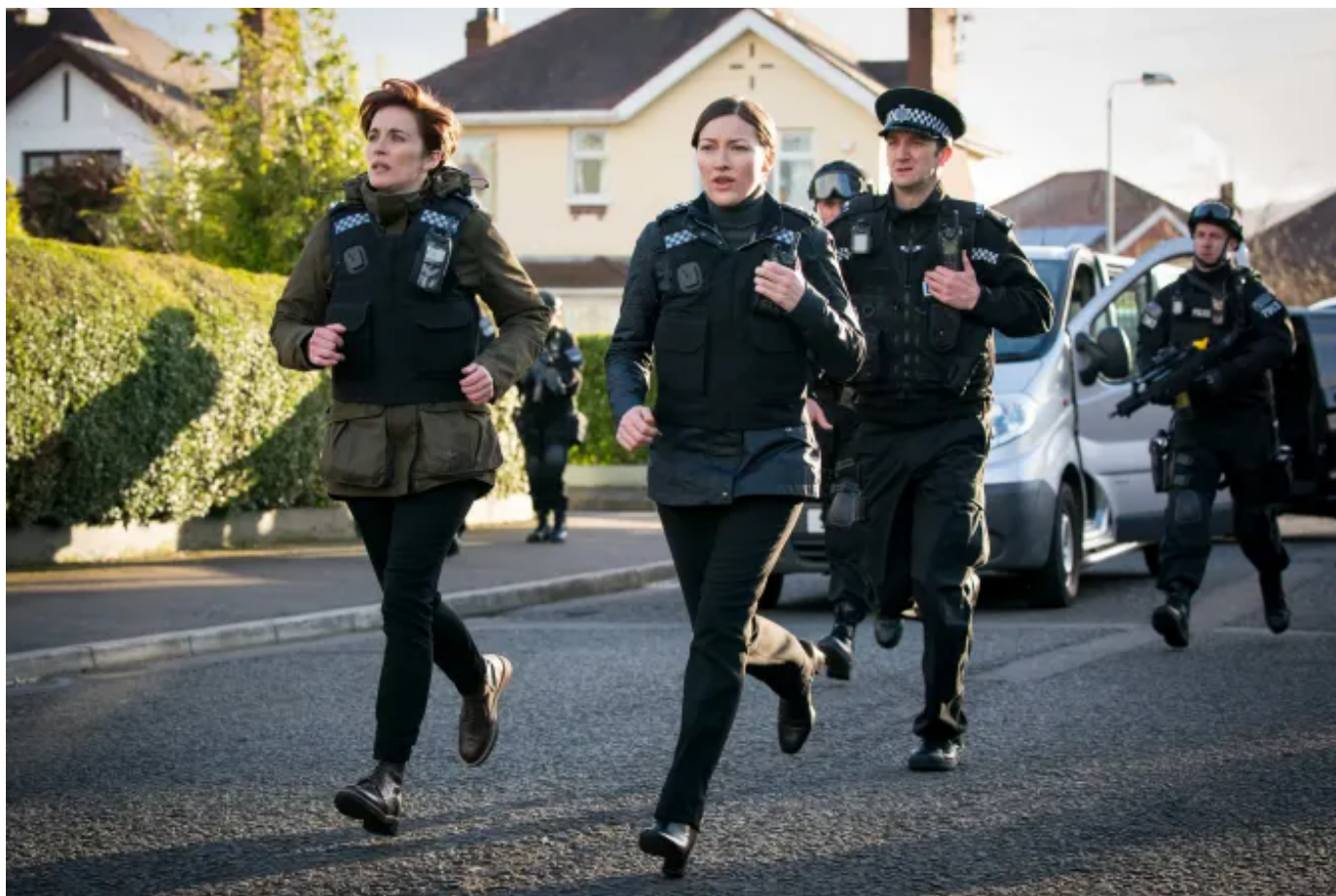


Senior economics correspondent Shane Wright was engrossed by Amazon Prime's *The Expanse*.

Summer read: Hopefully under the Christmas tree will be *The Future of Money* by Eswar Prasad. An insight into how digitisation is changing money, the future of central banks and digital currencies with a side-track into ABBA's Björn Ulvaeus and his concern about cash.

Sophie Aubrey, deputy Lifestyle editor

Favourite book: In the depths of our lockdown, I found myself wanting to escape into pacey fiction. My favourite was Brit Bennett's *The Vanishing Half*, which I picked up after it was recommended by friends. The novel is about identical twin sisters who grow up in a small community in the segregated US south of the '50s. They run away at 16, and their stories diverge when one sister decides to pass for white, with profound ripple effects on them and the next generation. It's just beautifully written, and I couldn't put it down.



Lifestyle deputy editor Sophie Aubrey sprinted her way through six seasons of *Line of Duty*.

Favourite TV show: *Line of Duty*. My husband and I smashed through all six seasons of this British police drama. It follows a detective sergeant who joins an anti-corruption unit where he and his team are asked to investigate and uncover dodgy police officers. Each season centres on a different case, but there is one persisting storyline that lasts to the end, and you'll be itching to solve it yourself.

Summer read: I'm lucky enough to sit just behind *The Age's* Books editor, [Jason Steger](#). I can't tell you how many times I've overheard him recommend [Love and Virtue](#), the debut novel by young Sydney-based author Diana Reid. It explores sexual consent and power dynamics following a fraught event during O-week at a prestigious university residential college. The book was also [one of Helen Garner's](#) favourite reads of the year.

Kerrie O'Brien, senior writer, culture

Favourite book: I devoured Emily Maguire's most recent novel, [Love Objects](#), about family, yearning, betrayal, privilege and love. It's the story of a family as seen through the eyes of two siblings and their aunt, and through them we gain insights into contemporary Australia: the things we do for love, generational privilege, emotional emptiness and the gaps we try to fill.



Emily Maguire's *Love Objects* was a favourite of senior culture writer Kerrie O'Brien, who has William Trevor's *Love and Summer* next on her list.

Favourite TV show: Ricky Gervais is at his best in [After Life](#), which he wrote, produced, directed and stars in. Tony is reeling in the aftermath of his wife's death and decides to operate in life without filters, saying exactly what he feels, sparing no one his caustic observations. It makes for laugh-out-loud viewing, while raising significant existential issues. Binge now on Netflix before series three is released in January.

Summer read: A friend just lent me a slight novel called *Love and Summer*, two things we all need more of right now. Published in 2009, it's by Irish writer William Trevor and my mate reckons I will love it and race through it in a weekend.

Rachael Dexter, *Sunday Age* reporter

Favourite book: This year I leaned into the theme of the year by picking up Albert Camus' [The Plague](#). I found a kind of solace in the pages amid descriptions of the town of the French Algerian city of Oran cut off in quarantine amid the spread of a strange new influenza. There's something reassuring reading about a population going through all this before.



In the midst of lockdown, reporter Rachel Dexter found comfort in reading *The Plague* by Albert Camus (pictured).

Favourite TV show: I finally watched *The Sopranos* (available on Binge), having been too young to watch the series when it first aired more than two decades ago. I especially loved the characterisation of the deeply flawed but somehow still likeable mafia don Tony Soprano.

Summer read: Not a book, but I'm bracing myself to jump into the [Sex and the City](#) reboot. Everyone has a hot take on it, I can't wait to check it out for myself – G&T in hand, of course.

Greg Baum, sports columnist

Favourite book: I'm an indiscriminate reader, but lockdowns provided a theme: all the unread volumes on my bookshelves. Off they tumbled, one after the other: Tsiolkas, Mantel, Roth, Maggie O'Farrell, even Dostoevsky, a few sports books, then through the post, Paul Kennedy's *Funkytown*.

Favourite TV show: It comes down to two obvious choices: [Mare of Easttown](#) and *Succession*. Many American police characters are cartoonish, but Kate Winslet as Mare Sheehan was real, uncertain and

mortal as heroines come. You just want to hug her, except she wouldn't let you. *Succession* worked for the opposite reason: all the characters were so brilliantly ghastly that I didn't care what happened to any of them and so wasn't disappointed by any of the many devilishly clever turns in the plot.



Damon Galgut and his Booker prize-winning novel *The Promise*, one of sports columnist's Greg Baum's favourite reads of the year. AP

Summer read: Hilary Mantel's *Wolf Hall* and *Bring up the Bodies* are back on the shelves now, leaving only [The Mirror and the Light](#). It is sitting on my bedside table, all 900 pages of it. Between that, the books that will turn up at Christmas as a matter of course, and the cricket, I won't need to put my head up again until footy season.

John Silvester, senior crime journalist and columnist

Favourite book: While *Chopper Three: How to Shoot Friends and Influence People* remains a classic of its genre, one of the best crime books going around was not originally written in English. It's *Crime and Guilt* by Ferdinand von Schirach, a German barrister who writes of his cases. Translated into English, *The New York Times* described it as "mesmerising".

Favourite TV show: [Mr Inbetween](#) on Foxtel and Binge is the best local crime show produced in 20 years. What is not to like about a hitman who tries to prove the existence of unicorns for his daughter? On the other side of the world is *Life on Mars*, the ridiculous story of a modern-day policeman who is in a coma after being hit by a car and is somehow transported back to 1973 to work with old-school cops. The British *Line of Duty* is an edge-of-the-seat drama that captures elements of police culture that usually escape scriptwriters.



Crime journalist John Silvester says Mr Inbetween is the best Australian crime show in decades. JOEL PRATLEY/FX

Summer read: [*Titanic Thompson: The Man Who Bet on Everything*](#) by Kevin Cook is the true story of a gambling chancer – such a legend in certain circles that he was the basis of Damon Runyon’s character Sky Masterson. Who can resist a book where the cover spruiks that the subject was married five times and killed five men?

The Booklist is a weekly newsletter for book lovers from books editor Jason Steger. [Get it delivered every Friday.](#)