

The 37 best books of 2022

Our critics choose their favourite books, from daring fiction and page-turning history to celebrity memoir and much more



Friday October 28 2022, 5.00pm, The Times

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Super-Infinite: The Transformations of John Donne by Katherine Rundell

An Elizabethan metaphysical poet might sound like dry fodder, but the academic and children's author Katherine Rundell has written a magical portrait of the man — poet, lover, preacher — who melded body and imagination to create a new kind of “excessive, hungry” poetry about sex, death and God. This book, which just won the Baillie Gifford prize for non-fiction, is heady, unusual, visceral — super-brilliant.

[**Buy a copy of Super-Infinite here**](#)

I Used to Live Here Once: The Haunted Life of Jean Rhys by Miranda Seymour

Miranda Seymour's biography is bewitching. Jean Rhys, the author of *Wide Sargasso Sea*, was inspired and impossible, insecure and imperious, an ingenue who turned into a termagant. “No one who has read Jean Rhys's first four novels can suppose that she was good at life,” her publisher Diana Athill wrote, “but no one who never met her could know how very bad at it she was.” Bad but enthralling.

[**Buy a copy of I Used to Live Here Once here**](#)

- See all the [*best literary nonfiction books of 2022*](#)

Smart thinking

Magnificent Rebels: The First Romantics and the Invention of the Self by Andrea Wulf

No book about German philosophy has any right to be this fun. Andrea Wulf takes us to the small university town of Jena at the end of the 18th century. For a few magical years every genius in Germany seems to have washed up here: Goethe, Schelling, Hegel. They threw parties, squabbled, had affairs... and while they were at it they reinvented western thought.

[**Buy a copy of Magnificent Rebels here**](#)