

Darragh's Recommendations:

Days Without End, by Sebastian Barry

Read by Aiden Kelly, 7hrs 58mins

· Set in the 19th century American west, Days Without End is a love story of two men fighting through the Indian and Civil Wars. With elegant lyrical prose, spectacular set-pieces, and quiet moments of tender hope, it is a ludicrously good book.

The Secret History, by Donna Tartt

Read by Donna Tartt. 22hrs 4mins

· There is something very special about hearing an author read their own work. Some are better at it than others, but when it is done well, as it is here, it borders on the sublime. Tartt's soft, lilting Mississippi narration guides us through a compelling murder-mystery set in an exclusive Vermont university.

Less, by Andrew Sean Greer

Read by Robert Petkoff. 8h 17mins

· Winner of the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 2018, this fish-out-of-water comedy is the perfect holiday listen. Arthur Less, a struggling novelist about to turn 50, embarks on a literary world tour in order to avoid attending the wedding of an ex-boyfriend. What follows is a series of misadventures and social calamities tied together with wit and genuine warmth.

Solar Bones, by Mike McCormack

Read by Tim Gerard Reynolds. 9h

· A man wakes up in his Mayo kitchen, confused. Unaware he is already dead, he looks back on his life, examining everything from the minutiae of daily rhythms to the cosmic enormity of death. Lyrical, poetic, and often very funny, it is beautifully read by Tim Gerard Reynolds.

Moby Dick, by Herman Melville

Read by Frank Muller, 21hrs 19mins

· You'll always find excuses to not read Moby Dick. It's time to bite the bullet. Sure, it's deeply philosophical. And it's so steeped in symbolism and metaphor it

can mean a million different things to a million different people. But therein lies the beauty. You'll be surprised at how accessible and entertaining it is.

A Spool of Blue Thread, by Anne Tyler

Read by Kimberly Farr. 13hrs 18mins

· With 22 novels under her belt, Anne Tyler has written more than one stone-cold American classic. Her most celebrated works, including *Breathing Lessons* and *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant* can be difficult to find as audiobooks, but this more recent effort about three generations of a Baltimore family is up there with her very best.

The Son, by Philipp Meyer

Read by Will Patton, Kate Mulgrew, Scott Shepherd, Clifton Collins Jr. 17hrs 46mins

· Spanning two centuries and six generations of a ruthless Texan family, this rip-roaring listen is a true American epic. Dripping with violence and themes of power and ambition, it is the kind of book holidays are made for. The cast of narrators are excellent, each a perfect fit for the various members of the McCullough clan.

A Girl is a Half-Formed Thing, by Eimear McBride

Read by Eimear McBride. 7h 34mins

· *A Girl is a Half-Formed Thing* is not an easy read. A litany of miseries drenched in Catholic guilt, described in stream-of-consciousness style prose, it can be a challenge for even the

sharpest minds. So to hear it read aloud is both something of a relief and a beguiling experience. Even if there are times you have no idea what's going on, to hear McBride read her own work is a pleasure in itself.

The Path to Power, by Robert A. Caro

Read by Grover Gardner. 40hrs 29mins

· The world is divided into those who are obsessed with Caro's (as yet unfinished) multi-volume biography of Lyndon Johnson, and those who have yet to read it. *The Path to Power* deals with Johnson's impoverished Texas childhood through to his bid to become senator in 1941. A towering achievement and one of the finest biographies ever written.

All the Light We Cannot See, by Anthony Doerr

Read by Julie Teal. 17hrs

· The fates of a blind French girl and a boy in the Hitler Youth collide in this exhilarating and moving novel set amid the devastation of World War II. Books of such ambition and heart-wrenching beauty are hard to come by, and this one will stick with you long after you take the headphones off.

The Green Road, by Anne Enright

Read by Caroline Lennon. 9hrs 38mins

· There's no getting around it: The Green Road is a masterpiece. A book so rich in human understanding and empathy, it slowly reveals itself as a quiet tour-de-force. Small, ostensibly banal scenes like a mother hugging her hungover teenaged son, or the bedlam of a Christmas Eve supermarket, are so perfectly and tenderly portrayed you'll be crying before you realise why.

SPQR: A History of Ancient Rome, by Mary Beard

Read by Phyllida Nash. 18hrs 30mins

· The best single-volume history of Ancient Rome in a long time, Mary Beard's stroke of genius is to approach the vast subject matter thematically, rather than chronologically. The result is a thoroughly engaging and authoritative history, covering the foundation of the city up to 212 CE, when Emperor Caracalla declared every free inhabitant of the empire a full Roman citizen.

Champagne Football: John Delaney and the Betrayal of Irish Football, by Mark Tighe and Paul Rowan

Narrated by Johnny Candon, 10hrs 10mins

· This thoroughly-researched account of John Delaney's ludicrous career and the FAI's scarcely-believable financial mismanagement makes for compelling listening. Entertaining and depressing in equal measure.

Born Standing Up: A Comic's Life, by Steve Martin

Read by Steve Martin. 4hrs 2mins

· The funny thing about this book is...it's not that funny. Luckily, it's not supposed to be. In 1978, after a meteoric rise, Steve Martin was the biggest stand-up comedian in the world, selling out stadiums every show. Three years later he quit stand-up forever. This fascinating memoir, brilliantly read by the author, explains how he honed his craft, and why he decided to leave it all behind.

Alan Partridge: Nomad, by Alan Partridge

Read by Alan Partridge. 6hrs 2mins

· If any book in the world makes sense as an audiobook, it is an Alan Partridge autobiography. While it exists in the written form, it can only be truly appreciated in the rich, nasal splendour of North Norfolk Digital's most experienced broadcaster. While purists might pip for the first memoir, I, Partridge: We Need to Talk About Alan, there is something about the

beautiful, hyper-literate absurdity of Nomad that makes it, quite probably, the funniest audiobook you'll ever listen to.

Ikki Keane's Recommendations for Children's/Young People's Audiobooks

Amari and the Night Brothers – B B Alston

Amari Peter's brother goes missing, feared dead but Amari believes he is still alive and to find him she goes and enlists in his last place of work 'The Bureau of Supernatural Affairs' and that leads to adventure and danger and lots of magical stuff.

When the Sky Falls – Phil Earle and read by the author

It seems everyone has been raving about this book and for good reason. It's inspired by a true story set against the background of WW2 where 12 yr old Joseph is sent off to London to stay with the grumpy Mrs F who runs a rundown city zoo. This is where Joseph meets Adonis, a silverback gorilla and he learns to trust and to lower the barriers that he has built around him. Hopeful and heartbreaking at the same time! I couldn't believe that it was still available and would urge you to grab it NOW!

The Evernight (and Feast of the Evernight) – Ross McKenzie

I love McKenzie's world building and am a fan of his books.

All the **Morris Gleitzman books** set during the Holocaust about a young boy, Felix who escapes from an orphanage and goes on a quest to find his parents- starting with Once and read by Morris Gleitzman himself which gives them the added wow factor.

Crater Lake – Jennifer Killick

It's about a school camping trip to an activity centre that turns into a horror nightmare and a fight for survival.

High Rise Mystery – Sharna Jackson

Nik and Norva two sisters live in the 'TRI' a high rise block and they come across the murder of their caretaker so they turn detective to solve it.

The Wizards of Once series by Cressida Cowell and read by David Tenant

Wish, a warrior princess and Xar, a wizard whose families are at war with each other join forces with all sorts of other magical creatures to defeat the King Witch.

Adventures on Trains series – Sam Sedgman and M G Leonard

Starting with The Highland Falcon Thief, Harrison Beck and his Uncle Nat go on train journeys where they get involved in solving a mystery.

The Somerset Tsunami - Emma Carroll

Based on a real life Tsunami in Somerset in 1607, Emma Carroll does children's historical fiction so well and this book made me want to go away and learn more about this event.

Anything by Katherine Rundell – The Wolf Wilder

Feo and her mother train domesticated wolves to go back into the wild and this makes them targets, when Feo's mother is arrested she travels across the Russian wilderness to save her and The Explorer.

The Track series by Jason Reynolds

Ghost, Patina, Sunny and Lu are four kids chosen for an elite running team. **Also Long Way Down** read by the author. Takes place in 60 seconds the time it takes a kid to decide whether or not he is going to murder the guy who killed his brother.

The Brightstorm books by Vashti Hardy

Twins who go up in a sky ship to find their missing father.

Turtle Boy – M Evan Wolkenstein

Will, bullied at school as he loves turtles and has a funny chin meets RJ in hospital and has to complete RJ's bucket list. This is a heart-warming story about friendship and growing up.

The Ship of Shadows – Maria Kuzner

Aleja longs for magic and adventure and even better if it's on a ship she joins the Ship of Shadows and she gets a lot more than she bargained for.

Hilary McKay's – Skylark's War

Set against backdrop of WW1- Clarry and Peter's idyllic summers in Cornwall are interrupted by the War and shows the impact of war on families and friendships.

Murder Most Unladylike – Robin Stevens

Detective duo Daisy Wells and Hazel Wong solving murders .