

# The best 101 Australian books

*This selection, compiled by JOHN ARNOLD and PETER PIERCE\* and intended to be provocative, is an attempt to list 101 representative Australian books. To coincide with its publication, The Book Show on SBS-TV on November 19 will screen a discussion with Donald Horne, chairman of the Ideas for Australia Program, Judith Brett, who lectures in politics at La Trobe University, and the show's presenter, Dinny O'Hearn, on what books need to be written about Australia*

**O**ur list is about books that have already been published. The selection was influenced by the personal inclinations of its compilers, constrained by a brief to provide a representative listing in terms of subject, chronological spread, gender ratio and the restriction of only one book an author.

Regrettably, there are only 101. Because so many titles and miscellaneous works of high quality missed out, readers are encouraged to compile their own lists of the 10 best Australian books not included here. Besides satisfying their outrage, there is an inducement to do so: *The Bulletin* will publish the best five entries as judged by the compilers of "The best 101 Australian books" and the winners will receive, courtesy of the Ideas for Australia Program and D. W. Thorpe, a copy of the recently published *Who's Who of Australian Writers*. Entries should be sent to Best Books Competition, National Centre for Australian Studies, Monash University (Clayton Campus), Vic 3168.

Exhibitions of "The best 101 Australian books", with accompanying competitions, will be held at the Stanton Library in North Sydney and the Central Highlands Library at Ballarat in Victoria.

Here is the list, arranged alphabetically by author with no hierarchy intended.

**1** Francis Adams  
*The Australians: A Social Sketch* (1893)  
Important commentary by the journalist, novelist and poet which depicts the bushman as the "one powerful and unique national type yet produced in Australia".

**2** Dennis Altman  
*Homosexual: Oppression and Liberation* (1972)  
An influential account of the emergence of the gay liberation movement both in Australia and overseas and which also details the author's public coming out.

**3** Sidney Baker  
*The Australian Language* (1945)  
The source of many later studies, Baker was keenly alive to the nuance, irreverence and history of the vernacular. Containing a part-

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icularly amusing selection of rhyming slang, the book has been reprinted many times.

**4** Joseph Banks  
*The Endeavour Journal of Joseph Banks, 1768-1771* (edited by J. C. Beaglehole 1962)  
Two-volume journal of the naturalist and promoter of English settlement, written while a member of James Cook's first voyage to the Pacific during which eastern Australia was claimed as British territory.

**5** C. E. W. Bean  
*On the Wool Track* (1910)  
His travels in western NSW led Bean to believe that he had found "the real Australia". *The Official History of Australia in the Great*



Sir Donald Bradman: classic cricket manual

*War*, which he edited, would attempt to reveal how essential Australian qualities were expressed in battle.

**6** Randolph Bedford  
*Naught to Thirty-Three* (1944; second edition 1976)  
In one of the funniest Australian autobiographies, Bedford traverses his raunchy and reckless itinerant early career as journalist and gold-miner.

**7** Geoffrey Blainey  
*The Tyranny of Distance: How Distance Shaped Australia's History* (1966)  
A landmark of Australian historiography whose title has probably been quoted in ar-

gument and discussion more often than the book has been read.

**8** Rolf Boldrewood  
*Robbery Under Arms* (three volumes, 1888; UQP edition 1979)  
This classic romantic novel of bushranging also affords many insights into the world of shanties, small farms and gold-rush towns in colonial Australia.

**9** Robin Boyd  
*Australia's Home: Its Origin, Builders and Occupiers* (1952; MUP reprint with foreword by Hugh Stretton 1987)  
Still the best book on Australian architecture, it described a basic constituent of society in a style that guaranteed an audience wider than the author's profession.

**10** Sir Donald Bradman  
*The Art of Cricket* (1958)  
Remains the classic instruction manual on all facets of cricket, written by the greatest batsman in the history of the game.

**11** Kate Campbell  
*A Guide to the Care of the Young Child, Infant and Pre-School Ages: For Students of Infant Welfare* (1946)  
A pioneering and influential text on child raising which has been reprinted again and again.

**12** Raffaello Carboni  
*The Eureka Stockade: The Consequences of Some Pirates Wanting on Quarterdeck a Rebellion* (1855; MUP edition with foreword by Geoffrey Serle 1963)  
"Factional" account of the miners' rebellion at Ballarat in 1855 written by one of the participants – an Italian national temporarily resident in Australia, chasing gold while on a self-imposed exile.

**13** Neville W. Cayley  
*What Bird Is That? A Guide to the Birds of Australia* (1931; recent edition 1986)  
For generations of Australians, the definitive guide to native birds and one that is still consulted after family picnics to identify those seen during the outing.

**14** Don Charlwood  
*No Moon Tonight* (1956)  
Moving account of the experiences of a Royal Australian Air Force serviceman involved in Bomber Command raids on Eur-



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P.O. BOX 278, CARLTON SOUTH, VICTORIA 3053, AUSTRALIA

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*Printed on 100% Recycled paper*