



## My Top 5 Great Literary Loves

By Sandie Docker

Literary loves are some of the most powerful we can have in our lives. While it's true we never forget our first actual love, there's something extra special about our fictional loves. Maybe because we can keep them in our fictional bubble where they forever remain our heroes; maybe because while they might break our figurative heart, they never break our actual heart, so it remains an untainted love. Whatever the reason, when we think about the greatest love stories that touch our hearts, so often we turn to the world of literature. *Romeo and Juliet* – need I say more.

Ask any book lover and they always have a book boyfriend, that one fictional character they hold in their hearts for all time. They are special because they never let us down; they are always there for us at a moment's thought. It is a pure love that readers universally understand.

There are, of course, the classic book boyfriends – Fitzwilliam Darcy, who can make your heart skip a beat with a well-penned letter, and James Alexander Malcom McKenzie Fraser who would surely melt your ovaries if he ever called you 'Sassenach' – but I'd like to focus this piece on the ones that are a little more personal to me.

So here are my top 5 great literary loves:

At the top of the list it has to be Gilbert Blythe from *Anne of Green Gables*. He was the first fictional character to ever steal my heart. Witty, intelligent, cute – I wished I had red hair just so he could call me 'carrots'. Gilbert is the personification of loyalty and a good heart, and he taught a much younger me just what a boyfriend should be. Gilbert is so much my idea of the ideal man that when the actor who played him in the original series, Jonathan Crombie, passed away, I was truly bereft. I actually cried, which I've never done before with a celebrity death, nor since. Gilbert Blythe – the truest love of my fictional life.

Next up is Will Traynor from *Me Before You* by Jojo Moyes. The reason Will makes it on my list isn't because of Will himself, because, let's face it, at the beginning of the novel he's not exactly very nice. In fact, he's downright awful. Individually he wouldn't make the list. But as a couple, as a relationship, he and the main character, Louisa Clark, are the embodiment of how transformative true love can be. This is a couple that made me sob my heart out when I read the book; and I sobbed again in the movie, even though I knew exactly how it all went down – so strong was the relationship, the love and the heartache, between Will and Lou, and its effect on me. As a couple I love these two so much, I have not yet been able to bring myself to read the sequels, because I'm so afraid of having the divine heartache that is them, tainted in any way.

A perhaps lesser known hero, but one of my all-time favourites, is Dawsey Adams from *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society* by Mary Ann Shaffer and Annie Burrows. Firstly, the man writes letters; true, honest, simple letters. And he reads. He is humble and strong and has a great sense of justice. The other thing I love about Dawsey is how unassuming he is. Juliet is taken by surprise when she falls for him because he is nothing like what she thought she wanted, but turned out to be exactly what she needed. And I love the lesson in that.

One of the sexiest male leads I've read in modern literature, is Lincoln from Josephine Moon's *The Chocolate Promise*. I can't pinpoint what it is about Lincoln – the beard, the silent inner strength, the fact he travelled halfway round the world to see if the girl he loved, loved him back – but something about him really pulls at my heart. So much so, that I kind of think Christmas Livingstone doesn't deserve him. Really, no one does except me. When an author does that, it's a great example of the power of literary loves.

The last of the 5 loves might seem a little strange, but bear with me (no pun intended). This one makes the list because while there are always romantic elements in my novels, I also explore other forms of love and how important they are – parent/child love, sibling love, love across generations, love between friends. And this character is the pinnacle of unconditional love. Winnie the Pooh. Yes, you read that right. Surrounded by an eclectic group of friends, from hyperactive Tigger, to shy and constantly worried Piglet, to melancholic Eeyore, Pooh never judges his friends. He accepts them as they are and loves them no matter what. A quick google search of Pooh comes up with some of the best quotes ever on love, including my favourite...

Piglet: 'How do you spell love?'

Pooh: 'You don't spell it. You feel it.'

What Pooh can't teach us all about love, isn't worth knowing.