

Reading on the Road in the UK  
Kris Wiley for The News-Review

My husband and I just returned from an amazing vacation in Great Britain. We spent 10 days traversing the island, seeing Stonehenge, staying in a castle near Inverness, Scotland, watching an amazing performance of "Les Miserables" in London's West End and much more.

Of course I took several books along, and reading stories set in the places we visited added to my enjoyment of the narratives.

"Maame" by Jessica George has the early lead for my favorite book of the year. Maddie is a 25-year-old woman seeking fulfillment in London. From a young age, Maddie has been responsible - for taking care of her ill father, for holding down a job she hates in order to pay the bills, for putting her family's needs above her own.

When her mom plans to return from Ghana, Maddie moves out of her childhood home and begins to experience the rites of adult passage: roommates, Internet dating and a new job. But then tragedy strikes, Maddie loses her grip, and I got swept up rooting for her to find her way back again.

"Maame" is a book about the responsibilities we have to family and ourselves, grief, racism, love and friendship, and Maddie's journey toward healing left me in tears.

I have loved Ian Rankin's John Rebus mysteries for years for their dark atmosphere and unforgettable characters. Now that I have walked the streets of Edinburgh, I appreciate the Scottish series even more.

Rebus is the quintessential flawed hero, a detective inspector for the Lothian and Borders Police who clashes with his bosses as much as the criminals he pursues. He has a failed marriage, a daughter with whom he has a complicated relationship and a drinking problem. He also is witty and dogged in his pursuit of justice.

I recommend reading the series, which runs to 24 books and counting, in order. I just reread the 17th book, "Exit Music," which chronicles the days leading up to Rebus' retirement.

A Russian poet has been killed on the streets of Edinburgh, and Rebus has a hunch it's not a random attack. He and his partner, long-suffering Detective Sergeant Siobhan Clarke, run up against politicians and folks with deep pockets, including Rebus' longtime nemesis, mob boss "Big Ger" Cafferty.

Finally, thanks to volunteer Linda, I picked up the first book in the Brother Cadfael mystery series by Ellis Peters. "A Morbid Taste for Bones," which was published in 1977, introduces the Benedictine monk living in 12th century Shrewsbury, England.

Cadfael, a Welshman, entered the monastery later in life so has a worldly quality that contrasts with some of his more naive brothers.

In "A Morbid Taste for Bones," the Prior of Shrewsbury Abbey has set his sights on acquiring the remains of St. Winifred in Wales for his own chapel, and Cadfael joins the mission as translator. The Welsh locals push back on the Prior's plans, and before the sides can come to an agreement, the most vocal detractor is killed.

With the help of the murdered man's daughter, Cadfael quietly investigates, recognizing quickly that there are a number of suspects. I enjoyed the clever ending and look forward to reading more of the 20-book series.

### This Week's Library Events

Tuesday, March 28 – 3:30 p.m., STEM program for elementary students

Wednesday, March 29 – 10:30 a.m., Storytime with Aurora

Wednesday, March 29 – 3-4:30 p.m., Spring Break activities

Thursday, March 30 – 3-4 p.m., Spring Break activities

Thursday, March 30 – 6:30 p.m., Silent Book Group

Saturday, April 1 – 10:30 a.m.-12 p.m. – Read with Astra teens