**Ann Morgan: My year reading a book from every country in the world**

Who is your favourite author?

Do you prefer books from a specific country?

Have you ever read a book from a really exotic country?

Ann Morgan considered herself well read — until she discovered the "massive blind spot" on her bookshelf. Amid a multitude of English and American authors, there were very few books from beyond the English-speaking world. So she set an ambitious goal: to read one book from every country in the world over the course of a year.

Do you think it is possible to do it?

Can you imagine any problems she might have experienced?

**Watch the video and answer the question: VIDEO – books from every country**

Why did she decide to read books of all around the world?

Why did she choose the year 2012?

How many countries were there on her list?

Why do some books remain invisible to most readers?

How did she manage to get hold of the books?

How did she feel about people wanting to help her?

Who recommended her the book from Panama?

What happened when there wasn’t an English translation of the book in Portuguese?

What did the project give her?

What was the message she wants to give us?

In her selected readings from South America, Morgan encountered a number of characters who were mentally ill. s. “Amazing stories,” Morgan says, “often told inside the head of people going through some quite extreme crises.” The crime novels were equally unsettling: *Death in the Andes* by Peruvian author Mario Vargas Llosa includes a confounding number of culprits (viník), from bands of terrorists to rumors of vengeful mountain spirits. “You may not even get an answer as to who was responsible for the crime in many of the books,” says Morgan. “People I’ve spoken to say that this is most likely because of the history of corruption and violence that many regimes in South America have gone through.” The tidy resolutions that English-language readers may crave don’t exactly ring true here.

* Why aren’t there clear solutions of crimes in South American literature?

Much of Central American literature followed the patterns of South America. In the well-trod territory of U.S. literature, however, Morgan tried an experiment. She read *American Gods,* by the British writer Neil Gaiman. Some of her online readership objected to the choice of a foreign-born writer, which she found intriguing, given that other readers had no problem suggesting English and American writers to represent other countries. “I definitely wanted to make sure that I didn’t just choose books by British and American writers who’ve lived in other places for a while,” she says. The experience made her determined to read books by people as closely connected to each nation as possible.

* Why were some people annoyed by her choice of American Gods?

“Some of the funniest books that I read during my quest came from Europe,” Morgan says. Eastern European authors were especially adept at dark humor. A personal favorite was *Lake Como* by Serbian author Srdjan Valjarevic. The main character, an alcoholic writer from war-torn Belgrade, attends a writing retreat in Northern Italy, where he’s treated with pity by the other earnest artists in residence. “Actually he was just treating it as a free ride,” Morgan says. “He just spends his time there getting drunk and chatting up the waitresses. It’s a really funny book but quite touching as well.”

* What did she like about most European books?

In Africa Morgan encountered a blend of vivid imagery and strong female characters. “Some of the most feminist writing I came across during my reading came from Africa, and not just by women either,” she says.

* What is typical for African literature according to Ms. Morgan?

“I met some fabulous characters in Asian literature,” says Morgan. The child characters were especially vivid. One standout, she says, was the shepherd boy in the Mongolian novel *The Blue Sky,* by Galsan Tschinag. The boy smokes pipes and fantasizes about a 1,000-strong flock of sheep. “His perspective is so beautiful and the writing is so extraordinary that it really takes you into this very different world.” For a darker turn, she recommends *Smile As They Bow*, a story about a transgender temple dancer in Myanmar. “He earns his living by persuading pilgrims to pay him money to dance for them, and he doesn’t really believe in it, but then at the same time he sort of does,” she says. “He’s so incredibly vibrant, so irreverent and so funny.”

* Why did she like the Mongolian novel?

Don’t overlook the literature from the tiny Pacific Islands, Morgan says. “There’s still a strong tradition of performing stories, not just telling them, but using your whole body and gesturing and laughing and throwing in your own observations,” she says. “Some of the most creative storytelling that brings in traditional culture and weaves those stories into ever-changing shapes for a new generation is very interesting.” For a strange brew of history, mythology, songs and recipes (including the occasional list of edible plants), check out *The Book of Luelen* by Micronesian author Luelen Bernart.

* Why does she call Micronesian literature creative?

How important are books to you?

What kinds of books do you like?

Do you prefer paperbacks or hardbacks?

If you wrote a book, what would you write about?

How long does it take you to read a book?

Do you think the Internet will make books disappear?

What do you think of the idea of E-books?

How many books have you read in English?

Why doesn’t everybody enjoy reading?

Do you prefer to keep the books that you read?

Do you go to the library?

Which book have you read more times?

Do you spend a long time browsing in bookshops?

Do you ever read the last page before you start reading a book?