

10 ALL-TIME BESTSELLERS AND THEIR BLURBS

1. *About a Boy* by Nick Hornby

“How cool was Will Freeman?”

Too cool! At thirty-six, he’s as hip as a teenager. He’s single, child-free, goes to the right clubs and knows which trainers to wear. He’s also found a great way to score with women: attend single parents’ groups full of available (and grateful) mothers, all hoping to meet a Nice Guy.

Which is how Will meets Marcus, the oldest twelve-year-old on the planet. Marcus is a bit strange: he listens to Joni Mitchell and Mozart, looks after his mum and has never owned a pair of trainers. But Marcus latches on to Will—and won’t let go. Can Will teach Marcus how to grow up cool? And can Marcus help Will just to grow up?

Written in such simple language, this blurb resonates with the story of every boy!

2. *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone* by J.K. Rowling

Turning the envelope over, his hand trembling, Harry saw a purple wax seal bearing a coat of arms: a lion, an eagle, a badger and a snake surrounding a letter “H”.

Harry Potter has never even heard of Hogwarts when the letters start dropping on the doormat at number four, Privet Drive. Addressed in green ink on yellowish parchment with a purple seal, they are swiftly confiscated by his grisly aunt and uncle. Then, on Harry’s eleventh birthday, a great beetle-eyed giant of a man called Rubeus Hagrid bursts in with some astonishing news: Harry Potter is a wizard, and he has a place at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. An incredible adventure is about to begin!

This blurb introduces an element of mystery that makes the readers weave a story in their minds. Words such as “parchment,” “Witchcraft,” and “purple wax seal,” arouse even more curiosity.

3. *Jamie's Comfort Food* by Jamie Oliver

It's all about the dishes that are close to your heart, that put a smile on your face and make you feel happy, loved, safe and secure. Inspired by everything from childhood memories to the changing of the seasons, and taking into account the guilty pleasures and sweet indulgences that everyone enjoys, *Jamie's Comfort Food* is brimming with exciting recipes you'll fall in love with.

This is the food you really want to eat, made exactly how you like it. With this in mind, the book features ultimate versions of all-time favourites, and also introduces cherished dishes from countries around the world, providing a delicious recipe for every occasion. This isn't everyday cooking—this is about weekends, holidays, celebrations and occasions. Whether you're home alone, or sharing the love with a big group of family or friends, there really is something for everyone.

Treat yourself, and your loved ones, with *Jamie's Comfort Food*.

Feel at home—that's what this blurb does to you. It makes you want to go back home and cook, which is also its main selling point.

4. *Notes from a Small Island* by Bill Bryson

In 1995, before leaving his much-loved home in North Yorkshire to move back to the States for a few years with his family, Bill Bryson insisted on taking one last trip around Britain, a sort of valedictory tour of the green and kindly island that had so long been his home. His aim was to take stock of the nation's public face and private parts (as it were), and to analyse what precisely it was he loved so much about a country that had produced Marmite; a military hero whose dying wish was to be kissed by a fellow named Hardy; place names like Farleigh Wallop, Titsey and Shellow Bowells; people who said "Mustn't grumble," and "Ooh lovely" at the sight of a cup of tea and a plate of biscuits; and Gardeners' Question Time.

This short blurb introduces humor in a very subtle way. It builds a story around some familiar sights in Britain—that will not appear the same after reading this.

5. *Memoirs of a Geisha* by Arthur Golden

This is a seductive and evocative epic on an intimate scale, which tells the extraordinary story of a geisha girl. Summoning up more than twenty years of Japan's most dramatic history, it uncovers a hidden world of eroticism and enchantment, exploitation and degradation. From a small fishing village in 1929, the tale moves to the glamorous and decadent heart of Kyoto in the 1930s, where a young peasant girl is sold as servant and apprentice to a renowned geisha house. She tells her story many years later from the Waldorf Astoria in New York; it exquisitely evokes another culture, a different time and the details of an extraordinary way of life. It conjures up the perfection and the ugliness of life behind rice-paper screens, where young girls learn the arts of the geisha—dancing and singing, how to wind the kimono, how to walk and pour tea, and how to beguile the most powerful men.

This blurb presents a beautiful story of the beautiful geisha—someone we have heard of and don't know much about, but would like to know more. In just about 150 words, this blurb narrates the "extraordinary" story of a geisha.

6. *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini

Amir is the son of a wealthy Kabul merchant, a member of the ruling caste of Pashtuns. Hassan, his servant and constant companion, is a Hazara, a despised and impoverished caste. Their uncommon bond is torn by Amir's choice to abandon his friend amidst the increasing ethnic, religious, and political tensions of the dying years of the Afghan monarchy, wrenching them far apart. But so strong is the bond between the two boys that Amir journeys back to a distant world, to try to right past wrongs against the only true friend he ever had. The unforgettable, heartbreaking story of the unlikely friendship between a wealthy boy and the son of his father's servant, *The Kite Runner* is a beautifully crafted novel set in a country that is in the process of being destroyed. It is about the power of reading, the price of betrayal, and the possibility of redemption; and an exploration of the power of fathers over sons—their love, their sacrifices, their lies. A sweeping story of family, love, and friendship told against the devastating backdrop of the history of Afghanistan over the last thirty years, *The Kite Runner* is an unusual and powerful novel that has become a beloved, one-of-a-kind classic.

A good blurb for a fiction title should give the gist of the book without revealing too much. This blurb mentions all the main components of the story—ethnic, religious, and political tensions of the Afghan monarchy; friendship; betrayal; love; sacrifice; and history—but only touches on the main plot.

7. *Past Perfect* by Danielle Steel

Sybil and Blake Gregory live a well-ordered, predictable Manhattan life—she as a cutting-edge design authority and museum consultant, he in high-tech investments—raising their teenagers Andrew and Caroline and six-year-old Charlie. But when Blake is offered a dream job as CEO of a start-up in San Francisco, he accepts it, without consulting his wife, and buys a magnificent, historic mansion as their new home in Pacific Heights. Past and present collide at their elegant mansion, when they meet the large and lively family who lived there a century ago. All long dead but very much alive in spirit visible to the Gregorys and no one else. Within these enchanted rooms, it is at once 1917 and a century later. Have the Gregorys been given a perfect gift; beloved friends, a chance to relive the past and the wisdom and grace to shape the future?

A short blurb that starts with discussing the ordinary lives of the main characters and goes on to hint at an unexpected “twist” that might change their lives.

8. *Labyrinth* by Kate Moss

July 2005. In the Pyrenees mountains near Carcassonne, Alice, a volunteer at an archaeological dig, stumbles into a cave and makes a startling discovery—two crumbling skeletons, strange writings on the walls, and the pattern of a labyrinth.

Eight hundred years earlier, on the eve of a brutal crusade that will rip apart southern France, a young woman named Alais is given a ring and a mysterious book for safekeeping by her father. The book, he says, contains the secret of the true Grail, and the ring, inscribed with a labyrinth, will identify a guardian of the Grail. Now, as crusading armies gather outside the city walls of Carcassonne, it will take a tremendous sacrifice to keep the secret of the labyrinth safe.

Another blurb that arouses a sense of mystery. Phrases like “discovery,” “crumbling skeletons,” “writings on the walls,” “pattern of a labyrinth,” and “secret” are the hooks that draw the attention of the readers.

9. *The Help* by Kathryn Stockett

Enter a vanished and unjust world: Jackson, Mississippi, 1962. Where black maids raise white children, but aren't trusted not to steal the silver . . .

There's Aibileen, raising her seventeenth white child and nursing the hurt caused by her own son's tragic death; Minny, whose cooking is nearly as sassy as her tongue; and white Miss Skeeter, home from College, who wants to know why her beloved maid has disappeared.

Skeeter, Aibileen and Minny. No one would believe they'd be friends; fewer still would tolerate it. But as each woman finds the courage to cross boundaries, they come to depend and rely upon one another. Each is in a search of a truth. And together they have an extraordinary story to tell...

In a few words, the author introduces the three main characters of the story and an unjust world, hints at the boundaries defined by class and skin color, and shows how these women find the courage to cross these boundaries—covering all the main aspects of the book.

10. *Shoe Dog: A Memoir by the Creator of NIKE* by Phil Knight

In 1962, fresh out of business school, Phil Knight borrowed \$50 from his father and created a company with a simple mission: import high-quality, low-cost athletic shoes from Japan. Selling the shoes from the trunk of his lime green Plymouth Valiant, Knight grossed \$8,000 his first year. Today, Nike's annual sales top \$30 billion. In an age of startups, Nike is the ne plus ultra of all startups, and the swoosh has become a revolutionary, globe-spanning icon, one of the most ubiquitous and recognizable symbols in the world today.

But Knight, the man behind the swoosh, has always remained a mystery. Now, for the first time, in a memoir that is candid, humble, gutsy, and wry, he tells his story, beginning with his crossroads moment. At 24, after backpacking around the world, he decided to take the unconventional path, to start his own business—a business that would be dynamic, different.

Knight details the many risks and daunting setbacks that stood between him and his dream—along with his early triumphs. Above all, he recalls the formative relationships with his first partners and employees, a ragtag group of misfits and seekers who became a tight-knit band of brothers. Together, harnessing the transcendent power of a shared mission, and a deep belief in the spirit of sport, they built a brand that changed everything.

Rags to riches—a dream come true! This blurb narrates the story of the founder of NIKE in a manner that every reader would want to believe that dreams do come true.