

My favourite books

Architect and TV presenter George Clarke finds he doesn't have time to read as much as he'd like to.

LOVE books. They have always been an important part of my life. When I was younger my very practical grandfather always pushed me to read, but he insisted that I absorbed myself in the facts of non-fiction rather than losing my head in the clouds of fiction. This was tricky for me as I loved the fantasy world of J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit* and *Lord of the Rings*.

To satisfy my grandfather's insistence that I gain 'knowledge' from non-fiction I would read books on travel, adventure and expeditions, which were always exciting as a young boy. The historic books of Marco Polo were an inspiration, and I'm amazed by recent epic challenges in books by British adventurer, Ranulph Fiennes.

During my teenage years, when I'd

decided I wanted to be an architect, I began to absorb myself in any book about buildings. These books were incredibly broad and varied. I remember reading *The Glossary of Architectural Terms*, which my grandfather bought for me from the local library book sale for 10p. It was possibly the most boring book in the world, learning every term from A-Z, but I'll never forget how it educated me about the individual elements of architecture.

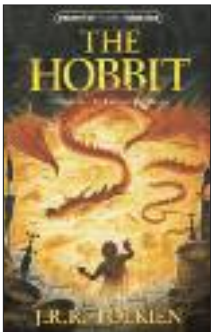
Banister Fletcher's *A History of Architecture* was the first serious book on architecture I bought. I couldn't afford a new copy, so at the age of 13 I discovered an old edition for sale in a second hand bookshop in Sunderland was a revelation. At £12 all of my savings were gone, but it

was worth every penny. This book really launched my architectural library where I now have over 1000 books from *The Poetics of Space* by Gaston Bachelard, a book I absolutely adore, to *Experiencing Architecture* by Rasmussen.

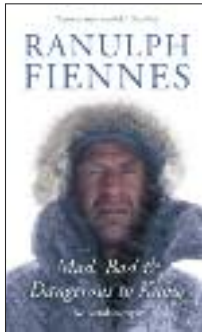
After reading books solidly on architecture between 13 and 18, my world of literature suddenly opened up when I began university. I'd travelled to Russia as a student and became obsessed by books such as *The Master and Margarita* by Mikhail Bulgakov and the work of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky.

Nowadays, with the pressures of running my architectural practice and construction company, as well as filming for TV, doing live events throughout the year like *The Ideal Home Show* and being a husband and father, I don't get to read as much as I'd like to. But I am now fascinated by the lives of people and I've gradually found myself reading more and more autobiographies. I'm currently reading a book about one of my design heroes, Sir Terence Conran.

Maybe one day my life will slow down and books will play a bigger part again.



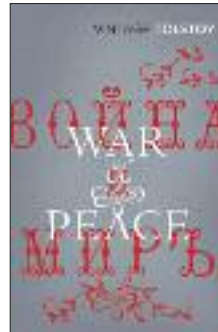
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