



## > THE BOOKS THAT CHANGED ME



# John Charalambous

## Crime And Punishment

> Fyodor Dostoevsky



After completing the HSC I had been meaning to read Tolstoy, but after a recommendation picked up Dostoevsky instead. I imagined it would be a dusty classic, but what I got was a fantastic read. At 19 and training to be an art teacher at Melbourne State College, I related to Raskolnikov who was also a student and not well off, and even though he had this horrendous idea, the whole thing stuck with me. The first 100 pages where he is planning and actually commits the murder were scary, exhilarating and weird. It was the first adult novel that really hooked me into fiction.

## Permaculture One

> Bill Mollison and David Holmgren

When I was in my late 20s, my wife and I moved to Wedderburn, central Victoria, where we'd bought a bush block. This book presented the idea that you could make a world where people could support themselves by gardening, and it really fired me up. I love plants and the whole idea of food plants. We established permaculture but I found that the harsh conditions prevented us from being able to support ourselves. It provided a food supplement and was satisfying, but there wasn't a community of like-minded people and, disappointingly, most still went to the local supermarket.

## The Poisonwood Bible

> Barbara Kingsolver

This is a story about a group of missionaries from America's deep South who decide to set up in the Belgian Congo. It's set in 1959 at a time when America was influencing the outcome of the Congolese Independence Movement, and the CIA sabotages the Congolese government. A mother and four girls are put in a position where they have to survive in the Congo because their father, a preacher, doesn't look out for them – the Africans are the ones who actually look after the family. They grow up and go their own ways but the characterisation of each of these people and the details of their lives is so convincing. It was also laugh-out-loud funny.

## Celebrating Silence

> Sri Sri Ravi Shankar



You couldn't classify *Celebrating Silence* as fiction or non-fiction; rather it's a book of spiritual aphorisms or advice. It's about how to be centred in life. You can read any little part of it and get an idea of how to deal with things. In the same way some people might use the Bible, I use this book a lot – how to get through the day or how to simply enjoy all the good things. I am not a spiritual person but someone who understands there are people out there with a wider perspective that can help me. A lot of the mistakes I make and other people make are through not being alert, and being ignorant to what's really going on in their minds and to what their needs really are. Rather than being terminally busy and making heaps of money, it's about being happy, and Sri Sri Ravi Shankar points to the way to achieve that.

Silent Parts by John Charalambous is published by University Of Queensland Press.



Interview by Robyn Doreian