# Sian Ejiwunmi-Le Berre on her chosen books

Sian Ejiwunmi-Le Berre: My recommendations, my books, which matter to me? One is Fanny Burney’s *Wanderer*. I love Fanny Burney. I wrote a radio play about her. I think her importance is hugely underrated. I'm really a proud member of the Burney Society, which extends not just to Fanny but to the whole mad Burney family, who are completely bonkers and fascinating. I love that period. And I love *The Wanderer* because I think it is an absolutely ruthless takedown of the British class system, and she's great,

I've often said that the best books I've ever read are kids books because they’re all story. And my favourite exponent of that is a radical Diana Wynne Jones. She’s a children’s fantasy writer who really excels, and when I was a kid, I never really thought it was fantasy, but it's a crazy book she wrote called *Dogsbody*, which if I try to explain to you, what the plot of it was: it involves a star being turned into a dog and sent down to Earth. It's absolutely wild. But she precedes JK Rowling in all things and she is extraordinary storyteller and not well known enough.

Uhm? Others. I don't know I'm torn at the moment. I mean, I expect everybody to have read Toni Morrison and Alice Walker. So you know, if you haven't, you should have. That's that. So, something else.

Really interesting, recently, is something called *The Science of Storytelling* by Will Storr. It's about mythos. It's about heroes’ journeys, writers’ journeys, but also about the actual kind of neurological needs to tell stories that we have as human beings. What defines us is that we tell stories. One of the last things that I did, 'cause I haven't been on stage for a while but I assistant directed the two Death of England shows, one-man shows, at the National Theatre, and we closed on our first night, on our press night, because of the pandemic, which is sad, because of lockdown, and I'd written this sort of big diary of how it was so weird opening during a time of plague. You know, theatre in the age of plague! But there was so much really interesting research I did for that which is all with the National Archives, and then because we were the first show in town after lockdown and we welcomed people back to the stage. When Rufus couldn’t speak, I would get up on this crazily reconfigured delivery stage, which is like this sort of lopsided amphitheatre, which was so significant, and you know I'd welcome people back to theatre and just say, ‘Thanks. Welcome back tonight,’ and people would cry. They were crying and I'd say, you know, something to the effect of, ‘The thing that makes us human is that we tell each other stories.’ And *The Science of Storytelling* tells you all about that. So that's my third.