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RD LOUNGE

Great Books

James Valentine shares a special book from his bookshelf

The Flashman series by George MacDonald Fraser



I kept hearing about the Flashman series.

People kept recommending it and eventually I found a tatty paperback falling apart in a secondhand bookshop for \$2. The best part: it was the first in the series.

Flashman introduces Harry Flashman, the famous bully in *Tom Brown's Schooldays* expelled from Rugby School for drunkenness. Flashman, a self-recognised cad and coward, then proceeds to be at every major event of the 19th century: the Crimean War, the American Civil War, the Indian Mutiny ... it's hilarious.

What I've enjoyed as much as the books themselves is the search for them in secondhand bookshops. I love the way the detail lurks underneath the plot and character; it never overwhelms them. The author knew exactly what he wanted to do with Flashman from book one. Brilliant.

James Valentine is a broadcaster and author of *The True History of Stuff: Volume One* (ABC Books, \$19.95). *The Flashman series* is published by Harper Collins.

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