Contemporary British Fiction:

The Whitbread Prize for the First Novel
The Whitbread Brewery established the Whitbread Prize for the First Novel in 1981 to recognize the best in contemporary British literature. A complete list of Whitbread winners is online at www.whitbread-bookawards.co.uk.

Atkinson, Kate. *Behind the Scenes at the Museum*. Ruby, born in York, England, in 1959, relates the story of her family living above shops in the 1960s and of her grandmother and mother living through the earlier wars. FICTION ATKINSON

Aw, Tash. *The Harmony Silk Factory*. Running an impressive Chinese silk factory in the Malaysian region throughout the first half of the 20th century, Johnny Lim finds his life complicated by his son’s belief that he uses the factory as a front for illegal businesses. FICTION AW

Chatwin, Bruce. *On the Black Hill*. Twin farmers born in 1900 live their entire lives together on the Welsh-English border. LARGE PRINT FICTION CHATWIN

Cusk, Rachel. *Saving Agnes*. Ready to embark on her new life as an adult in the London suburbs, Agnes Day acts as though her life is progressing smoothly, even while it seems increasingly out of her control. FICTION CUSK

D’Aguiar, Fred. *The Longest Memory*. In Virginia before the Civil War, a young male slave tries to escape, is caught, and dies from his punishment. In thirteen sections, people who knew the young man tell their stories. FICTION DAGUIAR

Foden, Giles. *The Last King of Scotland*. The reluctant personal physician to Idi Amin, Scottish civil servant Nicholas Garrigan is drawn despite himself to the charismatic but brutal dictator, until a plot against Amin awakens him to the unspeakable horror and cruelty of his regime. FICTION FODEN

Fuller, John. *Flying to Nowhere*. During the Middle Ages, Vane is sent as an emissary of the Bishop to a lonely Welsh island to investigate the disappearance of pilgrims who have come to visit its sacred well. FICTION FULLER

Kureishi, Hanif. *The Buddha of Suburbia*. Karim’s father becomes London’s Buddha of suburbia and draws his young son into an overwhelming world of punk rockers, eccentric theater people, and extravagant parties in this coming-of-age novel. FICTION KUREISH
Lanchester, John. *The Debt to Pleasure*. An impeccable Epicurean Englishman and lifelong Francophile recounts his past pleasures in Provence, in a meditation on food, vodka, and restaurant-going that becomes a dark satire on hedonism. FICTION LANCHES

Lebrecht, Norman. *The Song of Names*. The close friendship between Martin Simmonds and violin prodigy Dovidl Rappoport, two Jewish boys living in London between the 1930s and the end of World War II, is threatened by the unexpected disappearance of Dovidl on the eve of his debut performance. FICTION LEBRECH

Melville, Pauline. *The Ventriloquist’s Tale*. Set in Guyana in 1919, a teasing narrator explores the clash between European interlopers and the local people as a solar eclipse highlights the country’s cultural disparities. FICTION MELVILL

Pierre, D. B. C. *Vernon God Little*. In a small Texas town, 15 year old Vernon finds himself in trouble after his best friend Jesus kills sixteen of his classmates before committing suicide, as he becomes the target of vengeful townspeople and the media. FICTION PIERRE

Sayer, Paul. *The Comforts of Madness*. Inhabiting the world of the catatonic, Peter— as revealed through interior monologues— prefers not to participate in life, although his intelligence and sensitivity are clearly demonstrated in his honest attitude and lack of self-pity. FICTION SAYER

Smith, Zadie. *White Teeth*. Set in postwar London, this novel of the racial, political, and social upheaval of the last half-century follows two families— the Joneses and the Iqbals, both outsiders from within the former British empire— as they make their way in modern England. FICTION SMITH

Torrington, Jeff. *Swing Hammer Swing!* Set in Glasgow during the 1960s, Tom Clay, a rambling alcoholic and would-be novelist, contemplates his past and his future in the week before the wrecking crews tear down his old neighborhood. FICTION TORRING