

# Top top 10 fictional hunts

Adventure and escape. What better reason is there to open the pages of a book? As a young boy, I spent many years at boarding school where one of the things I most enjoyed was the time at the end of the day, just before lights out. In those precious moments, there was a rule of silence - 10 delicious, selfish minutes in which I could open a book and be anywhere. *Anyone*. I could fly through space, cross unforgiving deserts, forge through cruel jungles, navigate rough seas. I could slip into someone else's skin and become the hunter . . . or I could find myself in the shoes of the hunted.

## 1. [True Grit](#) by Charles Portiss

There isn't anything I don't love about this book. Mattie Ross is a unique and engaging narrator despite her aloof superiority, Rooster Cogburn is a gruff and mean drunk, and LaBoeuf is . . . well, he's just LaBoeuf. So when the three of them set out across the wilderness to hunt Tom Chaney – the man who murdered Mattie's father – you know you're in for an absolute treat. And the language is to die for.

## 2. [Danny Champion of the World](#) by Roald Dahl

This has always been my favourite Roald Dahl book – and not only because I share a name with the “champion of the world”. Brave and brilliant Danny lives in a caravan with his loving father, where they invent the most ingenious way to poach pheasants from Mr Hazel's estate. Their ultimate plan is to take every single pheasant, leaving none at all for the up-coming annual shooting party, and Danny hits on what he thinks is the perfect solution. Or is it?

‘My name is Inigo Montoya’... A still from the wonderful film adaptation of *The Princess Bride*. Photograph: Alamy

## 3. [The Princess Bride](#) by William Goldman

A super swashbuckling story filled with magic, fencing, monsters, giants, revenge, kidnap, battles of wits and, of course, true love. This book has everything stuffed into its pages. When Princess Buttercup is apparently kidnapped by agents of Guilder, Prince Humperdink of Florin sets out to hunt them down and find his bride. But there's more to Humperdink than

meets the eye, and the nefarious plot all leads back to his wicked plan to start a war between Guilder and Florin. Little does he know, however, that The Dread Pirate Roberts is also hunting the kidnappers. The infamous pirate is determined to find Buttercup, his one true love, and not even death can stop him. There's only one thing left to say – "As you wish".

#### **4. The Runaways by Victor Canning**

This is the first book in a trilogy I fell in love with when I was a boy. Young "Smiler" is accused of a crime he didn't commit, and ends up on the run, hunted by the police. He hopes to last long enough for his father to return from sea and put the record straight for him. Meanwhile, a cheetah named Yarra escapes from Longleat safari park and finds her way onto Salisbury plain to have her cubs in privacy. Both lives become intertwined as they strive to keep their freedom. Smiler proves himself to be a resourceful, resilient and very likeable leading character.

#### **5. Prisoners of the Sun by Herge**

Growing up, Tintin was an almost constant companion for me - with Snowy running along behind, of course. Prisoners of the Sun is the follow-up to The Seven Crystal Balls, in which dear Professor Calculus succumbs to a curse and is kidnapped after unearthing the tomb of a mummified Inca. In Prisoners of the Sun, Tintin and Captain Haddock set off to Peru track down their friend and bring him home. It's a rip-roaring adventure, filled with llamas, guano, mysterious ships, runaway trains, mountains, rope bridges, condors, avalanches, bears, jungles, crocodiles, snakes, ants, anteaters, Incas, waterfalls, eclipses . . . and more llamas. I mean, *really!* What else could you possibly want?

#### **6. The Hunger Games by Suzanne Collins**

I'm sure this doesn't need any explanation. Teenagers are forced to participate in an annual fight to the death in an arena designed by the tyrants in the Capitol. This year, the arena is designed to look like a forest – which is perfect for Katniss Everdeen, who is an accomplished hunter and a dead-eye with a bow and arrow. Cue a book that spawned two sequels, has been turned into a hugely successful film series and launched Panem into the stratosphere.

## 7. [Battle Royale](#) by Koushun Takami

The spiritual predecessor of The Hunger Games. Teenagers are forced to participate in an annual fight to the death on an island somewhere near Japan. Murder and mayhem ensue. This really is a brutal book, but if it's a hunt you want, then you'll find exactly what you're looking for.

## 8. [Rogue Male](#) by Geoffrey Household

This is, perhaps, the ultimate hunt, and the ultimate boy's own adventure. The unnamed main character considers himself to be an uber-talented hunter, and sets out to fix a European dictator in his sights. He tells himself that he does not intend to pull the trigger; it's only about the hunt. When he is captured, tortured, and finally escapes, the protagonist is forced to use his top-notch fieldcraft skills to evade recapture, return to England and survive on the run. And then he must ask himself the question once more – did he really intend to pull the trigger?

## 9. [Lord of the Flies](#) by William Golding

“Kill the pig! Cut his throat! Kill the pig! Bash him in!” You know the story – stranded on a desert island, a group of schoolboys gradually falls into savagery. Jack, the self-proclaimed leader of the hunters, leads the violence, but it soon becomes clear that killing pigs isn't enough. This book in three words? Brilliant, brilliant, brilliant. When you get to the end, flip back to the beginning and read it again!

## 10. [The Old Man and The Sea](#) by Ernest Hemingway

Take one lone fisherman, a small skiff on the Gulf, and the biggest fish you ever saw. Throw them together, add sharks, and you've got one of the most perfect, weather-beaten stories ever written. I once recommended this to someone who read it, shrugged, and said, “it's about a bloke who catches a fish”. But it is so much more. It is about dignity, determination, struggle, nature, courage, loyalty, friendship, loss, pride, exclusion, and so much more. I can't praise it highly enough.