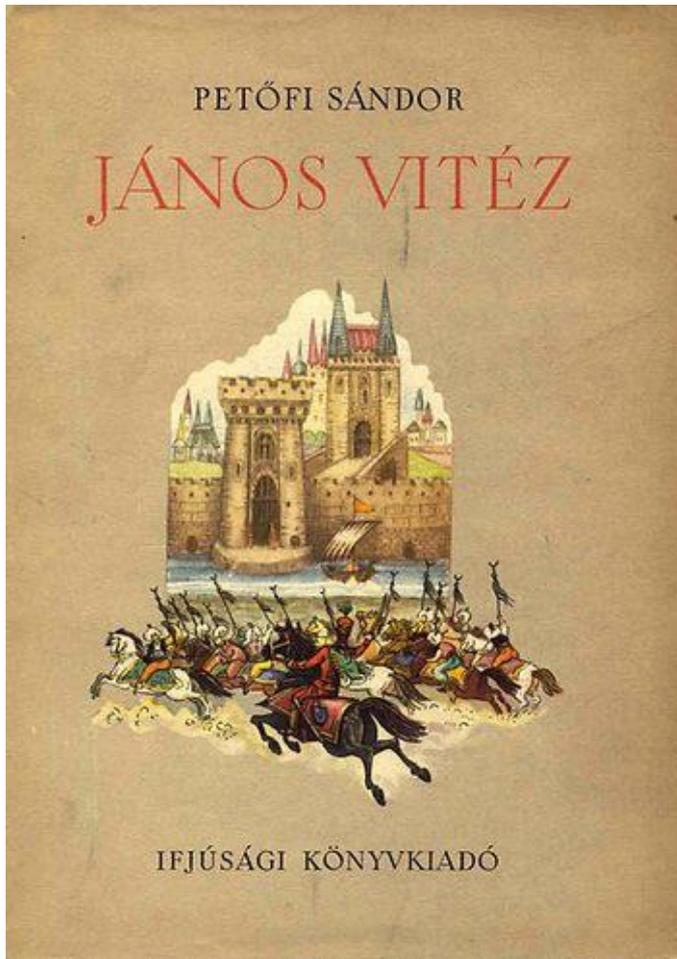


# Book Recommender

## Hungary



**John the Valiant** (János Vitéz) is an epic poem written in Hungarian by Sándor Petőfi in 1845. It is notable for its length, 370 quatrains divided into 27 chapters and for its wordplay.

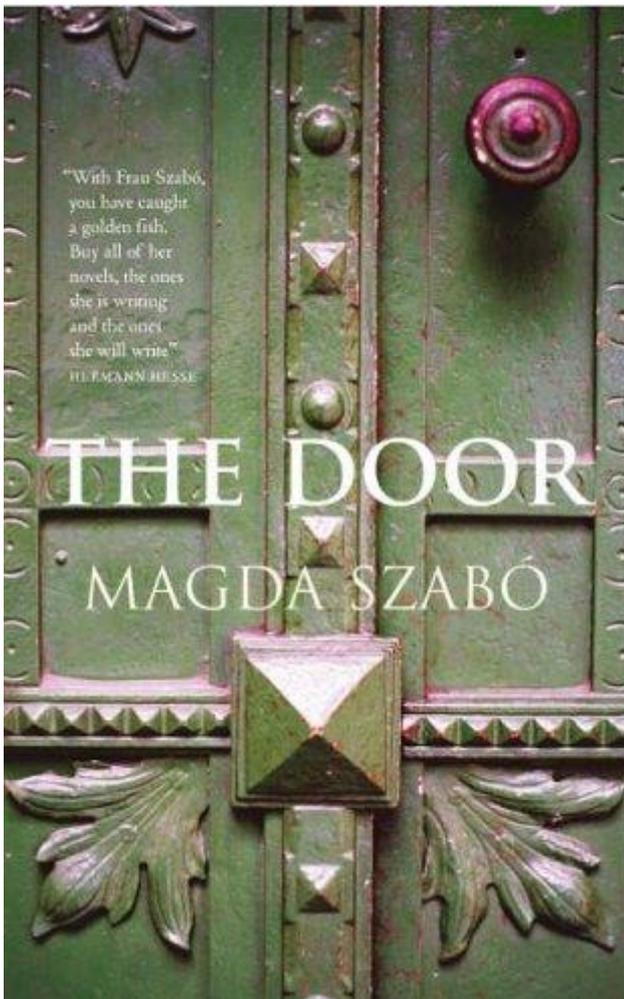
The poem is very popular in Hungary and it is a classic of Hungarian literature.

It was adapted into a musical in 1904 and later it was also adapted into an animated feature film directed by Marcell Jankovics in 1973.

The hero of the story is Johnny Corn (Kukorica Jancsi) who got his name from a cornfield where he had been found as a baby. He is in love with another orphan, a

girl named Nelly (Iluska). Johnny worked as a shepherd and one day while he is with her, all the sheep wander away. He has to escape from the village where he lives and he becomes a soldier (hussar). He fights bravely against many enemies in different battles, has a lot of adventures and he is rewarded with a lot of gold. Sadly, by the time he returns to his home village, his love has died. He then wants to die himself so he sets off on a series of extremely dangerous adventures. On his way he meets giants, witches, dragons and he reaches fairyland.

The story has a happy ending of course but in order to find out what it is you should read the poem. There is an English translation made by John Ridland.



**The Door** is a novel by Magda Szabó, who is one of the most famous Hungarian writers from the 20<sup>th</sup> century. She is the most translated author, with publications in 42 countries and over 30 languages.

Her book, *The Door* (*Az ajtó*) has been translated into English (twice already) and French. It was included in *The New York Times* 10 best books of 2015.

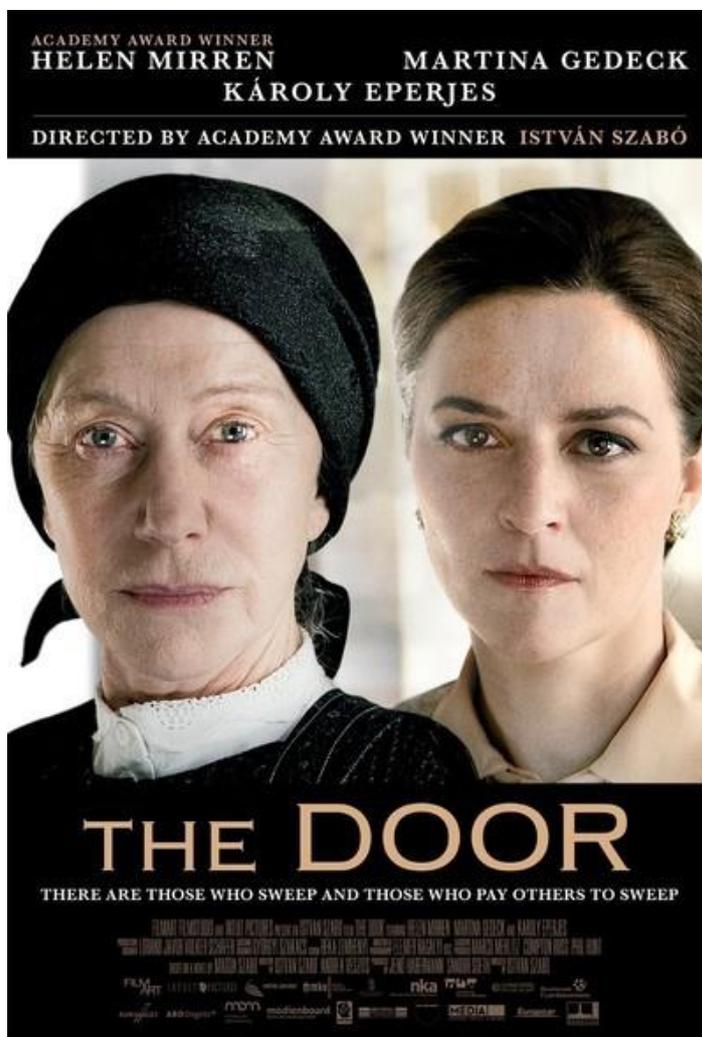
The story contains autobiographical elements, there are many similarities between the life of the author Magda, and the narrator Magda who happens to be a writer.

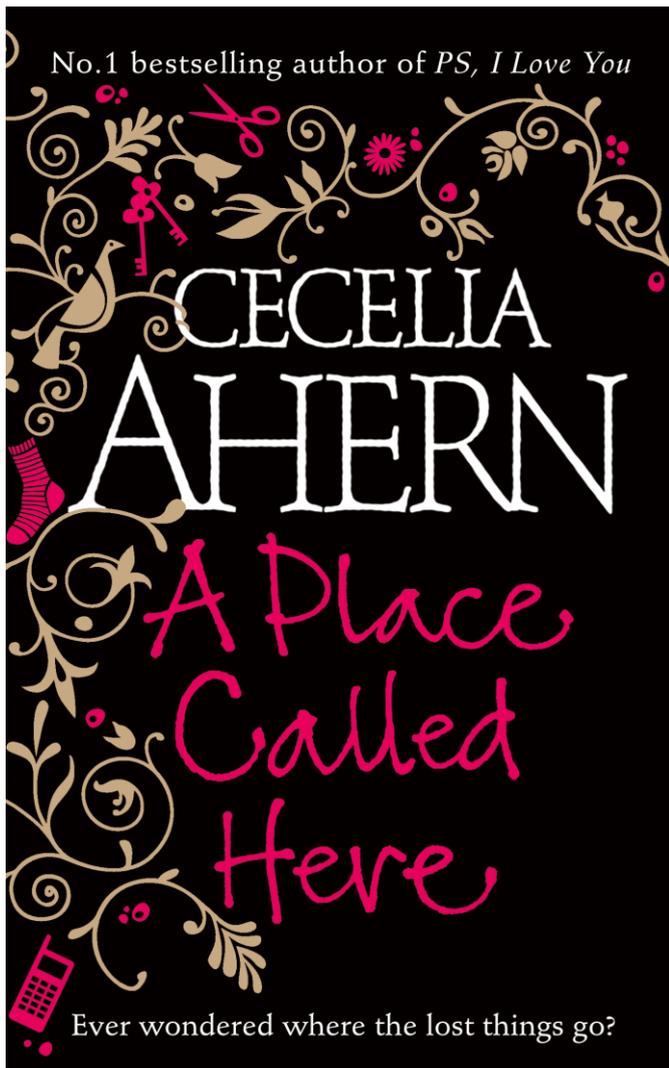
When the story begins, Magda has just come into favour with the government and her works are finally allowed to be published again. She realises that she must employ a housekeeper to be able to dedicate herself to writing full-time. A former classmate recommends an older woman named Emerence. Emerence agrees to come work for her on her own terms, but she will not, she informs Magda, just be a person to "wash the dirty linen" of whomever is willing to hire her. For several years, Magda and Emerence have a somewhat unconventional relationship. This relationship between the two women changes dramatically when Magda's husband suddenly becomes seriously ill. Magda, not thinking that Emerence cares about her personal life, takes her husband to the hospital for an operation without telling Emerence. When she returns, Emerence feels furiously betrayed. The two women stay up talking through the night, and get to know each other on a much deeper level than ever before. The two women open up to each other, and Magda learns many details of Emerence's life. Emerence develops so much trust for Magda that she allows her inside her house, an honour she has bestowed on nobody else in decades, not

even her three best friends or her own nephew. I'm not going to reveal the end of the story of course but you should know that it's not a fairy tale.

However, it's a powerful book conveying emotions and thoughts that can help anyone understand their own life better.

An English speaking film was made based on the book by István Szabó in 2012. The stars are Martina Gedeck and Helen Mirren in the film. It won the Michael Curtiz Audience Award at the Hungarian Film Festival of Los Angeles in November 2012.





Cecelia Ahern is probably best known for her book, *PS, I love you* which you might have read already so we would like to recommend another book of hers.

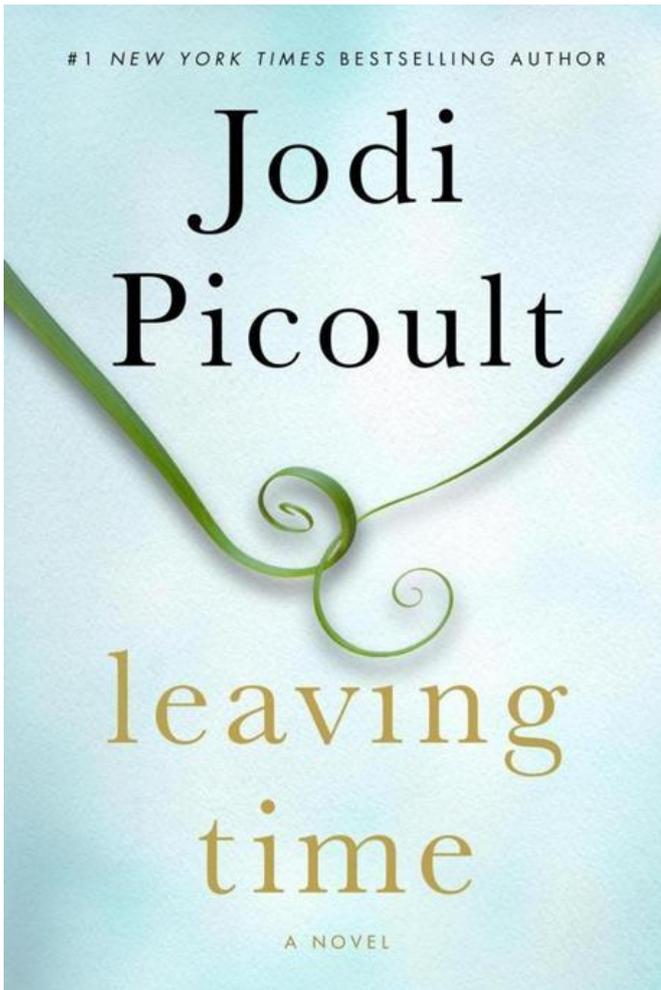
**A Place Called Here** is Ahern's 4<sup>th</sup> novel and was published in 2006. It is a magical story about the place where all the missing people and things go and about a woman who is in search of finding the missing.

This woman is Sandy Shortt, who has been obsessed with finding things which have been lost since her childhood rival, Jenny-May Butler went missing. Having worked for the Garda, the police force of the Republic of Ireland, she left her job to start an agency which looks for missing people.

A man named Jack Ruttle asks Sandy for help looking for his younger brother Donal, who went missing the year before. She agrees, never expecting to become missing herself as she discovers the world where everything which has ever been lost goes to, a place called Here.

Jack goes on a search for Sandy believing that she is the key to finding his brother but learning more about her personal life than he should. Meanwhile, Sandy's possessions keep getting lost from Here but found in this world. Something is bound to happen but the both of them have yet to know what it is.

A must read as it is a very exciting book.



Jodi Picoult is an American author who was awarded the New England Bookseller Award for fiction in 2003. She is a very popular writer these days as she has about 14 million copies of her books translated into 34 languages in print worldwide.

**Leaving Time** is a relatively new novel; it was published in 2014. It is set partially at a New England elephant sanctuary and in the savannahs of Africa, where herds of wild elephants roam.

When the novel opens, 13-year-old Jenna Metcalf is searching for her mother, Alice, an elephant researcher, who disappeared 10 years earlier in the wake of a tragic accident at the sanctuary. In hopes of finding clues

to her whereabouts, Jenna mines detailed journals her mother kept about her work. It's a lonesome quest, though. Her father has been in a psychiatric hospital since the incident and her grandmother, who has been taking care of Jenna, doesn't "want to go there," Jenna informs us. So Jenna solicits the help of Serenity Jones, a disgraced medium, and Virgil Stanhope, a hard-drinking private detective.

Leaving Time explores the mother-daughter relationship, be it elephant or human, and the idea that those we can't forget are never truly gone. A truly inspiring book.