

Selected Recommended Reading List for AP English Language and Composition

For this assignment, you are expected to choose challenging American literature of recognized importance. Here are some suggestions. If you choose any literature not on this list, get the teacher's approval. Woe unto him/her who turns in this assignment without having obtained approval; s/he will fail this assignment!

Adams, Henry, *The Education of Henry Adams in Novels*, 818.409 ADA

These are the best known works of Henry Adams, one of the most powerful and original minds to confront the American scene from the Civil War to the first World War. [The Education of Henry Adams](#) is on this reading list and is this anthology.

Ambrose, Stephen, *Band of Brothers*, FIC AMB

As grippingly as any novelist, preeminent World War II historian Stephen Ambrose tells the horrifying, hallucinatory saga of Easy Company, whose 147 members he calls the nonpareil combat paratroopers on earth circa 1941-45. Ambrose takes us along on Easy Company's trip from grueling basic training to Utah Beach on D-day, where a dozen of them turned German cannons into dynamited ruins resembling "half-peeled bananas," on to the Battle of the Bulge, the liberation of part of the Dachau concentration camp, and a large party at Hitler's "Eagle's Nest," where they drank the madman's (surprisingly inferior) champagne. Of Ambrose's main sources, three soldiers became rich civilians; at least eight became teachers; one became Albert Speer's jailer; one prosecuted Bobby Kennedy's assassin; another became a mountain recluse; the despised, sadistic C.O. who first trained Easy Company (and to whose strictness many soldiers attributed their survival of the war) wound up a suicidal loner whose own sons skipped his funeral. The Easy Company survivors describe the hell and confusion of any war.

Anderson, Sherwood, *Winesburg, Ohio*, FIC AND

[Winesburg, Ohio](#) depicts the strange, secret lives of the inhabitants of a small town. In "Hands," Wing Biddlebaum tries to hide the tale of his banishment from a Pennsylvania town, a tale represented by his hands. In "Adventure," lonely Alice Hindman impulsively walks naked into the night rain. Threaded through the stories is the viewpoint of George Willard, the young newspaper reporter who, like his creator, stands witness to the dark and despairing dealings of a community of isolated people.

Baldwin, James, *Go Tell It on the Mountain*, FIC BAL

What happens when you peel back the layers of damaged lives? What do you discover? *Go Tell It on the Mountain* is a young man's novel, as tightly coiled as a new spring, yet tempered by a maturing man's confidence and empathy. It's not a long book, and its action spans but a single day--yet the author packs in emotion, detail, and intimate revelation. Using as a frame the spiritual and moral awakening of 14-year-old John Grimes during a Saturday night service in a Harlem storefront church, Baldwin lays bare the secrets of a tormented black family during the depression. John's parents, praying beside him, both wrestle with the ghosts of their sinful pasts--Gabriel, a preacher of towering hypocrisy, fathered an illegitimate child during his first marriage down South and refused to recognize his doomed son; Elizabeth fell in love with a charming, free-spirited young man, followed him to New York, became pregnant with his son, and lost him before she could reveal her condition. Baldwin lays down the terrible similarities of these two blighted lives as the ironic context for their son John's dark night of the soul.

Baldwin, James, *If Beale Street Could Talk*, FIC BAL

Powerful novel of a young black couple and their brave struggle to live with dignity in a society riddled with hatred. Fonny, a talented young artist finds himself unjustly arrested and locked in New York's infamous Tombs. But his girlfriend, Tish, is determined to free him, and to have his baby, in this starkly realistic tale--a powerful indictment of American concepts of justice and punishment.

Bellamy, Edward, *Looking Backward: 2000-1887*, FIC BEL

Edward Bellamy's classic look at the future has been translated into over twenty languages and is the most

widely read novel of its time. A young Boston gentleman is mysteriously transported from the nineteenth to the twenty-first century--from a world of war and want to one of peace and plenty. This brilliant vision became the blueprint of utopia that stimulated some of the greatest thinkers of our age.

Bellow, Saul, *The Rain King*, FIC BEL

The novel examines the midlife crisis of Eugene Henderson, an unhappy millionaire. The story concerns Henderson's search for meaning. A larger-than-life 55-year-old who has accumulated money, position, and a large family, he nonetheless feels unfulfilled. He makes a spiritual journey to Africa, where he draws emotional sustenance from experiences with African tribes. Deciding that his true destiny is as a healer, Henderson returns home, planning to enter medical school.

Brown, Dee, *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*, 970.5 BRO

This extraordinary book changed the way Americans think about the original inhabitants of their country. Beginning with the Long Walk of the Navajos in 1860 and ending 30 years later with the massacre of Sioux men, women, and children at Wounded Knee in South Dakota, it tells how the American Indians lost their land and lives to a dynamically expanding white society. During these three decades, America's population doubled from 31 million to 62 million. Again and again, promises made to the Indians fell victim to the ruthlessness and greed of settlers pushing westward to make new lives. The Indians were herded off their ancestral lands into ever-shrinking reservations, and were starved and killed if they resisted. It is a truism that "history is written by the victors"; for the first time, this book described the opening of the West from the Indians' viewpoint.

Cather, Willa, *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, FIC CAT

Set in the mid-nineteenth century, this is the story of a priest who sets out to win the Southwest for Catholicism. Bishop Jean Latour is a patrician, intellectual, introverted man. It is a character study, exploring Latour's inner conflicts and his relationship with the land.

Cather, Willa, *My Antonia*, FIC CAT

The story of Antonia Shimerda is told by one of the friends of her childhood, Jim Burden, an orphaned boy from Virginia. Though he leaves the prairie, Jim never forgets the Bohemian girl who so profoundly influenced his life. An immigrant child of immigrant parents, Antonia's girlhood is spent working to help her parents wrest a living from the untamed land. Though in later years she suffers betrayal and desertion, through all the hardships of her life Antonia preserves a valor of spirit that no hardship can daunt or break.

Cather, Willa, *O Pioneers!*, FIC CAT

The classic story of the heroic Swedish pioneers in Nebraska in the 1880's. Alexandra Bergson's life is a success story told with a loving affirmation of the beauty of the land and the value of pioneer struggle. The novel also includes heartache. Alexandra's brothers turn out to be mean-spirited materialists and her beloved younger brother dies at the hand of a Czech farmer whose wife he has fallen in love with.

Cisneros, Sandra, *Caramelo*, FIC CIS

Celaya or "Lala," the youngest child of seven and the only daughter of Inocencio and Zoila Reyes, charts the family's movements back and forth across the border and through time in this sprawling, kaleidoscopic, Spanish-laced tale. The sensitive and observant Lala feels lost in the noisy shuffle, but she inherits the family stories from her grandmother, who comes from a clan of shawl makers and throughout her life has kept her mother's unfinished striped shawl, or caramelo rebozo, containing all the heartache and joy of her family. When she, and later Lala, wear the rebozo and suck on the fringes, they are reminded of where they come from, and those who came before them. In cramped and ever-changing apartments and houses, the teenaged Lala seeks time and space for self-exploration, finally coming to an understanding of herself through the prism of her grandmother. Cisneros was also the only girl in a family of seven, and this is clearly an autobiographical work. Its testaments to cross-generational trauma and rapture grow repetitive, but Cisneros's irrepressible enthusiasm, inspired riffs on any number of subjects (tortillas, telenovelas, La-Z-Boys, Woolworth's), hilarious accounts of family gatherings and pitch-perfect bilingual dialogue make this a landmark work.

Clark, Walter Van T., *The Ox-Bow Incident*, FIC CLA

This is a psychological study of corrupt leadership and mob rule. Set in Nevada in 1885, the story concerns the brutal lynching of three characters falsely accused of murder and theft. The strong-willed leader of the lynch mob, Major Tetley, easily takes advantage of the suppressed resentment and boredom of the townspeople. Here is the historical version of modern "road rage."

Conroy, Pat, *Lords of Discipline*, FIC CON

In a southern military academy, four cadets who have become blood brothers, will brace themselves for the brutal transition to manhood. Racism and corruption at a military academy unfolds in a powerful story.

Conroy, Pat, *My Losing Season*, 921 CON

The place is the Citadel in Charleston, South Carolina, that now famous military college, and in memory Conroy gathers around him his team to relive their few triumphs and humiliating defeats. In a narrative that moves seamlessly between the action of the season and flashbacks into his childhood, we see the author's love of basketball and how crucial the role of athlete is to all these young men who are struggling to find their own identity and their place in the world. In fast-paced exhilarating games, readers will laugh in delight and cry in disappointment. But as the story continues, we gradually see the self-professed "mediocre" athlete merge into the point guard whose spirit drives the team. He rallies them to play their best while closing off the shouts of "Don't shoot, Conroy" that come from the coach on the sidelines. For Coach Mel Thompson is to Conroy the undermining presence that his father had been throughout his childhood. And in these pages finally, heartbreakingly, we learn the truth about the Great Santini. In *My Losing Season* Pat Conroy has written an American classic about young men and the bonds they form, about losing and the lessons it imparts, about finding one's voice and one's self in the midst of defeat. And in his trademark language, we see the young Conroy walk from his life as an athlete to the writer the world knows him to be.

Cooper, James Fenimore, *The Deerslayer*, FIC COO

A tribute to the noble pioneer spirit in conflict with encroaching society. Natty Bumppo is an idealistic youth raised among the Indians but he has yet to meet the test. In a tale of violent action, the harsh realities of tribal warfare force him to kill his first foe and face torture at the stake.

Cooper, James Fenimore, *The Last of the Mohicans*, FIC COO

The classic portrait of a man of moral courage who severs all connections with a society whose values he can no longer accept. A brave woodsman, Natty Bumppo, and his loyal Mohican friends become embroiled in the bloody battle of the French and Indian War.

Crane, Stephen, *The Red Badge of Courage*, FIC CRA

This novel of the American Civil War is considered to be a masterwork for its perceptive depiction of warfare and of the psychological turmoil of the soldier. It tells of the experience of war from the point of view of an ordinary soldier.

Doctorow, E.L., *Ragtime*, FIC DOC

An extraordinary tapestry, *Ragtime* captures the spirit of America in the era between the turn of the century and the First World War. The story opens in 1906 in New Rochelle, New York, at the home of an affluent American family. One lazy Sunday afternoon, the famous escape artist Harry Houdini swerves his car into a telephone pole outside their house. And almost magically, the line between fantasy and historical fact, between real and imaginary characters disappears.

Dorris, Michael, *Yellow Raft in Blue Water*, FIC DOR

A powerful novel of three generations of American Indian women, each seeking her own identity while forever cognizant of family responsibilities, loyalty, and love. Rayona, half-Indian half-black daughter of Christine, reacts to feelings of rejection and abandonment by running away, not knowing that her mother had acted in a similar fashion some 15 years before. But family ties draw Rayona home to the Montana reservations they drew Christine to, and as they had drawn Ida many years earlier. As the three recount their lives, often repeating incidents but adding new perspectives, a total picture emerges.

Douglass, Frederick, *Narrative of the Life of an American Slave*, 921 DOU

In 1845, just seven years after his escape from slavery, the young Frederick Douglass published this powerful account of his life in bondage and his triumph over oppression. The book, which marked the beginning of Douglass's career as an impassioned writer, journalist, and orator for the abolitionist cause, reveals the terrors he faced as a slave, the brutalities of his owners and overseers, and his harrowing escape to the North. It has become a classic of American autobiography.

Dreiser, Theodore, *An American Tragedy*, FIC DRE

Corruption and destruction of one man who forfeits his life in desperate pursuit of success. The author based his realistic and vivid study on the actual case of Chester Gilete, who murdered Grace Brown at the Big Moose Lake in the Adirondacks in July 1906.

Dreiser, Theodore, *Sister Carrie*, FIC DRE

Sister Carrie tells the story of a rudderless but pretty small-town girl who comes to the big city filled with vague ambitions. She is used by men and uses them in turn to become a successful Broadway actress, while George Hurstwood, the married man who has run away with her, loses his grip on life and descends into beggary and suicide. *Sister Carrie* was the first masterpiece of the American naturalistic movement in its grittily factual presentation of the vagaries of urban life and in its ingenuous heroine, who goes unpunished for her transgressions against conventional sexual morality. The book's strengths include a brooding but compassionate view of humanity, a memorable cast of characters, and a compelling narrative storyline.

DuBois, W.E.B., *The Souls of Black Folk*, 301.451 DUB

One of the most influential and widely read texts in all of African American letters and history, *The Souls of Black Folk* combines some of the most enduring reflections on black identity, the meaning of emancipation, and African American culture. This new edition reprints the original 1903 edition of W. E. B. DuBois's classic work with the fullest set of annotations of any version yet published, together with two related essays, and numerous letters DuBois received and wrote concerning his widely read text.

Ellison, Ralph, *Invisible Man*, FIC ELL

The novel's hero remains optimistic despite enduring betrayal, manipulation, humiliation, and the loss of his illusions. Narrating his story from an underground cell, the anonymous protagonist explains that he is involuntarily invisible because society sees his stereotype rather than his true personality. The narrator recalls how he was raised in the South, named valedictorian of his high school graduation class, and invited to speak for the community's prominent white citizens. The evening's brutality convinces him that he will be rewarded if he does what white people expect, and this idea starts his identity crisis.

Faulkner, William, *Absalom, Absalom!*, FIC FAU

The story of Thomas Sutpen, an enigmatic stranger who came to Jefferson in the early 1830s to wrest his mansion out of the muddy bottoms of the north Mississippi wilderness. He was a man, Faulkner said, "who wanted sons and the sons destroyed him."

Faulkner, William, *As I Lay Dying*, FIC FAU

A novel concerning Addie Burden of Mississippi, her sons (Cash, Darl, Jewel, and Vardaman) and the family trip to bury her. A series of mishaps besets the family: in crossing a flooded river, the mules are drowned, Cash's leg is broken, and the coffin is upset and rescued by Jewel. Later the family rests at a farmhouse, where Darl sets fire to the barn in an attempt to destroy the rotting remains in the coffin. The family finally reaches Jefferson, where Addie is buried; Darl is taken to the insane asylum, and Anse acquires a new wife.

Faulkner, William, *Intruder in the Dust*, FIC FAU

This is the study of murder and the mass mind, of an accused Negro whose guilt or innocence becomes secondary to the larger moral problems of justice itself, of a boy just old enough to find his way into manhood under the stress of conflicting values.

Faulkner, William, *The Sound and the Fury*, FIC FAU

The subject of *The Sound and the Fury* is how the Compson family is falling apart. They are one of those august old Mississippi families that fell on hard times and wild eccentricity after the Civil War. But in fact what William Faulkner is really after in his legendary novel is the kaleidoscope of consciousness--the overwrought mind caught in the act of thought. His rich, dark, scandal-ridden story of squandered fortune, madness, congenital brain damage, theft, illegitimacy, and stoic endurance is told in the interior voices of three Compson brothers: first Benjy, the "idiot" man-child who blurs together three decades of sensations as he stalks the fringes of the family's former pasture; next Quentin, torturing himself brilliantly, obsessively over Caddy's lost virginity and his own failure to recover the family's honor as he wanders around the seedy fringes of Boston; and finally Jason, heartless, shrewd, sneaking, nursing a perpetual sense of injury and outrage against his outrageous family.

Fitzgerald, F. Scott, *The Great Gatsby*, FIC FIT

Here is the story of fabulously wealthy Jay Gatsby and his love for the beautiful Daisy Buchanan. It is a brilliant dramatization of the 1920's--the social and economic corruptions of the jazz age, Prohibition, gangsterism, blasé flappers and uprooted ness.

Frazier, Charles, *Cold Mountain*, FIC FRA

Cold Mountain is an extraordinary novel about a soldier's perilous journey back to his beloved at the end of the Civil War. At once a magnificent love story and a harrowing account of one man's long walk home.

Franklin, Benjamin, *Autobiography*, 921 FRA

One of the most popular works of American literature, this charming self-portrait has been translated into nearly every language. It covers Franklin's life up to his prewar stay in London as representative of the Pennsylvania Assembly, including his boyhood years, work as a printer, experiments with electricity, political career, much more.

Gaines, Ernest, *Gathering of Old Men*, FIC GAI

This is a powerful depiction of racial tensions arising over the death of a Cajun farmer at the hands of a black man. A sheriff is summoned to a sugarcane plantation, where he finds one young white woman, about 18 old black men, and one dead Cajun farmer.

Grisham, John, *A Painted House*, FIC GRI

Here there are hardscrabble farmers instead, and dirt-poor itinerant workers and a seven-year-old boy who grows up fast in a story as rich in conflict and incident as any previous Grisham and as nuanced as his very best. It's September 1952 in rural Arkansas when young narrator Luke Chandler notes that "the hill people and the Mexicans arrived on the same day." These folk are in Black Oak for the annual harvest of the cotton grown on the 80 acres that the Chandlers rent. The three generations of the Chandler family treat their workers more kindly than most farmers do, including engaging in the local obsession--playing baseball--with them, but serious trouble arises among the harvesters nonetheless. Most of it centers around Hank Spruill, a giant hillbilly with an equally massive temper, who one night in town beats a man dead and who throughout the book rubs up against a knife-wielding Mexican who is dating Hank's 17-year-old sister on the sly, leading to another murder. In fact, there's a mess of trouble in Luke's life, from worries about his uncle Ricky fighting in Korea to concerns about the nearby Latcher family and its illegitimate newborn baby, who may be Ricky's son. And then there are the constant fears about the weather, as much a character in this novel as any human, from the tornado that storms past the farm to the downpours that eventually flood the fields, ruining the crop and washing Luke and his family into a new life.

Hawthorne, Nathaniel, *The Scarlet Letter*, FIC HAW

Set in Puritan New England, the main character is Hester Prynne, a young woman who has borne an illegitimate child. It is considered a masterpiece of American literature and a classic moral study.

Heller, Joseph, *Catch 22*, FIC HEL

In this satirical novel, antihero Captain John Yossarian is stationed on an airstrip on a Mediterranean island in World War II and is desperate to stay alive. The "catch" involves a mysterious Air Force regulation which states that a man is considered insane if he requests to be relieved of his missions.

Hemingway, Ernest, *A Farewell to Arms*, FIC HEM

As a youth of 18, Ernest Hemingway was eager to fight in the Great War. Poor vision kept him out of the army, so he joined the ambulance corps instead and was sent to France. Then he transferred to Italy where he became the first American wounded in that country during World War I. Hemingway came out of the European battlefields with a medal for valor and a wealth of experience that he would, 10 years later, spin into literary gold with *A Farewell to Arms*. This is the story of Lieutenant Henry, an American, and Catherine Barkley, a British nurse. The two meet in Italy, and almost immediately Hemingway sets up the central tension of the novel: the tenuous nature of love in a time of war.

Hemingway, Ernest, *The Sun Also Rises*, FIC HEM

The story of a group of American and English patriots living in Paris and their excursion to Pamplona. It captures the angst of the post-World War I generation, known as the Lost Generation, and centers around the flamboyant Lady Brett Ashley and the hapless Jake Barnes. In an age of moral bankruptcy, spiritual dissolution, unrealized love and vanishing illusions, this is the Lost Generation.

Hemingway, Ernest, *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, FIC HEM

Timeless epic of Spanish Civil War portraying every facet of human emotions. This is the story of Robert Jordan, a young American attached to an antifascist guerilla unit in the mountains of Spain. It tells of loyalty and courage, love and defeat, and the tragic death of an ideal.

James, Henry, *Portrait of a Lady*, FIC JAM

When Isabel Archer, a beautiful, spirited American, is brought to Europe by her wealthy Aunt Touchett, it is expected that she will soon marry. But Isabel, resolved to determine her own fate, does not hesitate to turn down two eligible suitors. She then finds herself irresistibly drawn to Gilbert Osmond, who, beneath his veneer of charm and cultivation, is cruelty itself. A story of intense poignancy, Isabel's tale of love and betrayal still resonates with modern audiences.

James, Henry, *The Turn of the Screw*, FIC JAM

When a young lady goes to a big country house to teach two beautiful children, strange things start to happen and a terrible story of ghosts and danger begins.

Kerouac, Jack, *On the Road*, FIC KER

Poetic, open and raw, Kerouac's prose about the "beat generation of the 1950s" lays out a cross-country adventure as experienced by Sal Paradise, an autobiographical character. A writer holed up in a room at his aunt's house, Paradise gets inspired by Dean Moriarty (a character based on Kerouac's friend Neal Cassady) to hit the road and see America. From the moment he gets on the seven train out of New York City, he takes the reader through the highs and lows of hitchhiking, bonding with fellow explorers and opting for drink before food. First published in 1957, Kerouac's perennially hot story continues to express the restless energy and desire for freedom that makes people rush out to see the world.

Kesey, Ken, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, FIC KES

Randle Patrick McMurphy is a boisterous, brawling, fun-loving rebel who swaggers into the ward of a mental hospital and takes over... The contest starts as a sport but it soon develops into a grim struggle for the minds and hearts of the men, into an all-out war between two relentless opponents, Big Nurse and McMurphy.

Kidd, Sue Monk, *The Secret Life of Bees*, FIC KID

14-year-old Lily Owen, neglected by her father and isolated on their Georgia peach farm, spends hours imagining a blissful infancy when she was loved and nurtured by her mother, Deborah, whom she barely remembers. These consoling fantasies are her heart's answer to the family story that as a child, in unclear circumstances, Lily accidentally shot and killed her mother. All Lily has left of Deborah is a strange image of a Black Madonna, with the words "Tiburon, South Carolina" scrawled on the back. The search for a mother, and the need to mother oneself, are crucial elements in this well-written coming-of-age story set in the early 1960s against a background of racial violence and unrest. When Lily's beloved nanny, Rosaleen, manages to insult a group of angry white men on her way to register to vote and has to skip town, Lily takes the opportunity to go with her, fleeing to the only place she can think of--Tiburon, South Carolina--determined to find out more about her dead mother.

Kingsolver, Barbara, *The Poisonwood Bible*, FIC KIN

The *Poisonwood Bible* is the story told by the wife and four daughters of Nathan Price, the fierce, evangelical Baptist who takes his family and mission to the Belgian Congo in 1959. What follows is a suspense epic of one's family's tragic undoing and remarkable reconstruction over the course of three decades in postcolonial Africa.

Kingston, Maxine Hong, *The Woman Warrior*, 921 KIN

What is it like to grow up a girl in a family who values boys? How do family secrets affect a young girl? Here is an account of growing up female and Chinese American. "Woman Warrior" is a partly fictional work about Maxine Hong Kingston's girlhood as it was affected by the beliefs of her family. She is a California-born author, educated at U.C. Berkeley, and long time resident as a schoolteacher in Hawaii.

Krakauer, Jon, *Into Thin Air*, 796.52 KRA

Heroism and sacrifice triumph over foolishness, fatal error, and human frailty in this bone-chilling narrative in which the author recounts his experiences on last year's ill-fated, deadly climb. Accepting an assignment from *Outside* magazine to investigate whether it was safe for wealthy amateur climbers to tackle the mountain, Krakauer joined an expedition guided by New Zealander Rob Hall. But Krakauer got more than he bargained for when on summit day a blinding snowstorm caught four groups on the mountain's peaks. While Krakauer made it back to camp, eight others died, including Scott Fischer and Hall, two of the world's best mountaineers. Devastated by the disaster, Krakauer has written this compelling and haunting account.

Krakauer, Jon, *Into the Wild*, 917.9804 KRA

After graduating from Emory University in Atlanta in 1992, top student and athlete Christopher McCandless abandoned his possessions, gave his entire \$24,000 savings account to charity and hitchhiked to Alaska, where he went to live in the wilderness. Four months later, he turned up dead. His diary, letters and two notes found at a remote campsite tell of his desperate effort to survive, apparently stranded by an injury and slowly starving. They also reflect the posturing of a confused young man, raised in affluent Annandale, Va., who self-consciously adopted a Tolstoyan renunciation of wealth and return to nature. Krakauer, a contributing editor to *Outside* and *Men's Journal*, retraces McCandless's ill-fated antagonism toward his father, Walt, an eminent aerospace engineer. Krakauer also draws parallels to his own reckless youthful exploit in 1977 when he climbed Devils Thumb, a mountain on the Alaska-British Columbia border, partly as a symbolic act of rebellion against his autocratic father. In a moving narrative, Krakauer probes the mystery of McCandless's death.

Lewis, Sinclair, *Arrowsmith*, FIC LEW

As the son and grandson of physicians, Sinclair Lewis had a store of experiences and imparted knowledge to draw upon for *Arrowsmith*. Published in 1925, after three years of anticipation, the book follows the life of Martin Arrowsmith, a rather ordinary fellow who gets his first taste of medicine at 14 as an assistant to the drunken physician in his home town. It is Leora Tozer who makes Martin's life extraordinary. With vitality and love, she urges him beyond the confines of the mundane to risk answering his true calling as a

scientist and researcher. Not even her tragic death can extinguish her spirit or her impact on Martin's life.

Lewis, Sinclair, *Babbitt*, FIC LEW

Tale of a conniving, prosperous real estate man, George Follansbee Babbitt. He is unimaginative, self-important, and hopelessly middle class. He is dissatisfied and tries to alter the pattern of his life by flirting with liberalism and by entering a liaison with an attractive widow.

Lewis, Sinclair, *Main Street*, FIC LEW

This novel captures the humdrum existence of a small American town and its inhabitants. Carol Milford, a girl of quick intelligence but no particular talent, after graduation from college, meets and marries Will Kennicott, a sober, kindly, unimaginative physician of Gopher Prairie, Minnesota, who tells her that the town needs her.

Malamud, Bernard, *The Assistant*, FIC MAL

Story of a secret love between a desperate man and the daughter of his employer. Winner of the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction.

Malamud, Bernard, *The Fixer*, FIC MAL

Winner of the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award, this is the story of Yakov Bok, accused of murder as part of an anti-Semitic movement, and how he becomes a hero.

Malamud, Bernard, *The Natural*, FIC MAL

What happens when you tell everyone you want to be the greatest player that ever lived? Roy Hobbs, the protagonist of *The Natural*, makes the mistake of pronouncing aloud his dream: to be the best there ever was. Such hubris, of course, invites divine intervention, but the brilliance of Bernard Malamud's novel is the second chance it offers its hero, elevating him--and his story--into the realm of myth.

Mason, Bobbie Anne, *In Country*, FIC MAS

Sam, 17, is obsessed with the Vietnam War and the effect it has had on her life losing a father she never knew and now living with Uncle Emmett, who seems to be suffering from the effects of Agent Orange. In her own forthright way, she tries to sort out why and how Vietnam has altered the lives of the vets of Hopewell, Kentucky. Her untempered curiosity and imagination sprint off in all directions as she examines closely the often undiscussed, but always noticed, aspects of daily life. In this coming-of-age novel, Sam ponders many problems, among them Emmett's crusty, salve-covered pimples, veteran Tom's inability to have an erection and her good friend Dawn's pregnancy. Although Sam lives in a disheveled, tawdry house, she brings a freshness of spirit to the way she scrutinizes and revels in life. When she wants to understand living conditions in the Vietnam jungles, she decides she has to experience it, so spends the night beside a local swamp. A harshly realistic, well-written look at the Vietnam War as well as the story of a young woman maturing.

McCarthy, Cormac, *Crossing*, FIC McC

Sixteen-year-old Billy Parham is obsessed with trapping a renegade wolf that has crossed the border from Mexico to raid his father's cattle ranch. By the time he finally succeeds, Billy has formed such a close bond with his prey that he decides to return the wolf to its home, and the two head off into the mountains. Billy returns months later to find that his parents have been murdered by horse thieves. He abducts his kid brother from a foster home, and they ride into Mexico to retrieve their property, encountering gypsies, desperadoes, and itinerant philosophers along the way. Essentially a boy's adventure story written for adults, [The Crossing](#) is thematically related to the award-winning bestseller [All The Pretty Horses](#), but it is not a sequel.

Melville, Herman, *Moby-Dick*, FIC MEL

Moby Dick, the great white whale, is pursued by the monomaniacal Captain Ahab, whose ivory leg is testimony to their previous encounter. The crew of Ahab's ship, the Pequod, is composed of a mixture of

racers and religions, including the God-fearing mate Starbuck; three primitive harpooners; the Black cabin boy; and the fire-worshipping Parsee.

Miller, Arthur, *Death of a Salesman*, 812.52 MIL

This play is the genuine article--it's got the goods on the human condition, all packed into a day in the life of one self-deluded, self-promoting, self-defeating soul. The tragedy of Loman the all-American dreamer and loser works eternally, on the page as on the stage.

Mitchell, Margaret, *Gone With the Wind*, FIC MIT

Gone with the Wind is a compelling and entertaining novel. It was the sweeping story of tangled passions and the rare courage of a group of people in Atlanta during the time of Civil War that brought those cinematic scenes to life. The reason the movie became so popular was the strength of its characters--Scarlett O'Hara, Rhett Butler, and Ashley Wilkes--all created here by the deft hand of Margaret Mitchell, in this, her first novel.

Morrison, Toni, *Sula*, FIC MOR

This novel traces the lives of two black heroines from their growing up together in a small Ohio town, through their divergent paths through womanhood, to their ultimate confrontation and reconciliation. Here is the unforgettable rendering of what it means and costs to exist and survive as a black woman in America.

Morrison, Toni, *Beloved*, FIC MOR

In this Pulitzer prize winning novel, is a dense, complex story that yields up its secrets one by one. As Toni Morrison takes us deeper into Sethe's history and her memories, the horrifying circumstances of her baby's death start to make terrible sense. And as past meets present in the shape of a mysterious young woman about the same age as Sethe's daughter would have been, the narrative builds inexorably to its powerful, painful conclusion. Beloved may well be the defining novel of slavery in America, the one that all others will be measured by.

Morrison, Toni, *Song of Solomon*, FIC MOR

A literary masterpiece about four generations of black life in America. It is a world we enter through the present, through Macon Dead Jr., son of the richest black family in a Midwestern town. We enter on the day of his birth and see Macon growing up in his father's money-haunted, death-haunted house with his silent sisters and strangely, passive mother.

Neihardt, John G., *Black Elk Speaks*, 921 BLA

This life story of a holy man of the Oglala Sioux, Black Elk, is considered a North American bible of all tribes. Here is the story of a Native American who lived during the tragic decades of the Custer battle, the ghost dance, and the Wounded Knee Massacre. He offers a profound vision of the unity of all creation.

Nordhoff and Hall, *Bounty Trilogy*, FIC NOR

Classic saga of men and the sea includes Mutiny on the Bounty, Men Against the Sea, and Pitcairn's Island.

Norris, Frank, *The Octopus*, FIC NOR

Based on an actual, bloody dispute between a wheat farmer and the Southern Pacific Railroad in 1880, *The Octopus* is a Stunning novel of the waning days of the frontier West. To the tough-minded and self-reliant farmers, the monopolistic, land-grabbing railroad represented everything they despised: consolidation, organization, conformity. But Norris idealizes no one in this epic depiction of the volatile situation, for the farmers themselves ruthlessly exploited the land, and in their hunger for larger holdings they resorted to the same tactics used by the railroad: subversion, coercion, and outright violence.

O'Brien, Tim, *Going After Cacciato: A Novel*, FIC OBR

Winner of the 1979 National Book Award, *Going After Cacciato* captures the peculiar blend of horror and hallucinatory comedy that marked this strangest of wars. Reality and fantasy merge in this fictional account of one private's sudden decision to lay down his rifle and begin a quixotic journey from the jungles of

Indochina to the streets of Paris. Will Cacciato make it all the way? Or will he be yet another casualty of a conflict that seems to have no end? In its memorable evocation of men both fleeing and meeting the demands of battle, *Going After Cacciato* stands as much more than just a great war novel. Ultimately it's about the forces of fear and heroism that do battle in the hearts of us all.

O'Brien, Tim, *Things They Carried*, SC OBR

The Things They Carried depicts the men of Alpha Company: Jimmy Cross, Henry Dobbins, Rat Kiley, Mitchell Sanders, Norman Bowker, Kiowa, and of course, the character Tim O'Brien who has survived his tour in Vietnam to become a father and writer at the age of forty-three. They battle the enemy (or maybe more the idea of the enemy), and occasionally each other. In their relationships we see their isolation and loneliness, their rage and fear. They miss their families, their girlfriends and buddies; they miss the lives they left back home. Yet they find sympathy and kindness for strangers (the old man who leads them unscathed through the mine field, the girl who grieves while she dances), and love for each other, because during the Vietnam War they are the only family they have. We hear the voices of the men and build images upon their dialogue. The way they tell stories about others, we hear them telling stories about themselves. With the creative verve of the greatest fiction and the intimacy of a searing autobiography, *The Things They Carried* is a testament to the men who risked their lives in America's most controversial war. It is also a mirror held up to the frailty of humanity. Ultimately *The Things They Carried* and its myriad protagonists call to order the courage, determination, and luck we all need to survive.

O'Connor, Flannery, *Three (Everything That Rises Must Converge)*, FIC OCO

Three great works are included: (1) *Wise Blood* evokes a terrifying world as it reveals a weird relationship between a sensual girl, a conniving widow, and a young man who deliberately blinds himself; (2) *The Violent Bear It Away* tells of a strangely decadent family--three generations obsessed by guilt and driven to violence; and (3) *Everything That Rises Must Converge* is a collection about eroding family relationships, individuals grappling with their sense of place and race relations.

O'Connor, Flannery, *Collected Works (A Good Man is Hard to Find)*, 810.9 OCO

The story begins with the grandmother trying to convince her family to cancel a trip to Florida, because of a vicious criminal who is on the lam somewhere in the Southern states. Everyone in her family ignores her except for her granddaughter, who mocks her. The family does take the trip and, in an ironic twist of fate, the father, who is grandmother's son, reluctantly agrees to take a fatal detour down a dirt road that grandmother insists leads to an old plantation she once visited. On this road, the cat that grandmother secretly brought along in the car attacks the father, causing an accident. While recovering from the accident and deciding what next step to take, the family is visited by the Misfit, the very criminal whom the grandmother feared meeting before the family began their trip.

O'Neill, Eugene, *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, 812.5 ONE

Completed in 1940, it is an autobiographical play Eugene O'Neill wrote that--because of the highly personal writing about his family--was not to be released until 25 years after his death, which occurred in 1953. But since O'Neill's immediate family had died in the early 1920s, his wife allowed publication of the play in 1956. Besides the history alone, the play is fascinating in its own right. It tells of the "Tyrones"--a fictional name for what is clearly the O'Neills. Theirs is not a happy tale: The youngest son (Edmond) is sent to a sanitarium to recover from tuberculosis; he despises his father for sending him; his mother is wrecked by narcotics; and his older brother by drink. In real-life these factors conspired to turn O'Neill into who he was--a tormented individual and a brilliant playwright.

Picoult, Jodi, *Salem Falls*, FIC PIC

Loosely based on *The Crucible*: A handsome stranger comes to the sleepy New England town of Salem Falls in hopes of burying his past: once a teacher at a girls' prep school, Jack St. Bride was destroyed when a student's crush sparked a powder keg of accusation. Now, washing dishes for Addie Peabody at the Do-Or-Diner, he slips quietly into his new routine, and Addie finds this unassuming man fitting easily inside her heart. But amid the rustic calm of Salem Falls, a quartet of teenage girls harbor dark secrets -- and they maliciously target Jack with a shattering allegation. Now, at the center of a modern-day witch hunt, Jack is

forced once again to proclaim his innocence: to a town searching for answers, to a justice system where truth becomes a slippery concept written in shades of gray, and to the woman who has come to love him.

Rand, Ayn, *The Fountainhead*, FIC RAN

Can one man dare to be different? This is the story of the struggle of genius architect Howard Roark--said to be based on Frank Lloyd Wright--as he confronts conformist mediocrity. In the author's world, suppression of individual creativity is the greatest evil. Roark is expelled from architectural school for his unique ideas, but he pursues his vision any way.

Rees, Celia, *Witch Child*, FIC REE

Enter the world of Mary Newbury, where being different can cost a person her life. Hidden until now in the pages of her secret diary, fourteen-year-old Mary's story begins as she flees the English witch-hunts to settle in an American colony. How long can she hide her true nature from the Puritans? How long can she keep running?

Robinson, Marilynne, *Gilead*, FIC ROB

Reverend John Ames of Gilead, Iowa, a grandson and son of preachers, now in his seventies, is afraid he hasn't much time left to tell his young son about his heritage. And so he takes up his pen, as he has for decades--he estimates that he's written more than 2,000 sermons--and vividly describes his prophetlike grandfather, who had a vision that inspired him to go to Kansas and "make himself useful to the cause of abolition," and the epic conflict between his fiery grandfather and his pacifist father. He recounts the death of his first wife and child, marvels over the variegated splendors of earth and sky, and offers moving interpretations of the Gospel. And then, as he struggles with his disapproval and fear of his namesake and shadow son, Jack, the reprobate offspring of his closest friend, his letter evolves into a full-blown apologia punctuated by the disturbing revelation of Jack's wrenching predicament, one inexorably tied to the toxic legacy of slavery. "For me writing has always felt like praying," discloses Robinson's contemplative hero, and, indeed, John has nearly as much reverence for language and thought as he does for life itself. Millennia of philosophical musings and a century of American history are refracted through the prism of Robinson's exquisite and uplifting novel as she illuminates the heart of a mystic, poet, and humanist.

Rolvaag, O.E., *Giants in the Earth*, FIC ROL

What was it like to be a pioneer settling untamed territory in America? This is the classic story of a Norwegian pioneer family's struggle with the land and the elements of the Dakota territory as they try to make a new life in America.

Russo, *Empire Falls*, FIC RUS

Wealthy, controlling matriarch Francine Whiting lives in an incongruous Spanish-style mansion across the river from smalltown Empire Falls, dominated by a long-vacant textile mill and shirt factory, once the center of her husband's family's thriving manufacturing dominion. In his early 40s, passive good guy Miles Roby, the son of Francine's husband's long-dead mistress, seems helpless to escape his virtual enslavement as longtime proprietor of the Whiting-owned Empire Grill, the town's most popular eatery, which Francine has promised to leave him when she dies. Miles's wife, Janine, is divorcing him and has taken up with an aging health club entrepreneur. In her senior year in high school, their creative but lonely daughter, Tick, is preoccupied by her parents' foibles and harassed by the bullying son of the town's sleazy cop who, like everyone else, is a puppet of the domineering Francine. Struggling to make some sense of her life, Tick tries to befriend a boy with a history of parental abuse. To further complicate things, Miles's brother, David, is suspected of dealing marijuana, and their rascally, alcoholic father is a constant annoyance. Miles and David's secret plan to open a competing restaurant runs afoul of Francine just as tragedy erupts at the high school.

Salinger, J.D., *The Catcher in the Rye*, FIC SAL

The hero-narrator is a sixteen year-old named Holden Caulfield. After he is expelled from his prep school, he goes underground in New York for three days. Confused and disillusioned, he searches for truth and rails against the "phoniness" of the adult world. He ends up exhausted and emotionally ill in a psychiatrist's office. After he recovers, he tells his story in this novel.

Schlosser, Eric, *Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All American Meal*, 394.1 SCH

Schlosser's incisive history of the development of American fast food indicts the industry for some shocking crimes against humanity, including systematically destroying the American diet and landscape, and undermining our values and our economy. The first part of the book details how fast food in Southern California became important, assessing the impact on people in the West in general. The second half looks at the product itself: where it is manufactured (in a handful of enormous factories), what goes into it (chemicals, feces) and who is responsible (monopolistic corporate executives). In harrowing detail, the book explains the process of beef slaughter and confirms almost every urban myth about what in fact "lurks between those sesame seed buns." Given the estimate that the typical American eats three hamburgers and four orders of french fries each week, and one in eight will work for McDonald's in the course of their lives, few are exempt from the insidious impact of fast food. Throughout, Schlosser fires these and a dozen other hair-raising statistical bullets into the heart of the matter. While cataloguing assorted evils with the tenacity and sharp eye of the best investigative journalist, he uncovers a cynical, dismissive attitude to food safety in the fast food industry and widespread circumvention of the government's efforts at regulation enacted after Upton Sinclair's similarly scathing novel, *The Jungle*, exposed the meat-packing industry 100 years ago.

Shaara, Michael, *Killer Angels*, FIC SHA

This novel reveals more about the Battle of Gettysburg than any piece of learned nonfiction on the same subject. Michael Shaara's account of the three most important days of the Civil War features deft characterizations of all of the main actors, including Lee, Longstreet, Pickett, Buford, and Hancock. The most inspiring figure in the book, however, is Col. Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain, whose 20th Maine regiment of volunteers held the Union's left flank on the second day of the battle. This unit's bravery at Little Round Top helped turned the tide of the war against the rebels. There are also plenty of maps, which convey a complete sense of what happened July 1-3, 1863. Reading about the past is rarely so much fun as on these pages.

Sinclair, Upton, *The Jungle*, FIC SIN

The author vividly depicts factory life in Chicago in the first years of the 20th century. The horrors of the slaughterhouse, their barbarous working conditions...the crushing poverty, the disease and despair--he revealed all through the eyes of Jurgis Rudkus, a young immigrant who came to the New World to build a home for himself and his family.

Smiley, Jane, *A Thousand Acres*, FIC SMI

The vast and beautiful landscape of a thousand-acre farm is where Jane Smiley begins her Pulitzer Prize-winning novel. Scanning the countryside through a fish eye lens, the novel brings into focus a small barbecue party where a decision has been made that will break down the frail framework that has held together a seemingly idyllic and prosperous third-generation farm family. The focus narrows as Jane Smiley delves into these complex, trapped characters blindly leading themselves into unchangeable situations. Reminiscent of Shakespeare's *King Lear*, the story revolves around three daughters and their father, Larry, who sees them as one entity with no personality, their only reason for existence being to serve him. Ginny, the protagonist, her indecision swinging like a pendulum, selflessly wants to please everyone. Rose, the witty, sarcastic middle sister, is at first the only person with whom Ginny can identify. The confident Caroline left the farm to become a lawyer; now she drifts through Ginny's and Rose's lives like an outsider. Just when it seems that the reader knows everything about these complex characters, Jane Smiley sneaks up from behind and exposes another layer of their lives. Vivid and unsettling, *A Thousand Acres* takes us to the edge of unbelievable desperation and makes us question whether anyone's life is what it seems.

Steinbeck, John, *East of Eden*, FIC STE

The novel highlights the conflicts of two generations of brothers; the first being the kind, gentle Adam Trask and his wild brother Charles. Adam eventually marries Cathy Ames, an evil, manipulative, and beautiful prostitute; she betrays him, joining Charles on the very night of their wedding. Later, after giving birth to twin boys, she shoots Adam and leaves him to return to her former profession. In the shadow of this heritage Adam raises their sons, the fair-haired, winning, yet intractable Aron, and the dark, clever Caleb. This second generation of brothers vie for their father's approval. In bitterness Caleb reveals the truth about their mother to Aron, who then joins the army and is killed in France. The novel is a symbolic recreation of the biblical story of Cain and Abel woven into a history of California's Salinas Valley.

Steinbeck, John, *The Grapes of Wrath*, FIC STE

Driven from their Oklahoma farm by the encroachment of large agricultural interests, the Joad family sets out, like generations before them, to the promised land of California. As they travel across the country, joined by countless other unwilling migrants, the Joads confront the naked realities of an America divided into Haves and Have-nots.

Steinbeck, John, *In Dubious Battle*, FIC STE

Observe social unrest and a young man's struggle for identity in this fast-paced novel. In *Dubious Battle* is set in California's apple country, where a strike by migrant workers against landowners spirals out of control. Caught up in the upheaval is Jim Nolan, a once aimless man who finds himself in the course of the strike, briefly becomes its leader, and is ultimately crushed in its service.

Steinbeck, John, *Sweet Thursday*, FIC STE

In Monterey, California, *Sweet Thursday* is what they call the day after Lousy Wednesday, which is one of those days that is naturally bad. Returning to the scene of Cannery Row, the weedy lots and junk heaps and flophouses of Monterey, Steinbeck once more focuses on everyday life of post-World War II.

Steinbeck, John, *To a God Unknown*, FIC STE

As his father lies dying, Joseph Wayne decides to trade his Vermont farm for a new life in California. Once established on his ranch, he comes to revere a huge tree as the embodiment of his father's spirit. Joseph's brothers and their wives join him, and their farms prosper. Then one of the brothers, repelled by Joseph's reverence for the tree, cuts it down. Consequences follow -- harsh and severe. In *TO A GOD UNKNOWN*, one of his earliest novels, Steinbeck uses the Western American experience as a way of exploring man's relationships to his environment -- a theme that would come to characterize much of his later work.

Steinbeck, John, *The Winter of Our Discontent*, FIC STE

Ethan Hawley, a descendant of proud New England sea captains, works as a clerk in the grocery store owned by an Italian immigrant. His wife is restless: his teenaged children are troubled and unhappy, hungry for the tantalizing material comforts he cannot provide. Then one day, in a moment of moral crisis, Ethan decides to take a holiday from his own morals.

Stone, Irving, *Love is Eternal*

In Irving Stone's historical novel about Mary Todd, Love is Eternal, the future Mrs. Lincoln confides to her cousin Ann that she might marry a Springfield, Illinois, lawyer because he has a promising political future and might someday be president.

Stowe, Harriet Beecher, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, FIC STO

This is a book that changed history. Harriet Beecher Stowe was appalled by slavery, and she took one of the few options open to nineteenth century women who wanted to affect public opinion: she wrote a novel, a huge, enthralling narrative that claimed the heart, soul, and politics of pre-Civil War Americans. It is unabashed propaganda and overtly moralistic, an attempt to make whites - North and South - see slaves as mothers, fathers, and people with (Christian) souls. In a time when women might see the majority of their children die, Harriet Beecher Stowe portrays beautiful Eliza fleeing slavery to protect her son. In a time when many whites claimed slavery had "good effects" on blacks, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* paints pictures of

three plantations, each worse than the other, where even the best plantation leaves a slave at the mercy of fate or debt. By twentieth-century standards, her propaganda verges on melodrama, and it is clear that even while arguing for the abolition of slavery she did not rise above her own racism. Yet her questions remain penetrating even today: "Is man ever a creature to be trusted with wholly irresponsible power?".

Tan, Amy, *Joy Luck Club*, FIC TAN

This novel is structured around the stories of four pairs of Chinese immigrant mothers and their American-born daughters. The first and last segments tell the mother's stories in China and in America. The middle cradles the daughter's experiences as children and as Chinese American women. The author uses this structure to communicate a sense of mother and daughter connectedness that eventually resolves generational differences and conflicts.

Thoreau, Henry, *Walden*, 818.309 THO

In August 1854, Houghton Mifflin's predecessor, Ticknor & Fields, published a book called *Walden; or, Life in the Woods*, by a little-known writer named Henry Thoreau. At the time the book was largely ignored, but it has gone on to become one of the most widely read and influential works ever published, not only in this country but throughout the world. Enjoy this record written by an individualist and a lover of nature; Thoreau describes his Robinson Crusoe existence, bare of creature comforts but rich in contemplation of the wonders of the natural world and the ways of man.

Thoreau, Henry, *Civil Disobedience*, 818.309 THO

An essay by Henry Thoreau. Its major premise is "that government is best which governs least." Thoreau asserts that a man's first loyalty is to his own nature; true to himself, he may then be true to a government. The essay influenced Gandhi's doctrine of passive resistance.

Twain, Mark, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, FIC TWA

Huck's adventures on a raft on the Mississippi River begin with his escape from his drunken, brutal father. Huck meets up with Jim, a runaway slave, and what follows is their story downstream and occasional encounters with town life along the banks of the river. The novel is also a penetrating social commentary that reveals corruption, moral decay, and intellectual impoverishment. Through Jim, Huck learns about the dignity and worth of human life.

Tyler, Anne, *Accidental Tourist*, FIC TYL

Macon Leary, a travel writer who hates to travel, is about to embark on a surprising journey. Grounded by loneliness, comfort, and a somewhat odd domestic life, Macon encounters "love" in the unlikely shape of a fuzzy-harried dog-obedience trainer.

Uhry, Alfred, *Driving Miss Daisy*, 812.54 UHR

An elderly Jewish widow living in Atlanta can no longer drive. Her son insists she allow him to hire a driver, which in the 1950s meant a black man. She resists any change in her life but, Hoke, the driver is hired by her son. She refuses to allow him to drive her anywhere at first, but Hoke slowly wins her over with his native good graces. It covers over twenty years of the pair's life together as they slowly build a relationship that transcends their differences.

Updike, John, *Rabbit, Run*, FIC UPD

A frank treatment of a former high school basketball star's failure to deal with the adult world. On impulse, he deserts his wife and at 26 years old struggles to take responsibility for his life.

Vonnegut, Kurt, *Cat's Cradle*, FIC VON

Commentary on modern man and his madness. An apocalyptic tale of this planet's ultimate fate, it features a midjet as the protagonist.

Vonnegut, Kurt, *Slaughterhouse Five*, FIC VON

One of Vonnegut's major works, this is an apocalyptic tale of the planet's ultimate fate, featuring a cast of unlikely heroes. One of Vonnegut's most entertaining novels, it is filled with scientists and G-men and even ordinary folks caught up in the game. These assorted characters chase each other around in search of the world's most important and dangerous substance, a new form of ice that freezes at room temperature.

Walker, Alice, *The Color Purple*, FIC WAL

In this Pulitzer prize winning novel we discover that life wasn't easy for Celie. But she knew how to survive, needing little to get by. Then her husband's lover, a flamboyant blues singer, barreled into her world and gave Celie the courage to ask for more--to laugh, to play, and finally, to love.

Walls, Jeannette, *The Glass Castle: a memoir*, 921 WAL

How do you make a sad memory into art? The Glass Castle is the memoir of Jeannette Walls, a look into a deeply dysfunctional family. When her father was sober, he was brilliant and charming, teaching his children physics, geology, and how to embrace life fearlessly. But when he drank, he was dishonest and destructive. Her mother was a free spirit who hated homemaking and didn't want the responsibility of raising a family. The Walls children learned to take care of themselves. They fed, clothed and protected one another, and eventually found their way to New York. Their parents followed them, choosing to be homeless even as their children succeeded. Jeannette Walls tells her astonishing story without an ounce of self pity. A spectacular read.

Warren, Robert, *All the King's Men*, FIC WAR

This Pulitzer Prize-winning novel is about the corrupting nature of power. Willie Stark, a well-intentioned, idealistic back-country lawyer, is unable to resist greed for power and lust for politics during his rise and fall. Stark draws a cast of memorable characters into his flawed life, and together they move toward mutual destruction innocent of their doom, the genuine hallmark of tragedy.

Welch, James, *Fools Crow*, FIC WEL

How was the Indian nation changed forever? The year is 1870. A portentous dream seems to overshadow the Lone Eaters clan of the Blackfeet Indians in the post-Civil War years. The slow invasion of the Napikwans, or whites, is inevitable and coincidental, however. As we follow White Man's Dog (later renamed Fools Crow), we see how some of his people try to follow the Napikwan ways, others rebel against them, and many ignore them. This alien force has both subtle and obvious methods of eliminating the tribal ways, and we watch individuals, families, and traditions crumbling. Welch's third novel (Winter in the Blood, The Death of Jim Loney) is like finding a lifestyle preserved for a century and reanimated for our benefit and education. Recommended for anyone who wants to see what we have lost, and read a fine novel in the process.

West, Nathaniel, *Miss Lonelyhearts*, 813.52 WES

Miss Lonelyhearts was a newspaper reporter, so named because he had been assigned to write the agony column. A joke at first, but then he was caught up in the suffering. In the Day of the Locust, Tod Hackett comes to Hollywood hoping for a career in scene designing, but he finds the hard way and falls in with others in difficulty.

Wharton, Edith, *The Age of Innocence*, FIC WHA

This is the elegant portrayal of desire and betrayal in Old New York. With vivid power, the author evokes a time of gas lit streets, formal dances held in ballrooms of stately brownstones, and society people "who dreaded scandal more than disease." This is Newland Archer's world as he prepares to marry the docile May Welland. Then, suddenly the mysterious, intensely nonconformist Countess Ellen Olenska returns to New York after a long absence and Newland Archer's world is never the same.

Wharton, Edith, *Ethan Frome*, FIC WHA

First published in 1911, Ethan Frome is widely regarded as Edith Wharton's most revealing novel and her finest achievement in fiction. Set in the bleak, barren winter landscape of New England, it is the tragic tale of a simple man, bound to the demands of his farm and his tyrannical, sickly wife, Zeena, and driven by his

star-crossed love for Zeena's young cousin, Mattie Silver. "In its spare, chilling creation of rural isolation, hardscrabble poverty and wintry landscape," writes Alfred Kazin in his afterword, "Ethan Frome overwhelms the reader as a drama of irresistible necessity." An exemplary work of literary realism in setting and character, Ethan Frome stands as one of the great classics of twentieth-century American literature.

Wideman, John Edgar, *Philadelphia Fire*, FIC WID

From "one of America's premier writers of fiction" (New York Times) comes this novel inspired by the 1985 police bombing of a West Philadelphia row house owned by the back-to-nature, Afrocentric cult known as Move. The bombing killed eleven people and started a fire that destroyed sixty other houses. At the center of the story is Cudjoe, a writer and exile who returns to his old neighborhood after spending a decade fleeing from his past, and his search for the lone survivor of the fire a young boy who was seen running from the flames. An impassioned, brutally honest journey through the despair and horror of life in urban America, "Philadelphia Fire isn't a book you read so much as one you breathe" (San Francisco Chronicle).

Williams, Tennessee, *The Glass Menagerie*, 812.54 WIL

Amanda, a faded southern belle, abandoned wife, and dominating mother, hopes to match her daughter Laura with an eligible "gentleman caller" while her son Tom supports the family. Laura, lame and painfully shy, evades her mother's schemes and reality by retreating to the make-believe world of her glass animal collection. Tom eventually leaves home to become a writer but is forever haunted by the memory of Laura.

Wolfe, Thomas, *Look Homeward Angel*, FIC WOL

This novel describes the childhood and youth of Eugene Gant. As he grows up, he becomes aware of the relations among his family, meets the eccentric people of the town, goes to college, discovers literature and ideas, has his first love affairs, and at last sets out alone on a mystic and romantic pilgrimage.

Wolfe, Thomas, *You Can't Go Home Again*, FIC WOL

This novel was the last Thomas Wolfe finished before his untimely death at age 37. In its brilliance, we find more cause to wish he had lived longer. As with his other novels, *You Can't Go Home Again* is an extremely personal work, but in the character of George Webber, a writer, Wolfe sees and captures America and the world in an dramatic time in history. The time is the period just before the great stock market crash and it stretches through the Depression and into Germany during the rise of Nazis. And the writer of course is Wolfe, who takes us on a ride through America never seen before--one with sharp insight and breathtaking flair.

Wright, Richard, *Black Boy*, 921 WRI

Richard Wright grew up in poverty, hunger, fear, and hatred. He lied, stole, and lashed out at those around him; he killed and tortured animals; at six he was a drunkard, hanging around the bars. Here is his autobiography -- an unashamed confession and a touching, powerful story.

Wright, Richard, *Native Son*, FIC WRI

Set in Chicago in the 1930s, Wright's powerful novel deals with the poverty and feelings of hopelessness experienced by people in inner cities across the country and what it means to be black in America. Right from the start, Bigger Thomas was headed for jail. He killed his first young victim in a movement of panic and found himself caught up in forces outside his control.