

ECISD • East Central High School
English Department
Summer Reading • 2022

Dear Students and Parents/Guardians,

The English language arts and reading sequence of courses are designed to prepare students for advanced coursework while still in a high school setting. A vital skill necessary for the success of all students is to engage in extensive reading. We have provided a list of optional titles for you to select from to read over the summer - these are not formal assignments or projects.

Disclaimer: Parents/Guardian, select texts with your student. We have provided summaries and trigger warnings to *assist* in this process.

We encourage students and parents to choose stories they find interesting and will enjoy. We can't wait to hear all about your literary adventures!

Sincerely,
Your English Teachers

NOTE: The list contains works with a variety of content and reading levels. Although some pieces have mature themes, all titles are works of literary merit. For any questions, please contact your English teacher.

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English I & Honors English I

Challenge: Read as many titles that match these descriptions! Be prepared to relate your reading to your learning throughout the year. Pay close attention to your book's setting, plot, characters, symbols, and theme.

- a book about overcoming adversity
- a book about space
- a book inspired by mythology, legend, or folklore
- a book written from multiple points-of-view
- a book published in 2022
- a book featuring an imaginary or extinct creature
- a book recommended by a celebrity you admire
- a book about family
- a book written by an author from a foreign country
- a book that takes place in a day
- a book based on true events
- a book retelling a classic story
- a book set on a school campus

Colloquium I

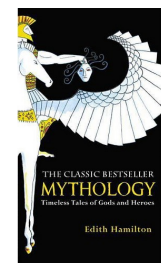
In order to maintain the academic growth you worked so hard to accomplish during the school year and to avoid summer learning loss, you should engage in the following summer reading and learning opportunities.

When completed, this will serve as an opportunity to prepare for the start of the school year and begin your high school career with a strong start in Colloquium English.

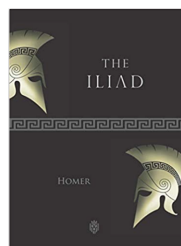
Recommendation: read ONE of these books and respond to some of the questions provided to keep your brain engaged and your skills sharp. Additionally, you will be able to submit responses to the suggested reading questions when school starts that can be used in place of an assignment in the first weeks of school.

Each of these books will introduce you to themes that will be present in our initial Mythology unit. You'll be introduced to aspects of ancient Greek and/or Roman mythology, gods and goddesses, and stories that give insight into the universal themes that reflect the human condition.

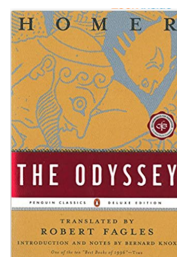
Content warning: Each of these books include instances of violence (including that of a sexual nature). None of these instances are particularly explicit.



Mythology by Edith Hamilton



The Iliad by Homer



The Odyssey by Homer

<p>Our first book study of the school year will be Edith Hamilton's <i>Mythology</i>.</p> <p>Mythology succeeds like no other book in bringing to life for the modern reader the Greek, Roman and Norse myths that are the keystone of Western culture-the stories of gods and heroes that have inspired human creativity from antiquity to the present.</p> <p>We follow the drama of the Trojan War and the wanderings of Odysseus. We hear the tales of Jason and the Golden Fleece, Cupid and Psyche, and mighty King Midas. We discover the origins of the names of the constellations. And we recognize reference points for countless works for art, literature and culture inquiry.</p>	<p><i>While we will not be reading The Iliad in its entirety, reading this epic poem will introduce you to many gods, goddesses and common themes we will discuss in our Mythology unit.</i></p> <p>The Iliad is an ancient Greek epic poem traditionally attributed to Homer. Usually considered to have been written down circa the 8th century BC, the Iliad is among the oldest works of Western literature.</p> <p>Although the story covers only a few weeks in the final year of the war, the Iliad mentions or alludes to many of the Greek legends about the siege; the earlier events, such as the gathering of warriors for the siege, the cause of the war, and related concerns tend to appear near the beginning.</p>	<p><i>While we will not be reading The Odyssey in its entirety, reading this epic poem will introduce you to many gods, goddesses and common themes we will discuss in our Mythology unit.</i></p> <p>If the Iliad is the world's greatest war epic, the Odyssey is literature's grandest evocation of an everyman's journey through life. Odysseus' reliance on his wit and willness for survival in his encounters with divine and natural forces during his ten-year voyage home to Ithaca after the Trojan War is at once a timeless human story and an individual test of moral endurance.</p> <p>In the myths and legends retold here, Fagles has captured the energy and poetry of Homer's original in a bold, contemporary idiom, and given us an Odyssey to read aloud, to savor, and to treasure for its sheer lyrical mastery.</p>
<p>Respond to 4 of 8 discussion questions below:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explain what the myths of Hyacinth, Narcissus, Adonis, and Clytie have in common and support your generalization by referring to essential elements in the myths. 2. Consider the myths of Icarus, Arachne, Phaeton, and Niobe. Identify a universal theme that the four myths have in common. Support your response by citing evidence from the texts. 3. Monsters frequently play important parts in these myths. Find three myths in which monsters have prominent roles. Explain how the heroes of each myth defeat the creatures; what power the monsters have; and what rewards the heroes receive after conquering the mythical demons. 4. Choose three heroes of Greek mythology. Describe the qualities each of the heroes has and how 	<p>Respond to 4 of 8 discussion questions below:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is the conflict between Achilles and Agamemnon? Whose side would you take? 2. What is the basis for Agamemnon's authority? What kind of authority or power does Achilles have? What comments does the Iliad make on these forms of power? 3. How do Agamemnon and Achilles represent different models of heroism? What sort of hero is Odysseus? What sort of hero is Paris? How does he compare to Achilles and Agamemnon? 4. What is the role of the gods in making or breaking heroes? How, when, and why do they intervene? 5. What can we learn about the status of women from the figures of Chryseis, Briseis and Helen? How does Achilles describe his feelings for Briseis? What is their relationship? How does Briseis feel 	<p>Respond to 5 of 10 discussion questions below:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is the symbolic meaning of the Greek gods and goddesses? Are they meant to be taken literally? If not, what is it that they represent? 2. Think carefully about the speech of Zeus. What does it suggest about human behavior and the tragic fate of human individuals? 3. Is Odysseus trapped on Calypso's island against his will? What does Calypso offer to Odysseus in order to keep him on her island? What is the alternative? 4. Explain the significance of the transfiguration of Athena into a small girl who guides Odysseus to Alkinoos' palace. 5. Why is the figure of the poet/singer Demodokos important? What or who does he represent?

<p>these qualities are shown through the hero's actions.</p> <p>5. Look at the myths of Hyacinth, Narcissus, Adonis, and Clytie. Explain how these flower myths follow the death/resurrection idea.</p> <p>6. Explain how the stories of Demeter and Dionysus follow the cycle of birth, growth, reproduction, and death!</p> <p>7. Choose three myths dealing with love. Explain how these myths illustrate three ideas about love: the essential element of trust; the acceptance of pain or suffering on behalf of love; valuing a person for him/herself and not for external appearances.</p> <p>8. Several Greek and Norse gods share similar traits and responsibilities. Compare and contrast the gods. Explain what you think these similarities highlight about human nature.</p>	<p>about Achilles? How would you characterize the interaction between Aphrodite and Helen in Book III? How would you characterize Helen's feelings for Paris?</p> <p>6. What can we learn about the nature of Archaic Greek marriages from the Iliad? What are the images of wives we see in books 3 and 6? What makes a good wife? How would you compare Helen and Andromache?</p> <p>7. Pay close attention to the description of Achilles' shield. In what ways do the scenes on the shield parallel scenes in the Iliad? How can it be seen as a commentary on the poem itself?</p> <p>8. What do you make of the ending? Who is given the final speech of the poem? Why? What is the meaning of Zeus' jars?</p>	<p>6. What does the cannibalistic monster symbolize? Why does he have only one eye?</p> <p>7. What do the Sirens sing about? Why are they so dangerous? What do they symbolize?</p> <p>8. Why does Odysseus wish to go to his own palace disguised as a beggar? What does the beggar disguise symbolize? Why is it important for him to show patience and self-restraint, even when hit and insulted?</p> <p>9. What are the elements of acceptable revenge in Ancient Greek culture? Does it differ from modern America's definition of acceptable revenge? Is vengeance a necessary part of life? Is it good or bad?</p> <p>10. Is the ending of the Odyssey through Athena's intervention a convincing and meaningful way of putting an end to the struggle between the Ithakans? Explain why or why not.</p>
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English II & Honors English II

These texts have appeared frequently on the AP exam.

***Invisible Man* by Ralph Ellison**

“Invisible Man is the story of a young, college-educated black man struggling to survive and succeed in a racially divided society that refuses to see him as a human being. Told in the form of a first-person narrative, Invisible Man traces the nameless narrator's physical and psychological journey from blind ignorance to enlightened awareness — or, according to the author, “from Purpose to Passion to Perception” — through a series of flashbacks in the forms of dreams and memories. Set in the U.S. during the pre-Civil Rights era when segregation laws barred black Americans from enjoying the same basic human rights as their white counterparts, the novel opens in the South (Greenwood, South Carolina), although the majority of the action takes place in the North (Harlem, New York).” - [Source](#)

Trigger Warnings: Sexual exploits

***Wuthering Heights* by Emily Bronte**

One of English literature's classic masterpieces—a gripping novel of love, propriety, and tragedy. Nominated as one of America's best-loved novels by PBS's The Great American Read

Emily Brontë's only novel endures as a work of tremendous and far-reaching influence. The Penguin Classics edition is the definitive version of the text, edited with an introduction by Pauline Nestor.

Lockwood, the new tenant of Thrushcross Grange, situated on the bleak Yorkshire moors, is forced to seek shelter one night at Wuthering Heights, the home of his landlord. There he discovers the history of the tempestuous events that took place years before. What unfolds is the tale of the intense love between the gypsy foundling Heathcliff and Catherine Earnshaw. Catherine, forced to choose between passionate, tortured Heathcliff and gentle, well-bred Edgar Linton, surrendered to the expectations of her class. As Heathcliff's bitterness and vengeance at his betrayal is visited upon the next generation, their innocent heirs must struggle to escape the legacy of the past.

In this edition, a new preface by Lucasta Miller, author of *The Brontë Myth*, looks at the ways in which the novel has been interpreted, from Charlotte Brontë onwards. This complements Pauline Nestor's introduction, which discusses changing critical

receptions of the novel, as well as Emily Brontë's influences and background. Publisher description retrieved from Google Books.

Trigger Warnings: Child abuse, Chronic illness, Death, Emotional abuse, Gravedigging, Physical abuse, Pregnancy, Starvation

***Great Expectations* by Charles Dickens**

Pip is a young orphan who wants nothing more than to become a gentleman and be worthy of the beautiful but snobby Estella. So when he receives a large fortune from an unknown benefactor to undergo training, he's ecstatic and convinced it must be from Miss Havisham, Estella's strange guardian. However, the culture of wealth breeds changes in Pip that his loyal friends find insulting. It may take the unsavory criminal from Pip's childhood to help him get his priorities in order and reset his expectations. Taken from the 1867 copyright edition, this is an unabridged version of English author Charles Dickens's classic tragic comedy. Publisher description retrieved from Google Books.

Trigger Warnings: Smoking

***King Lear* by William Shakespeare**

A king foolishly divides his kingdom between his scheming two oldest daughters and estranges himself from the daughter who loves him. So begins this profoundly moving and disturbing tragedy that, perhaps more than any other work in literature, challenges the notion of a coherent and just universe. The king and others pay dearly for their shortcomings—as madness, murder, and the anguish of insight and forgiveness that arrive too late combine to make this an all-embracing tragedy of evil and suffering.

Trigger Warnings: psychological turmoil, death

***Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad**

Joseph Conrad's enduring portrait of the ugliness of colonialism in a deluxe edition with a gripping cover by Hellboy artist Mike Mignola. Nominated as one of America's best-loved novels by PBS's The Great American Read

Heart of Darkness is the thrilling tale of Marlow, a seaman and wanderer recounting his physical and psychological journey in search of the infamous ivory trader Kurtz. Traveling upriver into the heart of the African continent, he gradually becomes obsessed by this enigmatic, wraith-like figure. Marlow's discovery of how Kurtz has gained his position of power over the local people involves him in a radical questioning, not only of

his own nature and values, but of those that underpin Western civilization itself. Publisher description retrieved from Google Books.

Triggers: Murder, Racism, Violence

***Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Bronte**

Penniless, orphaned, locked away in a prison-like boarding school, Jane Eyre has one chance for happiness: in the great mansion of Thornfield, as governess to a little French girl, the adopted ward of an eccentric millionaire.

Edward Rochester is troubled, cynical, moody--but funny, brilliant, giving, and sensitive; little Adele is a delight; Thornfield has all the beauty Jane could ever want. Life should be perfect.

But Jane Eyre and her decades-older employer are falling desperately in love.

And Thornfield holds a living horror that can, with no warning, destroy Edward, Jane, Adele..A murderous secret ready to devour Jane Eyre's dreams, hopes--even her life. Publisher description retrieved from Google Books.

Triggers: Ableism, Blinding, Death, Ethnic Slurs, Fire, Illness, Mutilation, Parental Abuse, Sexism, Suicide

***Crime and Punishment* by Fyodor Dostoyevsky**

Raskolnikov, an impoverished student living in the St. Petersburg of the tsars, is determined to overreach his humanity and assert his untrammelled individual will. When he commits an act of murder and theft, he sets into motion a story that, for its excruciating suspense, its atmospheric vividness, and its depth of characterization and vision is almost unequaled in the literatures of the world. The best known of Dostoevsky's masterpieces, *Crime and Punishment* can bear any amount of rereading without losing a drop of its power over our imaginations.

Dostoevsky's drama of sin, guilt, and redemption transforms the sordid story of an old woman's murder into the nineteenth century's profoundest and most compelling philosophical novel. Publisher description retrieved from Google Books.

Trigger Warnings: death

***Moby Dick* by Herman Melville**

Herman Melville's masterpiece, one of the greatest works of imagination in literary history. Nominated as one of America's best-loved novels by PBS's The Great American Read

Over a century and a half after its publication, *Moby-Dick* still stands as an indisputable literary classic. It is the story of an eerily compelling madman pursuing an unholy war against a creature as vast and dangerous and unknowable as the sea itself. But more than just a novel of adventure, more than an encyclopedia of whaling lore and legend, *Moby-Dick* is a haunting, mesmerizing, and important social commentary populated with several of the most unforgettable and enduring characters in literature. Publisher description retrieved from Google Books.

Triggers: Animal killing, Cannibalism, Death, Violence

***Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* by James Joyce**

A masterpiece of modern fiction, James Joyce's semi autobiographical first novel follows Stephen Dedalus, a sensitive and creative youth who rebels against his family, his education, and his country by committing himself to the artist's life. "I will not serve," vows Dedalus, "that in which I no longer believe....and I will try to express myself in some mode of life or art as freely as I can." To Dedalus, the artist is like God—one who "remains within or behind or beyond or above his handiwork, invisible, refined out of existence, indifferent, paring his fingernails." Joyce's rendering of the impressions of childhood broke ground in the use of language. "He took on the almost infinite English language," Jorge Luis Borges once said. "He wrote in a language invented by himself....Joyce brought a new music to English." As a bold literary experiment, this classic has had a huge and lasting influence on the contemporary novel.

Joyce's semi-autobiographical chronicle of Stephen Dedalus' passage from university student to "independent" artist is at once a richly detailed, amusing, and moving coming-of-age story, a tour de force of style and technique, and a profound examination of the Irish psyche and society. Publisher description retrieved from Google Books.

Triggers: suggestive content, alcohol use

***Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain**

Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (often shortened to *Huck Finn*) is a novel written by American humorist Mark Twain. It is commonly used and accounted as one of the first Great American Novels. It is also one of the first major American novels written using

Local Color Regionalism, or vernacular, told in the first person by the eponymous Huckleberry "Huck" Finn, best friend of Tom Sawyer and hero of three other Mark Twain books.

The book is noted for its colorful description of people and places along the Mississippi River. By satirizing Southern antebellum society that was already a quarter-century in the past by the time of publication, the book is an often scathing look at entrenched attitudes, particularly racism. The drifting journey of Huck and his friend Jim, a runaway slave, down the Mississippi River on their raft may be one of the most enduring images of escape and freedom in all of American literature.

Triggers: Parental neglect, Racial slurs, Racism, Slavery

***Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston**

An African-American woman searches for a fulfilling relationship through two loveless marriages and finally finds it in the person of Tea Cake, an itinerant laborer and gambler.

Triggers: Animal death, Death, Domestic abuse, Guns, Homophobia, Racism, Rape, Sexism, Slavery, Terminal illness, Violence

***The Awakening* by Kate Chopin**

This sensuous book tells of a woman's abandonment of her family, her seduction, and her awakening to desires and passions that threatened to consume her. Originally entitled "A Solitary Soul," this portrait of twenty-eight-year-old Edna Pontellier is a landmark in American fiction, rooted firmly in the romantic tradition of Herman Melville and Emily Dickinson. Here, a woman in search of self-discovery turns away from convention and society, and toward the primal, from convention and society, and toward the primal, irresistibly attracted to nature and the senses. "The Awakening," Kate Chopin's last novel, has been praised by Edmund Wilson as "beautifully written." And Willa Cather described its style as "exquisite," "sensitive," and "iridescent."

Triggers: sexually suggestive content

***Catch-22* by Joseph Heller**

Set in Italy during World War II, this is the story of the incomparable, malingering bombardier, Yossarian, a hero who is furious because thousands of people he has never met are trying to kill him. But his real problem is not the enemy—it is his own army, which keeps increasing the number of missions the men must fly to complete their service. Yet if Yossarian makes any attempt to excuse himself from the perilous

missions he's assigned, he'll be in violation of Catch-22, a hilariously sinister bureaucratic rule: a man is considered insane if he willingly continues to fly dangerous combat missions, but if he makes a formal request to be removed from duty, he is proven sane and therefore ineligible to be relieved.

Triggers: Misogyny, Sexual abuse, Violence

***The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald**

The story of the mysteriously wealthy Jay Gatsby and his love for the beautiful Daisy Buchanan, of lavish parties on Long Island at a time when The New York Times noted "gin was the national drink and sex the national obsession," it is an exquisitely crafted tale of America in the 1920s. Publisher description retrieved from Google Books.

Triggers: Alcohol, Character death, Cheating, Class discrimination, Murder, Misogynistic violence, Racism, Wealth hoarding

***Never Let Me Go* by Kazuo Ishiguro**

Hailsham seems like a pleasant English boarding school, far from the influences of the city. Its students are well tended and supported, trained in art and literature, and become just the sort of people the world wants them to be. But, curiously, they are taught nothing of the outside world and are allowed little contact with it.

Within the grounds of Hailsham, Kathy grows from schoolgirl to young woman, but it's only when she and her friends Ruth and Tommy leave the safe grounds of the school (as they always knew they would) that they realize the full truth of what Hailsham is.

Triggers: Bullying, Death of a loved one, Homophobia, Infertility, Slut shaming, Toxic relationships

***1984* by George Orwell**

Among the seminal texts of the 20th century, Nineteen Eighty-Four is a rare work that grows more haunting as its futuristic purgatory becomes more real. Published in 1949, the book offers political satirist George Orwell's nightmarish vision of a totalitarian, bureaucratic world and one poor stiff's attempt to find individuality. The brilliance of the novel is Orwell's prescience of modern life—the ubiquity of television, the distortion of the language—and his ability to construct such a thorough version of hell. Required reading for students since it was published, it ranks among the most terrifying novels ever written.

Triggers: Gaslighting, Sexually explicit scenes, Torture, Violence

***Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley**

Brave New World is a dystopian novel by English author Aldous Huxley, written in 1931 and published in 1932. Largely set in a futuristic World State, inhabited by genetically modified citizens and an intelligence-based social hierarchy, the novel anticipates huge scientific advancements in reproductive technology, sleep-learning, psychological manipulation and classical conditioning that are combined to make a dystopian society which is challenged by only a single individual: the story's protagonist.

Triggers: Self-harm, Sexual assault, Suicide

***Cry, the Beloved Country* by Alan Paton**

Cry, the Beloved Country is the deeply moving story of the Zulu pastor Stephen Kumalo and his son, Absalom, set against the background of a land and a people riven by racial injustice. Remarkable for its lyricism, unforgettable for character and incident, Cry, the Beloved Country is a classic work of love and hope, courage and endurance, born of the dignity of man.

Triggers: racism, death

***A Prayer for Owen Meany* by John Irving**

Eleven-year-old Owen Meany, playing in a Little League baseball game in Gravesend, New Hampshire, hits a foul ball and kills his best friend's mother. Owen doesn't believe in accidents; he believes he is God's instrument. What happens to Owen after that 1953 foul is both extraordinary and terrifying. At moments a comic, self-deluded victim, but in the end the principal, tragic actor in a divine plan, Owen Meany is the most heartbreaking hero John Irving has yet created.

Triggers: Profanity, Violence, War

***Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Becket**

The story revolves around two seemingly homeless men simply waiting for someone—or something—named Godot. Vladimir and Estragon wait near a tree, inhabiting a drama spun of their own consciousness. The result is a comical wordplay of poetry, dreamscapes, and nonsense, which has been interpreted as mankind's

inexhaustible search for meaning. Beckett's language pioneered an expressionistic minimalism that captured the existential post-World War II Europe. His play remains one of the most magical and beautiful allegories of our time.

Triggers: depiction of slavery

***Beloved* by Toni Morrison**

Sethe was born a slave and escaped to Ohio, but eighteen years later she is still not free. She has borne the unthinkable and not gone mad, yet she is still held captive by memories of Sweet Home, the beautiful farm where so many hideous things happened. Meanwhile Sethe's house has long been troubled by the angry, destructive ghost of her baby, who died nameless and whose tombstone is engraved with a single word: Beloved.

Sethe works at beating back the past, but it makes itself heard and felt incessantly in her memory and in the lives of those around her. When a mysterious teenage girl arrives, calling herself Beloved, Sethe's terrible secret explodes into the present.

Combining the visionary power of legend with the unassailable truth of history, Morrison's unforgettable novel is one of the great and enduring works of American literature.

Triggers: Ableism, Animal abuse, Assault, Bestiality, Childbirth, Child death, Death, Paranormal creatures, Physical abuse, Pregnancy, Racism, Sexual assault, Slavery

***Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley**

A timeless, terrifying tale of one man's obsession to create life—and the monster that became his legacy.

Triggers: Attempted murder, Child death, Death, Depression, Islamophobia, Murder, Parental abandonment, Xenophobia

***Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen**

When Elizabeth Bennet first meets eligible bachelor Fitzwilliam Darcy, she thinks him arrogant and conceited; he is indifferent to her good looks and lively mind. When she later discovers that Darcy has involved himself in the troubled relationship between his friend Bingley and her beloved sister Jane, she is determined to dislike him more than ever. In the sparkling comedy of manners that follows, Jane Austen shows us the folly of

judging by first impressions and superbly evokes the friendships, gossip and snobberies of provincial middle-class life.

Triggers: Classism, Sexism

***Oedipus Rex* by Sophocles**

In presenting the story of King Oedipus and the tragedy that ensues when he discovers he has inadvertently killed his father and married his mother, the play exhibits near-perfect harmony of character and action. Moreover, the masterly use of dramatic irony greatly intensifies the impact of the agonizing events and emotions experienced by Oedipus and the other characters in the play.

Triggers: patricide, incest, self-mutilation

***Death of a Salesman* by Arthur Miller**

Ever since it was first performed in 1949, *Death of a Salesman* has been recognized as a milestone of the American theater. In the person of Willy Loman, the aging, failing salesman who makes his living riding on a smile and a shoeshine, Arthur Miller redefined the tragic hero as a man whose dreams are at once insupportable vast and dangerously insubstantial. He has given us a figure whose name has become a symbol for a kind of majestic grandiosity—and a play that compresses epic extremes of humor and anguish, promise and loss, between the four walls of an American living room. Publisher description retrieved from Google Books.

"By common consent, this is one of the finest dramas in the whole range of the American theater." —Brooks Atkinson, *The New York Times*

"So simple, central, and terrible that the run of playwrights would neither care nor dare to attempt it." —*Time*

Trigger Warnings: Attempted suicide, abuse, cheating, domestic violence, imprisonment

***The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood**

Offred is a Handmaid in the Republic of Gilead, serving in the household of the enigmatic Commander and his bitter wife. She may go out once a day to markets whose signs are now pictures because women are not allowed to read. She must pray that the Commander makes her pregnant, for in a time of declining birthrates her value lies in her fertility, and failure means exile to the dangerously polluted Colonies. Offred can

remember a time when she lived with her husband and daughter and had a job, before she lost even her own name. Now she navigates the intimate secrets of those who control her every move, risking her life in breaking the rules. Publisher description retrieved from Google Books.

Trigger Warnings: Cheating, death, family separation, forced pregnancy, hanging, oppressive government, prostitution, rape, sexism - [Source](#)

The Divine Comedy by Dante Alighieri

The plot of The Divine Comedy is simple: a man, generally assumed to be Dante himself, is miraculously enabled to undertake an ultramundane journey, which leads him to visit the souls in Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise. [Source](#)

Trigger Warnings: bestiality, blood, gore, horrent/wasp attacks, torture, graphic violence - [Source](#)

Devil in the White City by Erik Larson

Two men, each handsome and unusually adept at his chosen work, embodied an element of the great dynamic that characterized America's rush toward the twentieth century. The architect was Daniel Hudson Burnham, the fair's brilliant director of works and the builder of many of the country's most important structures, including the Flatiron Building in New York and Union Station in Washington, D.C. The murderer was Henry H. Holmes, a young doctor who, in a malign parody of the White City, built his "World's Fair Hotel" just west of the fairgrounds--a torture palace complete with dissection table, gas chamber, and 3,000-degree crematorium.

Burnham overcame tremendous obstacles and tragedies as he organized the talents of Frederick Law Olmsted, Charles McKim, Louis Sullivan, and others to transform swampy Jackson Park into the White City, while Holmes used the attraction of the great fair and his own satanic charms to lure scores of young women to their deaths. What makes the story all the more chilling is that Holmes really lived, walking the grounds of that dream city by the lake.

The Devil in the White City draws the reader into the enchantment of the Gilded Age, made all the more appealing by a supporting cast of real-life characters, including Buffalo Bill, Theodore Dreiser, Susan B. Anthony, Thomas Edison, Archduke Francis Ferdinand, and others. Erik Larson's gifts as a storyteller are magnificently displayed in this rich narrative of the master builder, the killer, and the great fair that obsessed them both. Publisher description retrieved from Google Books.

Trigger Warnings: Abomination, Child abuse, confinement, death, kidnapping, torture, violence, murder, execution, demon possession, supernatural influences, drugs and alcohol, sexual content, words such as “damn, adn hell” are used when referring to historical figures. - Source

The Canterbury Tales by Geoffrey Chaucer

In The Canterbury Tales Chaucer created one of the great touchstones of English literature, a masterly collection of chivalric romances, moral allegories and low farce. A story-telling competition between a group of pilgrims from all walks of life is the occasion for a series of tales that range from the Knight's account of courtly love and the ebullient Wife of Bath's Arthurian legend, to the ribald anecdotes of the Miller and the Cook. Rich and diverse, The Canterbury Tales offer us an unrivaled glimpse into the life and mind of medieval England. Publisher description retrieved from Google Books.

Trigger Warnings: Rape, corruption, Catholic church hypocrisy, and violence

The Iliad by Homer

Probably written in the ninth century and based on an actual historical event that occurred in the thirteenth century B.C., Homer's "Iliad" is one of the great epic poems of the Western world. The poem essentially tells the story of a few days near the end of the ten-year-long Trojan War, detailing the destructive quarrel between the great warrior-hero Achilles and King Agamemnon, the battle between Paris and Menelaus for Helen of Troy, the Greek assault on the city, the Trojan counterattacks, the intervention of the gods on the part of their favorites on either side, and numerous other incidents and events.

Vast in scope, possessing extraordinary lyricism and poignancy, this time-honored masterpiece brilliantly conveys the inconsistencies of gods and men, the tumultuous intensity of conflict, and, ultimately, the enormous waste of life that results from war.

This inexpensive edition reproduces the celebrated Samuel Butler prose translation, admired for its simple, unadorned style, clarity, and readability. Publisher description retrieved from Google Books.

Trigger Warnings: graphic violence, sex, foul language, drinking, drugs, and smoking, animals being slaughtered

Parents need to know that the ancient Greek epic poem The Iliad, by Homer, depicts the women, warriors, gods and goddesses involved in the fictional Trojan War between the Trojans and Achaians. Whereas personal conflicts between the characters propel the plot, most of the action takes place on the battlefield, where

many men are killed or injured. This essential volume of classical literature includes a lot of graphic violence -- mostly inflicted by fighting with spears -- and some sex in which women are usually objectified, as they are considered prizes to be won in battle. As in Homer's *Odyssey*, there are also graphic descriptions of animals being slaughtered and sacrificed, and a good deal of wine is consumed.
- [Source](#)

The Odyssey by Homer

The epic tale of Odysseus and his ten-year journey home after the Trojan War forms one of the earliest and greatest works of Western literature. Confronted by natural and supernatural threats – shipwrecks, battles, monsters and the implacable enmity of the sea-god Poseidon – Odysseus must use his wit and native cunning if he is to reach his homeland safely and overcome the obstacles that, even there, await him.- [Source](#)

Trigger Warnings: murder, slaver, kidnapping & captivity, shipwrecks, Trojan War

Students were disturbed by Homer's "relentless" depiction of mayhem and gore: "Like the X-Men franchise, but Wolverine is definitely a more likable mutant than Achilles," concluded one respondent. Several students objected to the treatment of women -- mostly relegated to domestic activities or war booty -- and demanded to know if there were other epic poems by blind Archaic Greek bards that offered examples of female empowerment.

Also, a small but vocal number of students wearing PETA t-shirts protested the "inhumane" treatment of the dog Argo, left to die on a dung heap. Given the youthful impressionability of our customer base, we find potential problems with the Lotus-eater episode, as well as the character Helen's liberal use of pharmacological agents. [Source](#)

Parents need to know that, as the name implies, *The Odyssey* is an epic poem of journey and discovery. It's an essential book for students of literature and students of Greek history and culture. Because the book recounts not only Odysseus' tumultuous journey home and his son Telemakhos' coming of age but also tales of Odysseus' bravery in the Trojan War, it includes a good deal of violence. There's also some implied sexual activity (though nothing graphic).
[Source](#)

The Good Earth by Pearl Buck

Though more than seventy years have passed since this remarkable novel won the Pulitzer Prize, it has retained its popularity and become one of the great modern classics. In *The Good Earth* Pearl S. Buck paints an indelible portrait of China in the

1920s, when the last emperor reigned and the vast political and social upheavals of the twentieth century were but distant rumblings. This moving, classic story of the honest farmer Wang Lung and his selfless wife O-Lan is must reading for those who would fully appreciate the sweeping changes that have occurred in the lives of the Chinese people during the last century.

Nobel Prize winner Pearl S. Buck traces the whole cycle of life: its terrors, its passions, its ambitions and rewards. Her brilliant novel—beloved by millions of readers—is a universal tale of an ordinary family caught in the tide of history. Publisher description retrieved from Google Books.

Trigger Warning: Refers to females as “bitch”. There are numerous references to sex outside of marriage in a culture with sex slaves and mistresses as the norm. [Source](#)

***I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* by Maya Angelou**

Here is a book as joyous and painful, as mysterious and memorable, as childhood itself. *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* captures the longing of lonely children, the brute insult of bigotry, and the wonder of words that can make the world right. Maya Angelou’s debut memoir is a modern American classic beloved worldwide.

Sent by their mother to live with their devout, self-sufficient grandmother in a small Southern town, Maya and her brother, Bailey, endure the ache of abandonment and the prejudice of the local “powhitetrash.” At eight years old and back at her mother’s side in St. Louis, Maya is attacked by a man many times her age—and has to live with the consequences for a lifetime. Years later, in San Francisco, Maya learns that love for herself, the kindness of others, her own strong spirit, and the ideas of great authors (“I met and fell in love with William Shakespeare”) will allow her to be free instead of imprisoned.

Poetic and powerful, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* will touch hearts and change minds for as long as people read.

Triggers: Racism, Racial Slurs, White Supremacy, Sexism, Rape of a child, Sexual assault, Chronic bronchitis, Alcohol consumption, Smoking, Dead body, Murder, Physical assault

Colloquium II & Colloquium III

All of the marked following titles have made an appearance on the AP exam not just a few, but several times, and many of these titles are novels we will be reading together in class (additionally marked).

Our recommendation is that you read 2-3 of these novels over the summer to not only keep from losing your valuable reading and comprehension strength over the long months but to also start preparing for the AP exams early. Our classrooms and the library may even have a few limited copies for you to check out if you request one early enough.

(Has appeared on AP Exam) (Will read sophomore/junior year*) (Will read senior year**)
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"X times" refers to how often the title has appeared on the AP exam

"20XX" refers to the most recent year the title appeared on the AP exam

***Invisible Man* by Ralph Ellison**

28 times - 2016 (American)

"Invisible Man is the story of a young, college-educated black man struggling to survive and succeed in a racially divided society that refuses to see him as a human being. Told in the form of a first-person narrative, *Invisible Man* traces the nameless narrator's physical and psychological journey from blind ignorance to enlightened awareness — or, according to the author, "from Purpose to Passion to Perception" — through a series of flashbacks in the forms of dreams and memories. Set in the U.S. during the pre-Civil Rights era when segregation laws barred black Americans from enjoying the same basic human rights as their white counterparts, the novel opens in the South (Greenwood, South Carolina), although the majority of the action takes place in the North (Harlem, New York)." [Source](#)

Trigger Warnings: Sexual exploits

***Wuthering Heights* by Emily Bronte**

23 times - 2017 (British)

One of English literature's classic masterpieces—a gripping novel of love, propriety, and tragedy. Nominated as one of America's best-loved novels by PBS's *The Great American Read*

Emily Brontë's only novel endures as a work of tremendous and far-reaching influence. The Penguin Classics edition is the definitive version of the text, edited with an introduction by Pauline Nestor.

Lockwood, the new tenant of Thrushcross Grange, situated on the bleak Yorkshire moors, is forced to seek shelter one night at Wuthering Heights, the home of his landlord. There he discovers the history of the tempestuous events that took place years before. What unfolds is the tale of the intense love between the gypsy foundling Heathcliff and Catherine Earnshaw. Catherine, forced to choose between passionate, tortured Heathcliff and gentle, well-bred Edgar Linton, surrendered to the expectations of her class. As Heathcliff's bitterness and vengeance at his betrayal is visited upon the next generation, their innocent heirs must struggle to escape the legacy of the past.

In this edition, a new preface by Lucasta Miller, author of *The Brontë Myth*, looks at the ways in which the novel has been interpreted, from Charlotte Brontë onwards. This complements Pauline Nestor's introduction, which discusses changing critical receptions of the novel, as well as Emily Brontë's influences and background. Publisher description retrieved from Google Books.

Trigger Warnings: Child abuse, Chronic illness, Death, Emotional abuse, Gravedigging, Physical abuse, Pregnancy, Starvation

***Great Expectations* by Charles Dickens**

20 times - 2016 (British)

Pip is a young orphan who wants nothing more than to become a gentleman and be worthy of the beautiful but snobby Estella. So when he receives a large fortune from an unknown benefactor to undergo training, he's ecstatic and convinced it must be from Miss Havisham, Estella's strange guardian. However, the culture of wealth breeds changes in Pip that his loyal friends find insulting. It may take the unsavory criminal from Pip's childhood to help him get his priorities in order and reset his expectations. Taken from the 1867 copyright edition, this is an unabridged version of English author Charles Dickens's classic tragic comedy. Publisher description retrieved from Google Books.

Trigger Warnings: Smoking

***King Lear* by William Shakespeare**

17 times – 2014 (British)

A king foolishly divides his kingdom between his scheming two oldest daughters and estranges himself from the daughter who loves him. So begins this profoundly moving and disturbing tragedy that, perhaps more than any other work in literature, challenges the notion of a coherent and just universe. The king and others pay dearly for their

shortcomings—as madness, murder, and the anguish of insight and forgiveness that arrive too late combine to make this an all-embracing tragedy of evil and suffering.

Trigger Warnings: psychological turmoil, death

***Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad**

18 times -2016 (British)

Joseph Conrad's enduring portrait of the ugliness of colonialism in a deluxe edition with a gripping cover by Hellboy artist Mike Mignola. Nominated as one of America's best-loved novels by PBS's The Great American Read

Heart of Darkness is the thrilling tale of Marlow, a seaman and wanderer recounting his physical and psychological journey in search of the infamous ivory trader Kurtz. Traveling upriver into the heart of the African continent, he gradually becomes obsessed by this enigmatic, wraith-like figure. Marlow's discovery of how Kurtz has gained his position of power over the local people involves him in a radical questioning, not only of his own nature and values, but of those that underpin Western civilization itself. Publisher description retrieved from Google Books.

Triggers: Murder, Racism, Violence

***Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Bronte**

18 times; 2017 (British)

Penniless, orphaned, locked away in a prison-like boarding school, Jane Eyre has one chance for happiness: in the great mansion of Thornfield, as governess to a little French girl, the adopted ward of an eccentric millionaire.

Edward Rochester is troubled, cynical, moody--but funny, brilliant, giving, and sensitive; little Adele is a delight; Thornfield has all the beauty Jane could ever want. Life should be perfect.

But Jane Eyre and her decades-older employer are falling desperately in love.

And Thornfield holds a living horror that can, with no warning, destroy Edward, Jane, Adele..A murderous secret ready to devour Jane Eyre's dreams, hopes--even her life.

Publisher description retrieved from Google Books.

Triggers: Ableism, Blinding, Death, Ethnic Slurs, Fire, Illness, Mutilation, Parental Abuse, Sexism, Suicide

***Crime and Punishment* by Fyodor Dostoyevsky**

17 times – 2016 (Russian)

Raskolnikov, an impoverished student living in the St. Petersburg of the tsars, is determined to overreach his humanity and assert his untrammelled individual will. When he commits an act of murder and theft, he sets into motion a story that, for its excruciating suspense, its atmospheric vividness, and its depth of characterization and vision is almost unequaled in the literatures of the world. The best known of Dostoevsky's masterpieces, *Crime and Punishment* can bear any amount of rereading without losing a drop of its power over our imaginations.

Dostoevsky's drama of sin, guilt, and redemption transforms the sordid story of an old woman's murder into the nineteenth century's profoundest and most compelling philosophical novel. Publisher description retrieved from Google Books.

Trigger Warnings: murder

***Moby Dick* by Herman Melville**

15 times; 2009 (American)

Herman Melville's masterpiece, one of the greatest works of imagination in literary history. Nominated as one of America's best-loved novels by PBS's *The Great American Read*

Over a century and a half after its publication, *Moby-Dick* still stands as an indisputable literary classic. It is the story of an eerily compelling madman pursuing an unholy war against a creature as vast and dangerous and unknowable as the sea itself. But more than just a novel of adventure, more than an encyclopedia of whaling lore and legend, *Moby-Dick* is a haunting, mesmerizing, and important social commentary populated with several of the most unforgettable and enduring characters in literature. Publisher description retrieved from Google Books.

Triggers: Animal killing, Cannibalism, Death, Violence

***Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* by James Joyce**

14 times – 2013 (British)

A masterpiece of modern fiction, James Joyce's semi autobiographical first novel follows Stephen Dedalus, a sensitive and creative youth who rebels against his family, his education, and his country by committing himself to the artist's life. "I will not serve," vows Dedalus, "that in which I no longer believe....and I will try to express myself in some mode of life or art as freely as I can." To Dedalus, the artist is like God—one who "remains within or behind or beyond or above his handiwork, invisible, refined out of

existence, indifferent, paring his fingernails.” Joyce’s rendering of the impressions of childhood broke ground in the use of language. “He took on the almost infinite English language,” Jorge Luis Borges once said. “He wrote in a language invented by himself....Joyce brought a new music to English.” As a bold literary experiment, this classic has had a huge and lasting influence on the contemporary novel.

Joyce's semi-autobiographical chronicle of Stephen Dedalus' passage from university student to "independent" artist is at once a richly detailed, amusing, and moving coming-of-age story, a tour de force of style and technique, and a profound examination of the Irish psyche and society. Publisher description retrieved from Google Books.

Triggers: suggestive content, alcohol use

***Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain**

14 times -2011 (American)

Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (often shortened to Huck Finn) is a novel written by American humorist Mark Twain. It is commonly used and accounted as one of the first Great American Novels. It is also one of the first major American novels written using Local Color Regionalism, or vernacular, told in the first person by the eponymous Huckleberry "Huck" Finn, best friend of Tom Sawyer and hero of three other Mark Twain books.

The book is noted for its colorful description of people and places along the Mississippi River. By satirizing Southern antebellum society that was already a quarter-century in the past by the time of publication, the book is an often scathing look at entrenched attitudes, particularly racism. The drifting journey of Huck and his friend Jim, a runaway slave, down the Mississippi River on their raft may be one of the most enduring images of escape and freedom in all of American literature.

Triggers: Parental neglect, Racial slurs, Racism, Slavery

***The Scarlet Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne ***

14 times -2015 (American)

The Puritans thought Hester Prynne's crime was unforgivable. She was convicted, imprisoned--and then forced to wear, forever, a public reminder of her sin. The Scarlet letter. The Letter was unending punishment: it set Hester apart from society, it tormented her days and haunted her soul.

But the Letter haunted others, as well, its mystery turned Roger Chillingworth from a gentle healer into a man driven by revenge. Its meaning burned into Rev. Arthur

Dimsdale's heart, as deadly as cancer. And its power loomed over the life of Hester's daughter, the uncontrollable child Pearl.

Four people would be destroyed by a entangled web of guilt and secrets, unless one of them had the courage--and love--to reveal the truth of--The Scarlet Letter.

Triggers: Adultery, Misogyny, Slut shaming

***Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston**

13 times; 2014 (Amer.)

An African-American woman searches for a fulfilling relationship through two loveless marriages and finally finds it in the person of Tea Cake, an itinerant laborer and gambler.

Triggers: Animal death, Death, Domestic abuse, Guns, Homophobia, Racism, Rape, Sexism, Slavery, Terminal illness, Violence

***The Awakening* by Kate Chopin**

13 times – 2014 (American)

This sensuous book tells of a woman's abandonment of her family, her seduction, and her awakening to desires and passions that threatened to consume her. Originally entitled "A Solitary Soul," this portrait of twenty-eight-year-old Edna Pontellier is a landmark in American fiction, rooted firmly in the romantic tradition of Herman Melville and Emily Dickinson. Here, a woman in search of self-discovery turns away from convention and society, and toward the primal, from convention and society, and toward the primal, irresistibly attracted to nature and the senses "The Awakening," Kate Chopin's last novel, has been praised by Edmund Wilson as "beautifully written." And Willa Cather described its style as "exquisite," "sensitive," and "iridescent."

Triggers: sexually suggestive content

***Catch-22* by Joseph Heller**

14 times – 2016 (American)

Set in Italy during World War II, this is the story of the incomparable, malingering bombardier, Yossarian, a hero who is furious because thousands of people he has never met are trying to kill him. But his real problem is not the enemy—it is his own army, which keeps increasing the number of missions the men must fly to complete their service. Yet if Yossarian makes any attempt to excuse himself from the perilous missions he's assigned, he'll be in violation of Catch-22, a hilariously sinister bureaucratic rule: a man is considered insane if he willingly continues to fly dangerous

combat missions, but if he makes a formal request to be removed from duty, he is proven sane and therefore ineligible to be relieved.

Triggers: Misogyny, Sexual abuse, Violence

The Great Gatsby by F. Scott Fitzgerald *

13 times – 2016 (American)

The story of the mysteriously wealthy Jay Gatsby and his love for the beautiful Daisy Buchanan, of lavish parties on Long Island at a time when The New York Times noted “gin was the national drink and sex the national obsession,” it is an exquisitely crafted tale of America in the 1920s. Publisher description retrieved from Google Books.

Triggers: Alcohol, Character death, Cheating, Class discrimination, Murder, Misogynistic violence, Racism, Wealth hoarding

Other books that have appeared frequently on the AP exam:

(A work by William Shakespeare is always on the test; in addition to *King Lear*, the most frequent titles have been *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *The Tempest*, *Twelfth Night*, and *Julius Caesar*.)

***Never Let Me Go* by Kazuo Ishiguro**

Hailsham seems like a pleasant English boarding school, far from the influences of the city. Its students are well tended and supported, trained in art and literature, and become just the sort of people the world wants them to be. But, curiously, they are taught nothing of the outside world and are allowed little contact with it.

Within the grounds of Hailsham, Kathy grows from schoolgirl to young woman, but it's only when she and her friends Ruth and Tommy leave the safe grounds of the school (as they always knew they would) that they realize the full truth of what Hailsham is. -

[Source](#)

Trigger Warnings: Medical experimentation, bullying, death of a loved one, homophobia, infertility, slut shaming, toxic relationships.

***Poisonwood Bible* by Barbara Kingsolver**

Barbara Kingsolver's acclaimed international bestseller tells the story of an American missionary family in the Congo during a poignant chapter in African history. It spins the

tale of the fierce evangelical Baptist, Nathan Price, who takes his wife and four daughters on a missionary journey into the heart of darkness of the Belgian Congo in 1959. They carry with them to Africa all they believe they will need from home, but soon find that all of it – from garden seeds to the King James Bible – is calamitously transformed on African soil. - [Source](#)

Trigger Warnings: Character death, child death, war themes, racism, misogyny, domestic violence.

1984 by George Orwell **

The year 1984 has come and gone, but George Orwell's prophetic, nightmarish vision in 1949 of the world we were becoming is timelier than ever. 1984 is still the great modern classic of "negative utopia"—a startlingly original and haunting novel that creates an imaginary world that is completely convincing, from the first sentence to the last four words. No one can deny the novel's hold on the imaginations of whole generations, or the power of its admonitions—a power that seems to grow, not lessen, with the passage of time. - [Source](#)

Trigger Warnings: Suicide, torture , gaslighting, sexually explicit scenes, violence.

Brave New World by Aldous Huxley **

Far in the future, the World Controllers have created the ideal society. Through genetic engineering, brainwashing and recreational sex and drugs all its members are happy consumers. Bernard Marx seems alone in feeling discontent, harboring an ill-defined longing to break free. A visit to one of the few remaining Savage Reservations, where the old, imperfect life still continues, may be the cure for his distress... - [Source](#)

Trigger Warnings: Racism, racial slurs, queermisia (LGBTQ+) , misogyny (contempt for women) , eugenics "planned breeding", cheating, suicide, self harm, self-flagellation, domestic abuse, violence, child abuse, recreational drug use and abuse, overdoes, emesis (vomiting), parental death, hanging, electrocution, animal neglect, animal death, dead bodies. [Source](#)

***Cry, the Beloved Country* by Alan Paton**

Cry, the Beloved Country is the deeply moving story of the Zulu pastor Stephen Kumalo and his son, Absalom, set against the background of a land and a people riven by racial injustice. Remarkable for its lyricism, unforgettable for character and incident, *Cry, the*

Beloved Country is a classic work of love and hope, courage and endurance, born of the dignity of man. Publisher description retrieved from Google Books.

Trigger Warnings: prostitution, alcohol abuse, racial segregation, apartheid, oppression

***A Prayer for Owen Meany* by John Irving**

In the summer of 1953, two eleven-year-old boys—best friends—are playing in a Little League baseball game in Gravesend, New Hampshire. One of the boys hits a foul ball that kills the other boy's mother. The boy who hits the ball doesn't believe in accidents; Owen Meany believes he is God's instrument. What happens to Owen, after that 1953 foul ball, is extraordinary and terrifying. *A Prayer for Owen Meany* was first published in 1989. This Modern Library edition includes a new Introduction by the author. Publisher description retrieved from Google Books.

Trigger Warnings: profanity, violence, war, anger

***Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Becket**

The story revolves around two seemingly homeless men waiting for someone—or something—named Godot. Vladimir and Estragon wait near a tree, inhabiting a drama spun of their own consciousness. The result is a comical wordplay of poetry, dreamscapes, and nonsense, which has been interpreted as mankind's inexhaustible search for meaning. Beckett's language pioneered an expressionistic minimalism that captured the existential post-World War II Europe. His play remains one of the most magical and beautiful allegories of our time. Publisher description retrieved from Google Books.

Trigger Warnings: death, slavery, warnings of suicide

***Beloved* by Toni Morrison**

Staring unflinchingly into the abyss of slavery, this spellbinding New York Times bestseller transforms history into a story as powerful as *Exodus* and as intimate as a lullaby.

Sethe, its protagonist, was born a slave and escaped to Ohio, but eighteen years later she is still not free. She has too many memories of Sweet Home, the beautiful farm where so many hideous things happened. And Sethe's new home is haunted by the ghost of her baby, who died nameless and whose tombstone is engraved with a single word: *Beloved*. Filled with bitter poetry and suspense as taut as a rope, *Beloved* is a towering achievement.

Trigger Warnings: Death of a Child, Rape, Breast Feeding, Abuse, Racism, Slavey, dehumanization - [Source](#)

***Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley ***

A timeless, terrifying tale of one man's obsession to create life—and the monster that became his legacy. "If ever a book needed to be placed in context, it's *Frankenstein*" (The New York Times Book Review).

A timeless, terrifying tale of one man's obsession to create life—and the monster that became his legacy. Publisher description retrieved from Google Books.

Trigger Warnings: Medical Experimentation, death of parents, murder.

Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen *

Since its immediate success in 1813, *Pride and Prejudice* has remained one of the most popular novels in the English language. Jane Austen called this brilliant work "her own darling child" and its vivacious heroine, Elizabeth Bennet, "as delightful a creature as ever appeared in print." The romantic clash between the opinionated Elizabeth and her proud beau, Mr. Darcy, is a splendid performance of civilized sparring. And Jane Austen's radiant wit sparkles as her characters dance a delicate quadrille of flirtation and intrigue, making this book the most superb comedy of manners of Regency England.

Trigger Warnings: Classism, Misogyny, alcohol consumption

Oedipus Rex* by Sophocles *

Considered by many the greatest of the classic Greek tragedies, *Oedipus Rex* is Sophocles' finest play and a work of extraordinary power and resonance. Aristotle considered it a masterpiece of dramatic construction and refers to it frequently in the *Poetics*.

In presenting the story of King Oedipus and the tragedy that ensues when he discovers he has inadvertently killed his father and married his mother, the play exhibits near-perfect harmony of character and action. Moreover, the masterly use of dramatic irony greatly intensifies the impact of the agonizing events and emotions experienced by Oedipus and the other characters in the play. Now these and many other facets of this towering tragedy may be studied and appreciated in Dover's attractive inexpensive

edition of one of the great landmarks of Western drama. Publisher description retrieved from Google Books.

Trigger Warnings: Incest, extreme violence, gore, death, suicide, grief, death of parents, war, self harm, murder - [Source](#)

Death of a Salesman by Arthur Miller

Ever since it was first performed in 1949, *Death of a Salesman* has been recognized as a milestone of the American theater. In the person of Willy Loman, the aging, failing salesman who makes his living riding on a smile and a shoeshine, Arthur Miller redefined the tragic hero as a man whose dreams are at once insupportably vast and dangerously insubstantial. He has given us a figure whose name has become a symbol for a kind of majestic grandiosity—and a play that compresses epic extremes of humor and anguish, promise and loss, between the four walls of an American living room. Publisher description retrieved from Google Books.

"By common consent, this is one of the finest dramas in the whole range of the American theater." —Brooks Atkinson, *The New York Times*

"So simple, central, and terrible that the run of playwrights would neither care nor dare to attempt it." —*Time*

Trigger Warnings: Attempted suicide, abuse, cheating, domestic violence, imprisonment

A Doll House by Henrik Ibsen *

Nora Helmer, wife to Torvald and mother of three children, appears to enjoy living the life of a pampered, indulged child. But as her economic dependence becomes brutally clear, Nora's acceptance of the status quo undergoes a profound change. To the horror of the bewildered Torvald, himself caught in the tight web of a conservative society which demands that he exert strict control, Nora comes to see that the only possible true course of action is to leave the family home. Publisher description retrieved from Google Books.

Trigger Warnings: Self harm, sexual assault, domestic violence, power imbalance from stronger gender roles

Texts that have appeared rarely on the AP exam, but we will read for class:

***All the Light We Cannot See* by Anthony Doer ***

Marie-Laure lives with her father in Paris near the Museum of Natural History, where he works as the master of its thousands of locks. When she is six, Marie-Laure goes blind and her father builds a perfect miniature of their neighborhood so she can memorize it by touch and navigate her way home. When she is twelve, the Nazis occupy Paris and father and daughter flee to the walled citadel of Saint-Malo, where Marie-Laure's reclusive great-uncle lives in a tall house by the sea. With them they carry what might be the museum's most valuable and dangerous jewel.

In a mining town in Germany, the orphan Werner grows up with his younger sister, enchanted by a crude radio they find. Werner becomes an expert at building and fixing these crucial new instruments, a talent that wins him a place at a brutal academy for Hitler Youth, then a special assignment to track the resistance. More and more aware of the human cost of his intelligence, Werner travels through the heart of the war and, finally, into Saint-Malo, where his story and Marie-Laure's converge. Publisher description retrieved from Google Books.

Trigger Warnings: Antisemitism & Nazism, rape, murder, torture, bullying, and war themes. - [Source](#)

The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood *

Offred is a Handmaid in the Republic of Gilead, serving in the household of the enigmatic Commander and his bitter wife. She may go out once a day to markets whose signs are now pictures because women are not allowed to read. She must pray that the Commander makes her pregnant, for in a time of declining birthrates her value lies in her fertility, and failure means exile to the dangerously polluted Colonies. Offred can remember a time when she lived with her husband and daughter and had a job, before she lost even her own name. Now she navigates the intimate secrets of those who control her every move, risking her life in breaking the rules. Publisher description retrieved from Google Books.

Trigger Warnings: Cheating, death, family separation, forced pregnancy, hanging, oppressive government, prostitution, rape, sexism - [Source](#)

The Divine Comedy* by Dante Alighieri *

The plot of *The Divine Comedy* is simple: a man, generally assumed to be Dante himself, is miraculously enabled to undertake an ultramundane journey, which leads him to visit the souls in Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise. [Source](#)

Trigger Warnings: bestiality, blood, gore, horent/wasp attacks, torture, graphic violence - [Source](#)

Devil in the White City by Erik Larson *

Two men, each handsome and unusually adept at his chosen work, embodied an element of the great dynamic that characterized America's rush toward the twentieth century. The architect was Daniel Hudson Burnham, the fair's brilliant director of works and the builder of many of the country's most important structures, including the Flatiron Building in New York and Union Station in Washington, D.C. The murderer was Henry H. Holmes, a young doctor who, in a malign parody of the White City, built his "World's Fair Hotel" just west of the fairgrounds--a torture palace complete with dissection table, gas chamber, and 3,000-degree crematorium.

Burnham overcame tremendous obstacles and tragedies as he organized the talents of Frederick Law Olmsted, Charles McKim, Louis Sullivan, and others to transform swampy Jackson Park into the White City, while Holmes used the attraction of the great fair and his own satanic charms to lure scores of young women to their deaths. What makes the story all the more chilling is that Holmes really lived, walking the grounds of that dream city by the lake.

The Devil in the White City draws the reader into the enchantment of the Gilded Age, made all the more appealing by a supporting cast of real-life characters, including Buffalo Bill, Theodore Dreiser, Susan B. Anthony, Thomas Edison, Archduke Francis Ferdinand, and others. Erik Larson's gifts as a storyteller are magnificently displayed in this rich narrative of the master builder, the killer, and the great fair that obsessed them both. Publisher description retrieved from Google Books.

Trigger Warnings: Aboration, Child abuse, confinement, death, kidnapping, torture, violence, murder, execution, demon possession, supernatural influences, drugs and alcohol, sexual content, words such as "damn, adn hell" are used when referring to historical figures. - [Source](#)

***Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* by Robert Pirsig ***

One of the most important and influential books written in the past half-century, Robert M. Pirsig's *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* is a powerful, moving, and penetrating examination of how we live . . . and a breathtaking meditation on how to live better. Here is the book that transformed a generation: an unforgettable narration of a summer motorcycle trip across America's Northwest, undertaken by a father and his young son. A story of love and fear -- of growth, discovery, and acceptance -- that becomes a profound personal and philosophical odyssey into life's fundamental questions, this uniquely exhilarating modern classic is both touching and transcendent,

resonant with the myriad confusions of existence . . . and the small, essential triumphs that propel us forward.

Trigger Warnings: depiction of car accidents involving motor vehicles such as cars, buses, trucks, and motorcycles; as well as hit-and-runs with bicycles and pedestrians. See also Boating accidents, Plane crashes, and Train accidents - [Source](#)

The Canterbury Tales by Geoffrey Chaucer *

In *The Canterbury Tales* Chaucer created one of the great touchstones of English literature, a masterly collection of chivalric romances, moral allegories and low farce. A story-telling competition between a group of pilgrims from all walks of life is the occasion for a series of tales that range from the Knight's account of courtly love and the ebullient Wife of Bath's Arthurian legend, to the ribald anecdotes of the Miller and the Cook. Rich and diverse, *The Canterbury Tales* offer us an unrivaled glimpse into the life and mind of medieval England. Publisher description retrieved from Google Books.

Trigger Warnings: Rape, corruption, Catholic church hypocrisy, and violence

The Iliad by Homer *

Probably written in the ninth century and based on an actual historical event that occurred in the thirteenth century B.C., Homer's "*Iliad*" is one of the great epic poems of the Western world. The poem essentially tells the story of a few days near the end of the ten-year-long Trojan War, detailing the destructive quarrel between the great warrior-hero Achilles and King Agamemnon, the battle between Paris and Menelaus for Helen of Troy, the Greek assault on the city, the Trojan counterattacks, the intervention of the gods on the part of their favorites on either side, and numerous other incidents and events.

Vast in scope, possessing extraordinary lyricism and poignancy, this time-honored masterpiece brilliantly conveys the inconsistencies of gods and men, the tumultuous intensity of conflict, and, ultimately, the enormous waste of life that results from war.

This inexpensive edition reproduces the celebrated Samuel Butler prose translation, admired for its simple, unadorned style, clarity, and readability. Publisher description retrieved from Google Books.

Trigger Warnings: graphic violence, sex, foul language, drinking, drugs, and smoking, animals being slaughtered

Parents need to know that the ancient Greek epic poem *The Iliad*, by Homer, depicts the women, warriors, gods and goddesses involved in the fictional Trojan War between the Trojans and Achaeans. Whereas personal conflicts between the

characters propel the plot, most of the action takes place on the battlefield, where many men are killed or injured. This essential volume of classical literature includes a lot of graphic violence -- mostly inflicted by fighting with spears -- and some sex in which women are usually objectified, as they are considered prizes to be won in battle. As in Homer's *Odyssey*, there are also graphic descriptions of animals being slaughtered and sacrificed, and a good deal of wine is consumed.

- [Source](#)

The Odyssey by Homer

The epic tale of Odysseus and his ten-year journey home after the Trojan War forms one of the earliest and greatest works of Western literature. Confronted by natural and supernatural threats – shipwrecks, battles, monsters and the implacable enmity of the sea-god Poseidon – Odysseus must use his wit and native cunning if he is to reach his homeland safely and overcome the obstacles that, even there, await him.- [Source](#)

Trigger Warnings: murder, slaver, kidnapping & captivity, shipwrecks, Trojan War

Students were disturbed by Homer's "relentless" depiction of mayhem and gore: "Like the X-Men franchise, but Wolverine is definitely a more likable mutant than Achilles," concluded one respondent. Several students objected to the treatment of women -- mostly relegated to domestic activities or war booty -- and demanded to know if there were other epic poems by blind Archaic Greek bards that offered examples of female empowerment.

Also, a small but vocal number of students wearing PETA t-shirts protested the "inhumane" treatment of the dog Argo, left to die on a dung heap. Given the youthful impressionability of our customer base, we find potential problems with the Lotus-eater episode, as well as the character Helen's liberal use of pharmacological agents. [Source](#)

Parents need to know that, as the name implies, *The Odyssey* is an epic poem of journey and discovery. It's an essential book for students of literature and students of Greek history and culture. Because the book recounts not only Odysseus' tumultuous journey home and his son Telemakhos' coming of age but also tales of Odysseus' bravery in the Trojan War, it includes a good deal of violence. There's also some implied sexual activity (though nothing graphic). [Source](#)

The Good Earth by Pearl Buck

Though more than seventy years have passed since this remarkable novel won the Pulitzer Prize, it has retained its popularity and become one of the great modern classics. In *The Good Earth* Pearl S. Buck paints an indelible portrait of China in the

1920s, when the last emperor reigned and the vast political and social upheavals of the twentieth century were but distant rumblings. This moving, classic story of the honest farmer Wang Lung and his selfless wife O-Lan is must reading for those who would fully appreciate the sweeping changes that have occurred in the lives of the Chinese people during the last century.

Nobel Prize winner Pearl S. Buck traces the whole cycle of life: its terrors, its passions, its ambitions and rewards. Her brilliant novel—beloved by millions of readers—is a universal tale of an ordinary family caught in the tide of history. Publisher description retrieved from Google Books.

Trigger Warning: Refers to females as “bitch”. There are numerous references to sex outside of marriage in a culture with sex slaves and mistresses as the norm. [Source](#)

■ Common AP Titles.pdf

AP English IV

You have several options for summer reading that will greatly increase your chances of success on the AP English Literature and Composition exam. Choose one of the novels or plays that you read in English 1, 2, & 3 and re-read it.

If you have never finished a whole book (no shame - I had plenty of AP seniors who had never finished reading a whole book before they got to my class):

- grab one that you started but never finished and challenge yourself to finish it.
- choose something that you think might be interesting and challenge yourself to read the whole thing this summer.
- pick a novel that was turned into a movie that you liked and challenge yourself to read it cover to cover.
- find a self-improvement book that speaks to something you'd like to change about yourself and read a few pages of that every day, trying to implement the good advice it gives you along the way.

Check out this list of the most commonly cited novels/plays on the AP Literature exam and read the descriptions online. Choose books that sound interesting to you, and finish as many as you can this summer.

***Romeo and Juliet* by William Shakespeare**

When Romeo first lays eyes on the bewitching Juliet, it's love at first sight. But though their love runs true and deep, it is also completely forbidden. With family and fate determined to keep them apart, will Romeo and Juliet find a way to be together?

Trigger Warnings: Suicide by poisoning, alcohol consumption, murder, sword violence and stabbing, underage romance, war

***To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee**

"Shoot all the bluejays you want, if you can hit 'em, but remember it's a sin to kill a mockingbird."

A lawyer's advice to his children as he defends the real mockingbird of Harper Lee's classic novel--a black man charged with the rape of a white girl. Through the young eyes of Scout and Jem Finch, Harper Lee explores with rich humor and unswerving honesty the irrationality of adult attitudes toward race and class in the Deep South of the 1930s. The conscience of a town steeped in prejudice, violence, and hypocrisy is pricked by the

stamina and quiet heroism of one man's struggle for justice--but the weight of history will only tolerate so much. Publisher description retrieved from Google Books.

Trigger Warnings: Racism, racial slurs, rape, substance abuse, murder, gun violence, knife violence, stabbing, animal death, human cruelty

***Julius Caesar* by William Shakespeare**

Julius Caesar is among the best of Shakespeare's historical and political plays. Dealing with events surrounding the assassination of Julius Caesar in 44 B.C., the drama vividly illustrates the ways in which power and corruption are linked.

The cry 'Peace, freedom and liberty!' is used to exculpate brutal realities, while personal ambitions taint public actions. Rich in characterisation and replete with eloquent rhetoric, Julius Caesar remains engrossing and topical: a play for today.

Trigger Warnings: Treason, murder, supernatural elements

***Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley**

A timeless, terrifying tale of one man's obsession to create life—and the monster that became his legacy. “If ever a book needed to be placed in context, it's Frankenstein” (The New York Times Book Review).

A timeless, terrifying tale of one man's obsession to create life—and the monster that became his legacy. Publisher description retrieved from Google Books.

Trigger Warnings: Medical Experimentation, death of parents, murder.

***The Hobbit* by J.R.R. Tolkien**

In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit. Not a nasty, dirty, wet hole, filled with the ends of worms and an oozy smell, nor yet a dry, bare, sandy hole with nothing in it to sit down on or to eat: it was a hobbit-hole, and that means comfort.

Now recognized as a timeless classic, this introduction to the hobbit Bilbo Baggins, the wizard Gandalf, Gollum, and the spectacular world of Middle-earth recounts of the adventures of a reluctant hero, a powerful and dangerous ring, and the cruel dragon Smaug the Magnificent.

Trigger Warnings: Spiders, war, recreational drugs use, smoking, alcohol, kidnapping, whipping

***A Raisin in the Sun* by Lorraine Hansberry**

A Raisin in the Sun takes place over the course of several weeks in the life of an African-American family, the Youngers. The Youngers live on Chicago's south side in the 1950s. The matriarch, Mama, is about to and does receive an insurance check of \$10,000 from her deceased husband's life insurance policy. Each adult family member has a different idea about how to spend the money. Mama wants to leave their cramped apartment and buy a house in the suburbs. Her son, Walter Lee, wants to invest the money in a liquor store. His wife, Ruth (dismayed to discover that she is pregnant), agrees with Mama. Meanwhile, Mama's daughter, Beneatha, wants to use the money for medical school tuition.

When the check comes in, Mama entrusts the money to Walter Lee. He gives it all to a friend to invest, but the friend steals the money. Despite this setback, the family decides to move to the suburbs (over the protests of the white neighborhood association) taking with them their meager possessions and their hopes for the future. - [Source](#)

Trigger Warnings: profanity (includes d*mn / damned (pp. 34, 85); h*ll (pp. 38, 56, 83, 84, 143, 149; for Christ's sake, oh my God (p. 46); son of a b*tch (pp. 85, 144); g*dd*mit (p. 127); The "N" word (p. 144)); Alcohol and drug use, Violence and crime, Sexual content - [Source](#)

***The Great Gatsby* by F.Scott Fitzgerald**

The story of the mysteriously wealthy Jay Gatsby and his love for the beautiful Daisy Buchanan, of lavish parties on Long Island at a time when The New York Times noted "gin was the national drink and sex the national obsession," it is an exquisitely crafted tale of America in the 1920s. Publisher description retrieved from Google Books.

Triggers: Alcohol, Character death, Cheating, Class discrimination, Mrder, Misogynistic violence, Racism, Wealth hording

***The Scarlet Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne ***

14 times -2015 (American)

The Puritans thought Hester Prynne's crime was unforgivable. She was convicted, imprisoned--and then forced to wear, forever, a public reminder of her sin. The Scarlet letter. The Letter was unending punishment: it set Hester apart from society, it tormented her days and haunted her soul.

But the Letter haunted others, as well, its mystery turned Roger Chillingworth from a gentle healer into a man driven by revenge. Its meaning burned into Rev. Arthur Dimsdale's heart, as deadly as cancer. And its power loomed over the life of Hester's daughter, the uncontrollable child Pearl.

Four people would be destroyed by an entangled web of guilt and secrets, unless one of them had the courage--and love--to reveal the truth of--The Scarlet Letter.

Triggers: Adultery, Misogyny, Slut shaming

***Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Bronte**

Penniless, orphaned, locked away in a prison-like boarding school, Jane Eyre has one chance for happiness: in the great mansion of Thornfield, as governess to a little French girl, the adopted ward of an eccentric millionaire..

Edward Rochester is troubled, cynical, moody--but funny, brilliant, giving, and sensitive; little Adele is a delight; Thornfield has all the beauty Jane could ever want. Life should be perfect..

But Jane Eyre and her decades-older employer are falling desperately in love--

And Thornfield holds a living horror that can, with no warning, destroy Edward, Jane, Adele..A murderous secret ready to devour Jane Eyre's dreams, hopes--even her life.
Publisher description retrieved from Google Books.

Triggers: Ableism, Blinding, Death, Ethnic Slurs, Fire, Illness, Mutilation, Parental Abuse, Sexism, Suicide

Colloquium IV

All of the marked following titles have made an appearance on the AP exam not just a few, but several times, and many of these titles are novels we will be reading together in class (additionally marked).

Our recommendation is that you read 2-3 of these novels over the summer to not only keep from losing your valuable reading and comprehension strength over the long months but to also start preparing for the AP exams early. Our classrooms and the library may even have a few limited copies for you to check out if you request one early enough.

(Has appeared on AP Exam) (Will read sophomore/junior year*)
(Will read senior year**)
“X times” refers to how often the title has appeared on the AP exam
“20XX” refers to the most recent year the title appeared on the AP exam

Invisible Man** by Ralph Ellison – 28 times - 2016 (American)

Wuthering Heights by Emily Bronte – 23 times - 2017 (British)

Great Expectations by Charles Dickens – 20 times - 2016 (British)

King Lear by William Shakespeare – 17 times – 2014 (British)

Heart of Darkness by Joseph Conrad – 18 times -2016 (British)

Jane Eyre by Charlotte Bronte – 18 times; 2017 (British)

Crime and Punishment by Fyodor Dostoyevsky -- 17 times – 2016 (Russian)

Moby Dick by Herman Melville -- 15 times; 2009 (American)

Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man by James Joyce – 14 times – 2013 (British)

Adventures of Huckleberry Finn by Mark Twain – 14 times -2011 (American)

The Scarlet Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne – 14 times -2015 (American)

Their Eyes Were Watching God by Zora Neale Hurston – 13 times; 2014 (Amer.)

The Awakening by Kate Chopin – 13 times – 2014 (American)

Catch-22 by Joseph Heller – 14 times – 2016 (American)

The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald – 13 times – 2016 (American)

Other texts that have appeared frequently on the AP exam:

(A work by William Shakespeare is always on the test; in addition to *King Lear*, the most frequent titles have been *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *The Tempest*, *Twelfth Night*, and *Julius Caesar*.)

***Never Let Me Go* by Kazuo Ishiguro**

Hailsham seems like a pleasant English boarding school, far from the influences of the city. Its students are well tended and supported, trained in art and literature, and become just the sort of people the world wants them to be. But, curiously, they are taught nothing of the outside world and are allowed little contact with it.

Within the grounds of Hailsham, Kathy grows from schoolgirl to young woman, but it's only when she and her friends Ruth and Tommy leave the safe grounds of the school (as they always knew they would) that they realize the full truth of what Hailsham is. -

[Source](#)

Trigger Warnings: Medical experimentation, bullying, death of a loved one, homophobia, infertility, slut shaming, toxic relationships.

***Poisonwood Bible* by Barbara Kingsolver**

Barbara Kingsolver's acclaimed international bestseller tells the story of an American missionary family in the Congo during a poignant chapter in African history. It spins the tale of the fierce evangelical Baptist, Nathan Price, who takes his wife and four daughters on a missionary journey into the heart of darkness of the Belgian Congo in 1959. They carry with them to Africa all they believe they will need from home, but soon find that all of it – from garden seeds to the King James Bible – is calamitously transformed on African soil. -[Source](#)

Trigger Warnings: Character death, child death, war themes, racism, misogyny, domestic violence.

1984* by George Orwell *

The year 1984 has come and gone, but George Orwell's prophetic, nightmarish vision in 1949 of the world we were becoming is timelier than ever. 1984 is still the great modern classic of "negative utopia"—a startlingly original and haunting novel that creates an imaginary world that is completely convincing, from the first sentence to the last four words. No one can deny the novel's hold on the imaginations of whole generations, or the power of its admonitions—a power that seems to grow, not lessen, with the passage of time. - [Source](#)

Trigger Warnings: Suicide, torture , gaslighting, sexually explicit scenes, violence.

Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley *

Far in the future, the World Controllers have created the ideal society. Through genetic engineering, brainwashing and recreational sex and drugs all its members are happy consumers. Bernard Marx seems alone in feeling discontent, harboring an ill-defined longing to break free. A visit to one of the few remaining Savage Reservations, where the old, imperfect life still continues, may be the cure for his distress... - [Source](#)

Trigger Warnings: Racism, racial slurs, queermisia (LGBTQ+) , misogyny (contempt for women) , eugenics “planned breeding”, cheating, suicide, self harm, self-flagellation, domestic abuse, violence, child abuse, recreational drug use and abuse, overdoses, emesis (vomiting), parental death, hanging, electrocution, animal neglect, animal death, dead bodies. [Source](#)

***Cry, the Beloved Country* by Alan Paton**

Cry, the Beloved Country is the deeply moving story of the Zulu pastor Stephen Kumalo and his son, Absalom, set against the background of a land and a people riven by racial injustice. Remarkable for its lyricism, unforgettable for character and incident, Cry, the Beloved Country is a classic work of love and hope, courage and endurance, born of the dignity of man. Publisher description retrieved from Google Books.

Trigger Warnings: prostitution, alcohol abuse, racial segregation, apartheid, oppressoin

***A Prayer for Owen Meany* by John Irving**

In the summer of 1953, two eleven-year-old boys—best friends—are playing in a Little League baseball game in Gravesend, New Hampshire. One of the boys hits a foul ball that kills the other boy’s mother. The boy who hits the ball doesn’t believe in accidents; Owen Meany believes he is God’s instrument. What happens to Owen, after that 1953 foul ball, is extraordinary and terrifying. A Prayer for Owen Meany was first published in 1989. This Modern Library edition includes a new Introduction by the author. Publisher description retrieved from Google Books.

Trigger Warnings: profanity, violence, war , anger

***Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Becket**

The story revolves around two seemingly homeless men waiting for someone—or something—named Godot. Vladimir and Estragon wait near a tree, inhabiting a drama spun of their own consciousness. The result is a comical wordplay of poetry, dreamscapes, and nonsense, which has been interpreted as mankind's inexhaustible search for meaning. Beckett's language pioneered an expressionistic minimalism that captured the existential post-World War II Europe. His play remains one of the most magical and beautiful allegories of our time. Publisher description retrieved from Google Books.

Trigger Warnings: death, slavery, warnings of suicide

***Beloved* by Toni Morrison**

Staring unflinchingly into the abyss of slavery, this spellbinding New York Times bestseller transforms history into a story as powerful as Exodus and as intimate as a lullaby.

Sethe, its protagonist, was born a slave and escaped to Ohio, but eighteen years later she is still not free. She has too many memories of Sweet Home, the beautiful farm where so many hideous things happened. And Sethe's new home is haunted by the ghost of her baby, who died nameless and whose tombstone is engraved with a single word: Beloved. Filled with bitter poetry and suspense as taut as a rope, *Beloved* is a towering achievement.

Trigger Warnings: Death of a Child, Rape, Breast Feeding, Abuse, Racism, Slavery, dehumanization - [Source](#)

***Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley ***

A timeless, terrifying tale of one man's obsession to create life—and the monster that became his legacy. "If ever a book needed to be placed in context, it's *Frankenstein*" (The New York Times Book Review).

A timeless, terrifying tale of one man's obsession to create life—and the monster that became his legacy. Publisher description retrieved from Google Books.

Trigger Warnings: Medical Experimentation, death of parents, murder.

Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen *

Since its immediate success in 1813, *Pride and Prejudice* has remained one of the most popular novels in the English language. Jane Austen called this brilliant work "her own darling child" and its vivacious heroine, Elizabeth Bennet, "as delightful a creature as

ever appeared in print." The romantic clash between the opinionated Elizabeth and her proud beau, Mr. Darcy, is a splendid performance of civilized sparring. And Jane Austen's radiant wit sparkles as her characters dance a delicate quadrille of flirtation and intrigue, making this book the most superb comedy of manners of Regency England.

Trigger Warnings: Classism, Misogyny, alcohol consumption

Oedipus Rex* by Sophocles *

Considered by many the greatest of the classic Greek tragedies, *Oedipus Rex* is Sophocles' finest play and a work of extraordinary power and resonance. Aristotle considered it a masterpiece of dramatic construction and refers to it frequently in the *Poetics*.

In presenting the story of King Oedipus and the tragedy that ensues when he discovers he has inadvertently killed his father and married his mother, the play exhibits near-perfect harmony of character and action. Moreover, the masterly use of dramatic irony greatly intensifies the impact of the agonizing events and emotions experienced by Oedipus and the other characters in the play. Now these and many other facets of this towering tragedy may be studied and appreciated in Dover's attractive inexpensive edition of one of the great landmarks of Western drama. Publisher description retrieved from Google Books.

Trigger Warnings: Incest, extreme violence, gore, death, suicide, grief, death of parents, war, self harm, murder - [Source](#)

***Death of a Salesman* by Arthur Miller**

Ever since it was first performed in 1949, *Death of a Salesman* has been recognized as a milestone of the American theater. In the person of Willy Loman, the aging, failing salesman who makes his living riding on a smile and a shoeshine, Arthur Miller redefined the tragic hero as a man whose dreams are at once insupportably vast and dangerously insubstantial. He has given us a figure whose name has become a symbol for a kind of majestic grandiosity—and a play that compresses epic extremes of humor and anguish, promise and loss, between the four walls of an American living room. Publisher description retrieved from Google Books.

"By common consent, this is one of the finest dramas in the whole range of the American theater." —Brooks Atkinson, *The New York Times*

"So simple, central, and terrible that the run of playwrights would neither care nor dare to attempt it." —*Time*

Trigger Warnings: Attempted suicide, abuse, cheating, domestic violence, imprisonment

A Doll House by Henrik Ibsen *

Nora Helmer, wife to Torvald and mother of three children, appears to enjoy living the life of a pampered, indulged child. But as her economic dependence becomes brutally clear, Nora's acceptance of the status quo undergoes a profound change. To the horror of the bewildered Torvald, himself caught in the tight web of a conservative society which demands that he exert strict control, Nora comes to see that the only possible true course of action is to leave the family home. Publisher description retrieved from Google Books.

Trigger Warnings: Self harm, sexual assault, domestic violence, power imbalance from stronger gender roles

Books of note that have appeared rarely, but we will still be reading for class:

All the Light We Cannot See by Anthony Doerr *

Marie-Laure lives with her father in Paris near the Museum of Natural History, where he works as the master of its thousands of locks. When she is six, Marie-Laure goes blind and her father builds a perfect miniature of their neighborhood so she can memorize it by touch and navigate her way home. When she is twelve, the Nazis occupy Paris and father and daughter flee to the walled citadel of Saint-Malo, where Marie-Laure's reclusive great-uncle lives in a tall house by the sea. With them they carry what might be the museum's most valuable and dangerous jewel.

In a mining town in Germany, the orphan Werner grows up with his younger sister, enchanted by a crude radio they find. Werner becomes an expert at building and fixing these crucial new instruments, a talent that wins him a place at a brutal academy for Hitler Youth, then a special assignment to track the resistance. More and more aware of the human cost of his intelligence, Werner travels through the heart of the war and, finally, into Saint-Malo, where his story and Marie-Laure's converge. Publisher description retrieved from Google Books.

Trigger Warnings: Antisemitism & Nazism, rape, murder, torture, bullying, and war themes. - [Source](#)

The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood *

Offred is a Handmaid in the Republic of Gilead, serving in the household of the enigmatic Commander and his bitter wife. She may go out once a day to markets whose signs are now pictures because women are not allowed to read. She must pray that the Commander makes her pregnant, for in a time of declining birthrates her value lies in her fertility, and failure means exile to the dangerously polluted Colonies. Offred can remember a time when she lived with her husband and daughter and had a job, before she lost even her own name. Now she navigates the intimate secrets of those who control her every move, risking her life in breaking the rules. Publisher description retrieved from Google Books.

Trigger Warnings: Cheating, death, family separation, forced pregnancy, hanging, oppressive government, prostitution, rape, sexism - [Source](#)

The Divine Comedy* by Dante Alighieri *

The plot of *The Divine Comedy* is simple: a man, generally assumed to be Dante himself, is miraculously enabled to undertake an ultramundane journey, which leads him to visit the souls in Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise. [Source](#)

Trigger Warnings: bestiality, blood, gore, horent/wasp attacks, torture, graphic violence - [Source](#)

***Devil in the White City* by Erik Larson ***

Two men, each handsome and unusually adept at his chosen work, embodied an element of the great dynamic that characterized America's rush toward the twentieth century. The architect was Daniel Hudson Burnham, the fair's brilliant director of works and the builder of many of the country's most important structures, including the Flatiron Building in New York and Union Station in Washington, D.C. The murderer was Henry H. Holmes, a young doctor who, in a malign parody of the White City, built his "World's Fair Hotel" just west of the fairgrounds--a torture palace complete with dissection table, gas chamber, and 3,000-degree crematorium.

Burnham overcame tremendous obstacles and tragedies as he organized the talents of Frederick Law Olmsted, Charles McKim, Louis Sullivan, and others to transform swampy Jackson Park into the White City, while Holmes used the attraction of the great fair and his own satanic charms to lure scores of young women to their deaths. What makes the story all the more chilling is that Holmes really lived, walking the grounds of that dream city by the lake.

The Devil in the White City draws the reader into the enchantment of the Gilded Age, made all the more appealing by a supporting cast of real-life characters, including Buffalo Bill, Theodore Dreiser, Susan B. Anthony, Thomas Edison, Archduke Francis Ferdinand, and others. Erik Larson's gifts as a storyteller are magnificently displayed in this rich narrative of the master builder, the killer, and the great fairy that obsessed them both. Publisher description retrieved from Google Books.

Trigger Warnings: Abortion, Child abuse, confinement, death, kidnapping, torture, violence, murder, execution, demon possession, supernatural influences, drugs and alcohol, sexual content, words such as “damn, adn hell” are used when referring to historical figures. - [Source](#)

***Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* by Robert Pirsig ***

One of the most important and influential books written in the past half-century, Robert M. Pirsig's *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* is a powerful, moving, and penetrating examination of how we live . . . and a breathtaking meditation on how to live better. Here is the book that transformed a generation: an unforgettable narration of a summer motorcycle trip across America's Northwest, undertaken by a father and his young son. A story of love and fear -- of growth, discovery, and acceptance -- that becomes a profound personal and philosophical odyssey into life's fundamental questions, this uniquely exhilarating modern classic is both touching and transcendent, resonant with the myriad confusions of existence . . . and the small, essential triumphs that propel us forward. Publisher description retrieved from Google Books.

Trigger Warnings: the depiction of car accidents involving motor vehicles such as cars, buses, trucks, and motorcycles; as well as hit-and-runs with bicycles and pedestrians. See also Boating accidents, Plane crashes, and Train accidents - [Source](#)

***The Canterbury Tales* by Geoffrey Chaucer ***

In *The Canterbury Tales* Chaucer created one of the great touchstones of English literature, a masterly collection of chivalric romances, moral allegories and low farce. A story-telling competition between a group of pilgrims from all walks of life is the occasion for a series of tales that range from the Knight's account of courtly love and the ebullient Wife of Bath's Arthurian legend, to the ribald anecdotes of the Miller and the Cook. Rich and diverse, *The Canterbury Tales* offer us an unrivaled glimpse into the life and mind of medieval England. Publisher description retrieved from Google Books.

Trigger Warnings: Rape, corruption, Catholic church hypocrisy, and violence

The Iliad by Homer *

Probably written in the ninth century and based on an actual historical event that occurred in the thirteenth century B.C., Homer's "Iliad" is one of the great epic poems of the Western world. The poem essentially tells the story of a few days near the end of the ten-year-long Trojan War, detailing the destructive quarrel between the great warrior-hero Achilles and King Agamemnon, the battle between Paris and Menelaus for Helen of Troy, the Greek assault on the city, the Trojan counterattacks, the intervention of the gods on the part of their favorites on either side, and numerous other incidents and events.

Vast in scope, possessing extraordinary lyricism and poignancy, this time-honored masterpiece brilliantly conveys the inconsistencies of gods and men, the tumultuous intensity of conflict, and, ultimately, the enormous waste of life that results from war.

This inexpensive edition reproduces the celebrated Samuel Butler prose translation, admired for its simple, unadorned style, clarity, and readability. Publisher description retrieved from Google Books.

Trigger Warnings: graphic violence, sex, foul language, drinking, drugs, and smoking, animals being slaughtered

Parents need to know that the ancient Greek epic poem The Iliad, by Homer, depicts the women, warriors, gods and goddesses involved in the fictional Trojan War between the Trojans and Achaians. Whereas personal conflicts between the characters propel the plot, most of the action takes place on the battlefield, where many men are killed or injured. This essential volume of classical literature includes a lot of graphic violence -- mostly inflicted by fighting with spears -- and some sex in which women are usually objectified, as they are considered prizes to be won in battle. As in Homer's Odyssey, there are also graphic descriptions of animals being slaughtered and sacrificed, and a good deal of wine is consumed.

- [Source](#)

The Odyssey by Homer

The epic tale of Odysseus and his ten-year journey home after the Trojan War forms one of the earliest and greatest works of Western literature. Confronted by natural and supernatural threats – shipwrecks, battles, monsters and the implacable enmity of the sea-god Poseidon – Odysseus must use his wit and native cunning if he is to reach his homeland safely and overcome the obstacles that, even there, await him.- [Source](#)

Trigger Warnings: murder, slaver, kidnapping & captivity, shipwrecks, Trojan War

Students were disturbed by Homer's "relentless" depiction of mayhem and gore: "Like the X-Men franchise, but Wolverine is definitely a more likable mutant than

Achilles,” concluded one respondent. Several students objected to the treatment of women -- mostly relegated to domestic activities or war booty -- and demanded to know if there were other epic poems by blind Archaic Greek bards that offered examples of female empowerment.

Also, a small but vocal number of students wearing PETA t-shirts protested the “inhumane” treatment of the dog Argo, left to die on a dung heap. Given the youthful impressionability of our customer base, we find potential problems with the Lotus-eater episode, as well as the character Helen’s liberal use of pharmacological agents. [Source](#)

Parents need to know that, as the name implies, *The Odyssey* is an epic poem of journey and discovery. It’s an essential book for students of literature and students of Greek history and culture. Because the book recounts not only Odysseus’ tumultuous journey home and his son Telemakhos’ coming of age but also tales of Odysseus’ bravery in the Trojan War, it includes a good deal of violence. There’s also some implied sexual activity (though nothing graphic). [Source](#)

***The Good Earth* by Pearl Buck**

Though more than seventy years have passed since this remarkable novel won the Pulitzer Prize, it has retained its popularity and become one of the great modern classics. In *The Good Earth* Pearl S. Buck paints an indelible portrait of China in the 1920s, when the last emperor reigned and the vast political and social upheavals of the twentieth century were but distant rumblings. This moving, classic story of the honest farmer Wang Lung and his selfless wife O-Lan is must reading for those who would fully appreciate the sweeping changes that have occurred in the lives of the Chinese people during the last century.

Nobel Prize winner Pearl S. Buck traces the whole cycle of life: its terrors, its passions, its ambitions and rewards. Her brilliant novel—beloved by millions of readers—is a universal tale of an ordinary family caught in the tide of history. Publisher description retrieved from Google Books.

Trigger Warning: Refers to females as “bitch”. There are numerous references to sex outside of marriage in a culture with sex slaves and mistresses as the norm. [Source](#)