DULWICH COLLEGE
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Sixty-six



A collection of books to challenge, stimulate and enjoy for students in the Upper School

Revised edition, January 2022

Peter Ackroyd *Hawksmoor*



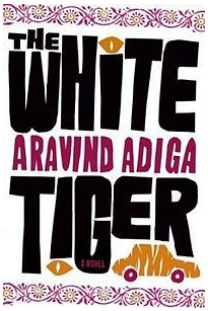
Ackroyd's novel alternates between the eighteenth-century and the 1980s in an elaborate blurring of fact and fiction. In 1711, architect and Satanist Nicholas Dyer, assistant to Sir Christopher Wren, is charged with building seven London churches; he hides a terrible secret in each. In the 1980s, a series of gruesome murders on the sites of old churches are investigated by London detective Nicholas Hawksmoor. Highly praised on publication, the novel won both the Guardian Fiction Prize and the Whitbread Best Novel Award in 1985.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie *Half of a Yellow Sun*



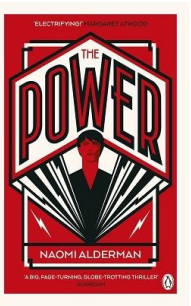
The horrors of the civil war that divided Nigeria in the late 1960s and early 1970s are the backdrop to this powerful novel. But Adichie's nuanced prose prevents this from being simply a traumatic tale, and instead elevates it to a masterful narrative in which ethnic differences and the ensuing descent into starvation and violence are conveyed through the emotional lives of the characters and their fragmenting relationships.

Aravind Adiga *The White Tiger*



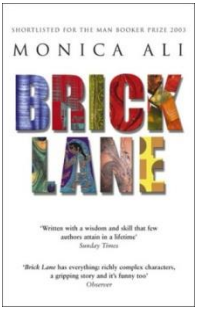
Getting to the top is all that matters to Balram Halwai, but the consequences are devastating. Set in modern India, this novel reveals the corruption, entrenched class system, and the abject poverty that pervades both New Delhi and the countryside. This is a fast-paced, energetic, and angry book that also contains moments of wicked humour.

Naomi Alderman *The Power*



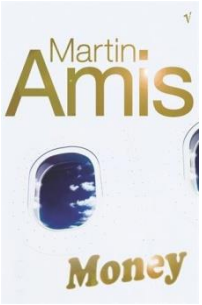
Imagine a world where men are frightened of the power of women. Alderman portrays a speculative world where girls, on reaching puberty, develop the power to send electric bolts from their fingertips and destroy those around them, including the men who have oppressed them. Through the experiences of four key characters, this science fiction thriller asks important questions about gender, power, and responsibility.

Monica Ali *Brick Lane*



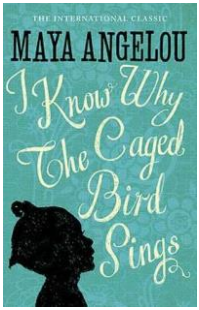
A story of fate set against a background of racial and gang torment in London's East End. Having grown up in Bangladesh, eighteen-year-old Nazneen's life is turned upside down when she moves to a block of flats in Tower Hamlets following an arranged marriage to a man twenty years her senior. Speaking no English, she is confined to her flat sewing for a living and raising her children until fate steps in and she becomes aware of Karim, a young radical, and Nazneen begins to retake control of her life…

Martin Amis *Money*



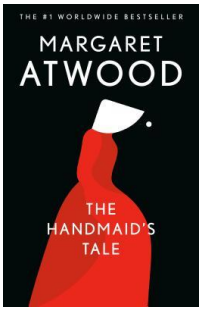
Follow John Self, the grotesque and avaricious narrator of Martin Amis's dark but humorous novel of money and greed, on his reckless drug and drink-fuelled production of his first feature film. Describing himself as '200 pounds of yob genes, booze, snout and fast food', Self's apparent rise and fall in the movie industry is told through a witty continuous monologue. As he negotiates, or rather stumbles drunkenly, through the production of his first film, he confronts demons- real and imaginary- in a satire of the 1980s obsession with money and hedonism.

Maya Angelo *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*



I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings begins in 1930s America. Born into a dysfunctional family, Angelou and her brother are deposited with her grandmother in Arkansas where she experiences racism, misogyny, and an abuse that results in years of selective mutism. However, Angelou's love of the written word remains strong, and through the help of the local librarian, Mrs Bertha Flowers, she regains her voice, literally and metaphorically. From then on, Angelou rails against injustice and reclaims control of her life. The book ends when Maya is 17, and about to embark on a new stage of life with her infant son. This powerful, honest work is both harrowing and uplifting.

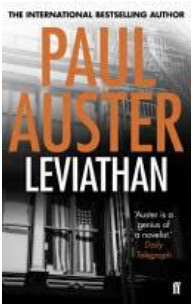
Margaret Atwood *The Handmaid's Tale*



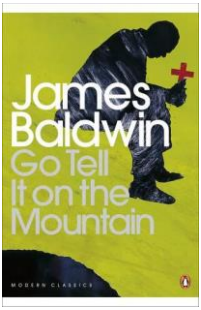
A dystopian novel set in the Republic of Gilead (ex-USA), sometime in the near future, in which an authoritarian, misogynistic, racist, theocracy has taken control. Birth rates are falling so 'handmaids' are used for reproductive purposes by the ruling class. The story is told through the life of Offred, who has just been given her third assignment as a handmaid. Breaking all the rules, she makes contact with the resistance. But is she being double-crossed?

Paul Auster *Leviathan*

"Six days ago, a man blew himself up by the side of a road in northern Wisconsin. There were no witnesses, but it appears that he was sitting on the grass next to his parked car when the bomb he was building accidentally went off. According to the forensic reports that have just been published, the man was killed instantly." Predating 9/11 (the novel was published in 1992), it explores the themes of isolation, terrorism, and the power of the state.

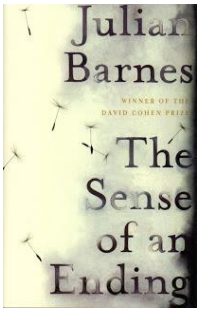


James Baldwin *Go Tell it on the Mountain*



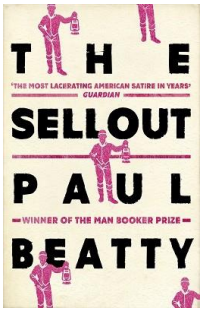
This is the first novel by James Baldwin, a prolific writer and a resounding voice of American literature. Semi-autobiographical, it follows the story of John Grimes, a teenager and stepson of a Pentecostal preacher growing up in Harlem, as he explores his own emerging, independent sense of self. Baldwin captures a tone of rage, spirituality, morality, judgement in this novel where energy bursts off the pages. As Baldwin said, 'Go back to where you started, or as far back as you can, examine all of it, travel your road again and tell the truth about it. Sing or shout or testify or keep it to yourself: but know whence you came.' In this novel, Baldwin takes us back with him.

Julian Barnes *The Sense of an Ending*



This Man Booker Prize winner, the story of a group of school friends, is far more powerful than it initially seems. Ultimately a study of memory, of lives led and mistakes made, it can't help but be deeply affecting. It is narrated by Tony Webster, a retired man who finds that he must re-visit the events of his past to try and solve a mystery.

Paul Beatty *The Sellout*



A biting satire about a young man's isolated upbringing and the race trial that sends him to the Supreme Court, *The Sellout* showcases a comic genius at the top of his game. Born in Dickens on the outskirts of Los Angeles, the narrator of *The Sellout* spent his childhood as the subject in his father's racially charged psychological studies. He is told that his father's work will lead to a memoir that will solve their financial woes. But when his father is killed in a drive-by shooting, he discovers there never was a memoir; all that's left is a bill for a drive-through funeral. What's more, Dickens literally has been wiped off the map to save California further embarrassment. The narrator seeks to right this wrong by the most

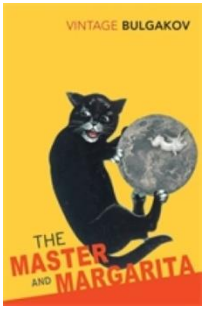
outrageous action conceivable: reinstating slavery and segregating the local high school, which lands him in the Supreme Court. Winner of the Booker Prize 2016.

Laurent Binet *HHhH*



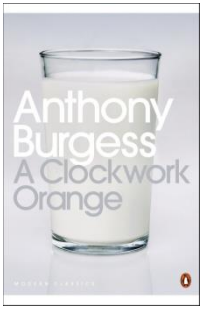
This gripping novel tells the true story of the attempted assassination of the Hangman of Prague, SS General Reinhard Heydrich. It is written in a postmodern style that intersperses the story of the assassination with chapters that describe the research the author has undertaken, and his growing obsession with portraying nothing but the truth. This book attempts to combine the pace of an historical thriller with a contemporary human-interest story and succeeds on both counts.

Mikhail Bulgakov *The Master and Margarita*



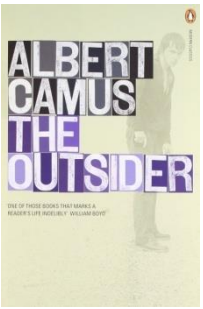
One of the great imaginative novels of the twentieth-century, a fierce political satire, and filled with the most dazzling, surreal humour. The devil makes a personal appearance in Moscow, accompanied by two demons, a naked girl and a huge black cat. When he leaves, the asylums are full and the forces of law and order in disarray. Only the Master, a man devoted to truth, and Margarita, the woman he loves, remain undiminished. An incredible read that provided the inspiration for the Rolling Stones' 'Sympathy for the Devil'.

Anthony Burgess *A Clockwork Orange*



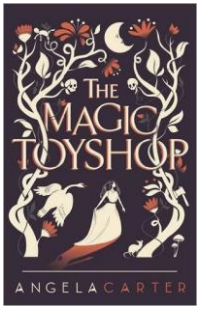
Disturbing, shocking, gratuitously violent, and as timely today as when it was first published. This is a challenging read, questioning society's morality. Posing more questions than it answers, the linguistic experimentation and invention is astounding.

Albert Camus *The Outsider*



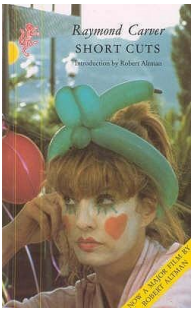
Meursault leads an apparently unremarkable bachelor life in Algiers until he commits a random act of violence. His lack of emotion and failure to show remorse only serve to increase his guilt in the eyes of the law, as he challenges the fundamental values of society.

Angela Carter *The Magic Toyshop*



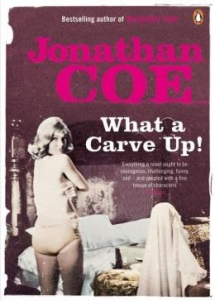
This unsettling novel begins when the newly orphaned Melanie is sent to live with eccentric relatives, including the ominous Uncle Philip, maker of puppets. Carter spins a lyrical, magical, coming-of-age tale in which dark secrets are revealed. The reader is left questioning their definition of good and evil, and reassessing what they know of human motivation.

Raymond Carver *Short Cuts*



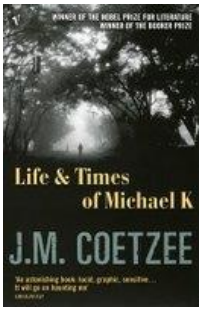
A collection of Carver's short stories that formed the basis for Robert Altman's cult movie of the same name, in which the lives of numerous characters become linked by infidelity and death.

Jonathan Coe *What a Carve Up*



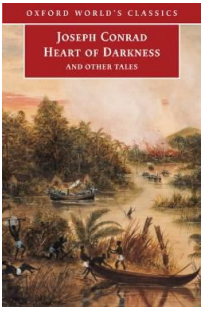
Meet the Winshaws, heirs to the desolate Winshaw Towers and surely the most despicable family in modern English fiction. Coe concocts a feast of political and social satire and serves it up with an Agatha Christi-style country house murder. The comedy is black and leaves you reeling at the decline of British values and the rise of greed during the 1980s.

JM Coetzee *The Life and Times of Michael K*



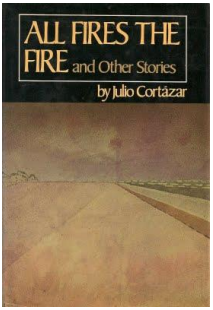
A slim, Kafkaesque volume concerning the progress of an apparently simple-minded man who finds himself in and out of work camps whilst a brutal civil war rages through South Africa. What does it mean to resist? Will he 'pass through the bowels of the state undigested'?

Joseph Conrad *Heart of Darkness*



This is a bleak autobiographical novella, on which the film *Apocalypse Now* is loosely based. It offers readers a philosophical background to life in the heart of Africa at the turn of the twentieth-century, charting not just the geographical exploration of unknown territory, but also the 'heart of darkness' hidden deep within the protagonist.

Julio Cortazar *All Fires the Fire*



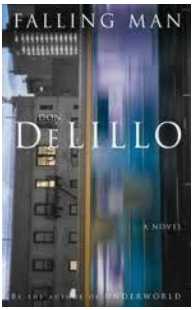
Short stories from a master of the genre. Cortazar takes a simple idea and takes it to its extreme. Ever been in a traffic jam on the South Circular? Well, imagine one that lasted six months…

Louis De Bernières *Captain Corelli's Mandolin*



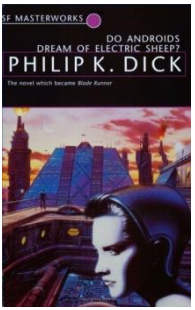
Set on the Greek island of Cephalonia during the Italian occupation of the island in World War II, the novel tells of the romance between Corelli, the music-loving captain of the Italian garrison, and Pelagia, the daughter of the island's doctor. As the war continues and the relationship between the occupiers and the islanders becomes more fraught, the light-hearted nature of the novel also darkens and the ugliness of war becomes more pervasive.

Dom Delillo *Falling Man*



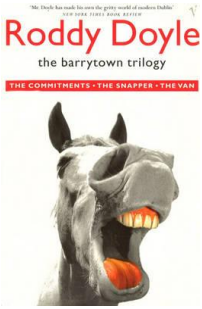
Falling Man begins on September 11, 2001, and looks at the changes in the lives of individuals and the changes of an entire nation's mindset brought about by the events of that day. This is a beautifully crafted book by one of America's finest living novelists.

Philip K Dick *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*



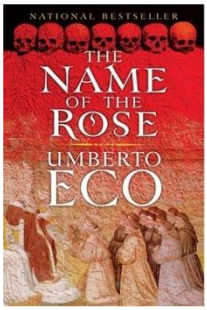
Best known as the novel which became the cult movie *Blade Runner*, it tracks bounty hunter Rick Deckard through the ruins of a devastated earth in search of renegade replicants. A marvellous and complex book.

Roddy Doyle *The Barrytown Trilogy*



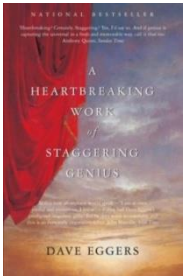
Three gritty but brilliantly funny stories set-in working-class Dublin before the economic miracle of the 1990s. Characterised by fast-paced dialogue, each story focuses on a different member of the Rabbitte family: Jimmy, who forms a soul band in *The Commitments*; Sharon, who finds herself pregnant after a wild night in the pub in *The Snapper*; and Jimmy senior, who runs a chip van during the World Cup fever summer of 1990 in *The Van*.

Umberto Eco *The Name of the Rose*



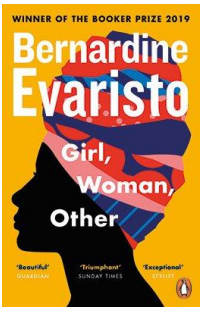
Medieval Italy and a murder investigation in a monastery provide the vehicle for far-reaching observations on the religious warfare of the fourteenth-century, heresy, and the development of language. A skilfully crafted murder mystery that draws the reader into the dark side of medieval religious life.

Dave Eggers *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius*



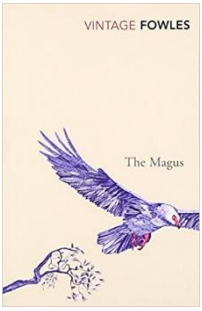
A sometimes rambling but utterly captivating and surprisingly amusing account of the death of the author's parents and his subsequent attempt to bring up his younger brother.

Bernardine Evaristo *Girl, Woman, Other*



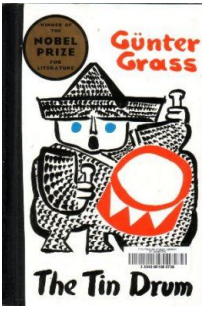
In this Booker prize-winning novel, Evaristo creates an overlapping narrative in which twelve women navigate the ups and downs of life. Although the characters have to deal with racism, sexism, and the roles that have been assigned to them by the patriarchy, the novel is essentially an uplifting, pacy, and robust, full of sympathetic personalities and pleasing resolutions. Evaristo imbues her characters, who represent different races, sexualities, religions, and backgrounds, with passion, imagination and thoughtfulness. Her soothing writing seamlessly blends poetry and prose.

John Fowles *The Magus*



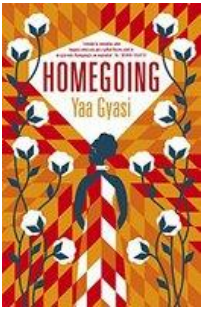
Nicholas Urfe is a young teacher of English who moves to a Greek Island and becomes embroiled in the games and illusions of a wealthy recluse, Maurice Conchis. The novel is highly readable metafiction and a 'young man's book': it is about ideas, sex, and loneliness, and is based on the author's own experiences as a teacher on the island of Spetses.

Günther Grass *The Tin Drum*



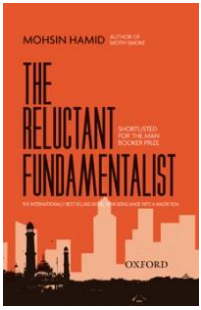
An epic and surreal story looking at the social conditions that allowed the rise of National Socialism, told through the eyes of an unreliable "idiot savant" narrator. This is exactly the narrative structure used to depict American post-war history in the film *Forest Gump*. Highly recommended!

Yaa Gyasi *Homegoing*



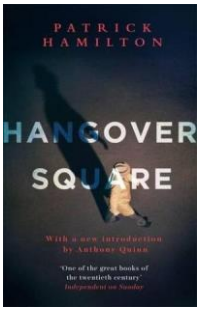
Homegoing is a debut novel that starts with two half-sisters, one of whom is married off to a slave trader whilst the other is made a slave. Each chapter picks up the story of a descendant of these two women. One reviewer writes, 'Gyasi excels at creating distinctive characters with depth, and she deftly crafts a narrative containing both the panorama of historical fiction and the intimate gaze of individual portraits.'

Mohsin Hamid *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*



The successful and aspirational life of a highly intelligent Pakistani man in America is upturned when the sombre scenes of 9/11 recalibrate the world view. This suspenseful novel cleverly sets the personal against the political in a brief, ambiguous dramatic monologue as the reader becomes increasingly tempted to question whether either the narrator or his companion have sinister ulterior motives.

Patrick Hamilton *Hangover Square*



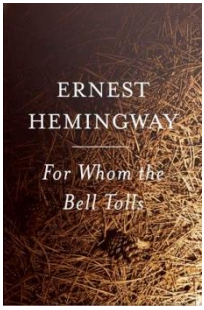
The author began writing this novel on Christmas Day in 1939. Written in the shadow of the approaching Second World War and set in the seedy bars and lodging houses of 1930s London, this darkly comic novel tells the tale of a man at war with himself and the world around him.

Nick Harkaway *Angelmaker*



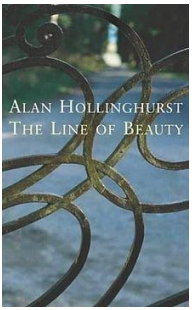
A rollicking, riveting read that blends adventure, science fiction, crime, and romance. Joe Spork is the unwilling protagonist, who, along with some evil monks, an octogenarian lady spy, and an opium villain, finds himself caught up in a race to locate a clockwork bee-operated doomsday machine. It's very quirky and extremely funny.

Ernest Hemingway *For Whom the Bell Tolls*

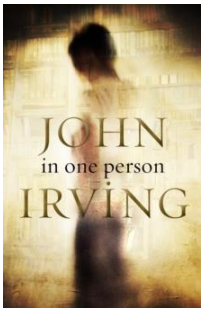


In 1937, Ernest Hemingway travelled to Spain to cover the civil war for the North American Newspaper Alliance. The novel that followed is about Robert Jordan, a young American attached to an antifascist guerilla unit on a mission to blow up a bridge. If you're looking for a war story about courage, loyalty, defeat, a beautiful girl, and the death of an ideal, this journey through the mountains of Spain is not one that you should miss.

Alan Hollinghurst *The Line of Beauty*



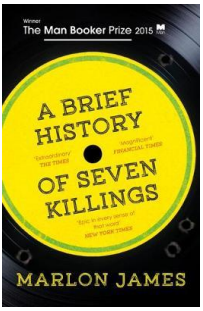
Hollinghurst's unapologetic romp through the excesses of Margaret Thatcher's Britain is told through the viewpoint of the obsessive Nick Guest, a recent graduate who longs to belong to the wealthy and privileged world of his hosts. This Man Booker Prize winner effortlessly illuminates the full social spectrum of the 1980s, segueing from cut-throat politics to homosexuality and the AIDS crisis, and encapsulates the distinctions of class that epitomise the era.



John Irving *In One Person*

In One Person is about a young bisexual man who falls in love with an older transgender woman, the librarian in a Vermont public library. Billy Abbott is the main character, but two transgender women are the heroes of this novel that explores gender and identity.

Marlon James *A Brief History of Seven Killings*



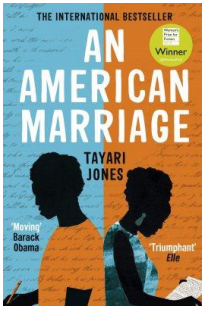
Jamaica, 1976: Seven gunmen storm Bob Marley's house, machine guns blazing. The reggae superstar survives but the gunmen are never caught. Spanning three decades, crossing continents, and with a host of unforgettable characters, *A Brief History of Seven Killings* explores this near-mythic event in a dazzling display of masterful storytelling. Winner of the Booker Prize 2015.

Denis Johnson *Train Dreams*



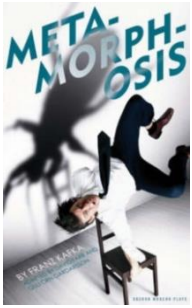
Can any life be called ordinary? This moving, short book tells the life of Robert Grainier, a labourer in early twentieth-century America. In unsentimental prose, his experiences of the landscape, work, and relationships are detailed in a simple, haunting story that captures a way of life long disappeared. Shortlisted for the Pulitzer Prize.

Tayari Jones *An American Marriage*



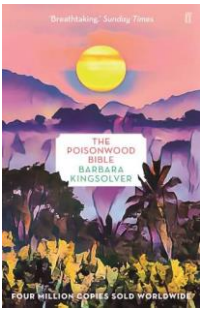
An immensely readable novel. We are thrust into the relationship between Roy and Celestial – all of its passions, challenges and tragedies, largely captured through the interweaving of both characters' narrative voices. The novel articulately comments on the racial issues of America whilst also capturing an intimate portrayal of a man and woman. Jones won the Women's Prize for Fiction with this novel, and has said that *An American Marriage* 'is a novel in conversation with *The Odyssey*; the story of a man trying to get back home to a waiting wife and a wife unsure of the extent to which she is permitted to rebuild her own life.'

Franz Kafka *Metamorphosis*



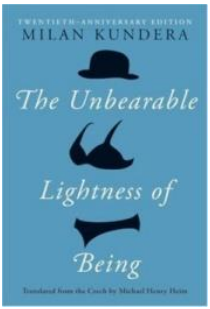
A man wakes to find he has changed into a giant insect. This story, written over a century ago, still has the power to shock and delight. Read it, and you will be able to use the term "Kafkaesque" with confidence.

Barbara Kingsolver *The Poisonwood Bible*



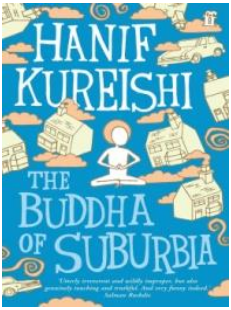
Nathan Price, a fierce, arrogant, evangelical Baptist missionary takes his reluctant wife and four daughters to the Belgian Congo in 1959. Bringing everything they think they'll need from home and armed with Christian faith, the family are bewildered by the unfamiliar world in which they find themselves. Orleanna Price and her four daughters take turns telling the story of their time there and the tragedy that befalls them.

Milan Kundera *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*



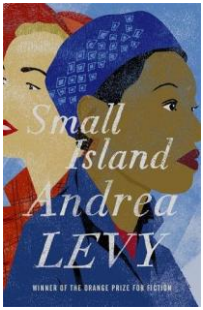
A postmodern novel of philosophy, pathos, and playfulness following the entangled relationships between surgeon Tomas, his wife Tereza, and their lovers, Sabina and Franz, all set against the background of the Prague Spring of 1968.

Hanif Kureishi *The Buddha of Suburbia*



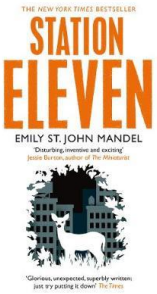
Kureishi tackles the big issues in a voice which speaks directly to the reader: relationships and their breakdown; love and loss; sexual, social and ethnic identity; and self-deception- all set in a sharply-observed suburban London setting.

Andrea Levy *Small Island*



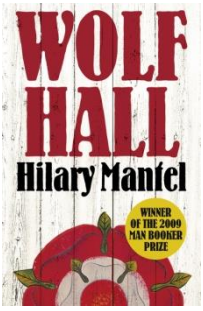
Levy's novel takes the reader across continents: from Jamaica to England to India during the Second World War and Windrush eras. Told through multiple narrative voices, Levy offers an insight into lives and experiences that cross cultures, gender, class, and race. Dreams, aspirations, disappointment, and the reality of living are all explored in this novel that has a mastery of narrative voice and characterisation. Levy won the 'Best of the Best' Orange Prize for Fiction for *Small Island.*

Emily St John Mandel *Station Eleven*



At face value, *Station Eleven* is a slightly-too-close-to-home novel in which the majority of the global population is wiped out by a strain of flu. Jumping between Year Zero, the time of the pandemic, and Year 20, when disparate groups of people have formed isolated settlements, the book weaves connections between characters spanning that timeframe. Primarily, it traces the life of Kristen, a young survivor who travels between settlements with the Traveling Symphony, an orchestra and company of Shakespearean players. Ultimately, the novel has less to do with a pandemic than why we need art, the purpose of storytelling and memory, and what it means to be human – to live, not just survive – so it is both lyrical and uplifting.

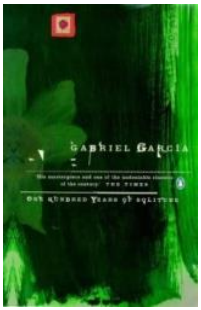
Hilary Mantel *Wolf Hall*



Multi-award-winning *Wolf Hall* has divided the critics. It is very long and takes as its subject the all-too-familiar era of Henry VIII. However, through the voice of Thomas Cromwell, Mantel makes this well-known story personal, poignant, and despite all our prior knowledge, truly gripping. The first book in a trilogy, it traces Cromwell's meteoric rise from a blacksmith in sixteenth-century

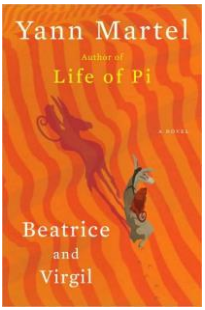
Putney to King's confidante, marriage fixer and prime mover in England's break from the Catholic church.

Gabriel García Márquez *One Hundred Years of Solitude*



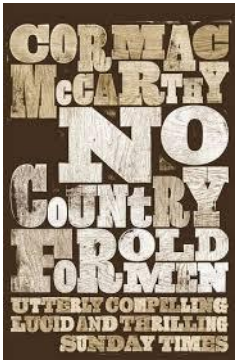
'Many years later, as he faced the firing squad, Colonel Aureliano Buendía was to remember that distant afternoon when his father took him to discover ice.' So begins a complex story of the trials and tribulations of the Buendía family in their remote South American village. Described by Salman Rushdie as "the greatest novel in any language of the last 50 years", it is perhaps the ultimate novel of magical realism- at times surreal, but always richly human.

Yann Martel *Beatrice and Virgil*



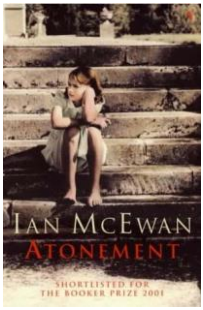
A short, shocking, and unforgettable allegorical novel by the author of *Life of Pi*. The disturbing subject matter – the Holocaust – is given a surreal twist through the use of a monkey, a donkey, and two people called Henry as narrators and protagonists. It is a highly provocative book that has been described as both pretentious and a masterpiece.

Cormac McCarthy *No Country for Old Men*



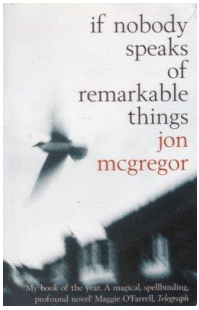
Llewelyn Moss, hunting antelope near the Rio Grande, stumbles upon a drug deal gone horribly wrong. Finding bullet-ridden bodies, several kilos of heroin, and a caseload of cash, he can choose to report the scene to the Police or take the money and run. Choosing the latter plunges him into mortal danger. Featuring one of the most sinister characters in modern fiction, this novel is a chilling journey into the dark side of America and remains well worth reading even if you have seen the Coen Brothers' film.

Ian McEwan *Atonement*



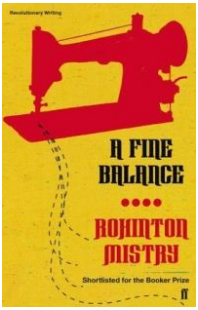
Atonement starts out as a classic country house novel, set during a stiflingly hot summer when the young protagonist is witness to a series of incidents that she does not fully understand and completely misinterprets. Before long, she is accusing a family friend of a crime he did not commit. It is something for which he, the innocent and she, the false accuser, must atone for the rest of their lives. The page-turning build-up of suspense is typical McEwan, and not to be missed.

Jon McGregor *If Nobody Speaks of Remarkable Things*



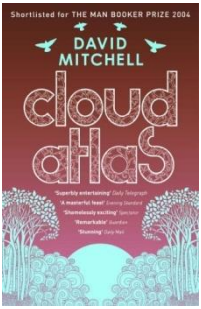
This is a simple story of unremarkable lives from a single street in a northern town on a sultry summer's day. But it is so much more than that. McGregor writes beautifully; his prose is matched in its elegance only by the pitch-perfect increase in tension as the strands of the plot come together in a gripping denouement. You'll have to concentrate – the characters aren't given names, which makes following the dialogue hard work – but it's worth it.

Rohinton Mistry *A Fine Balance*



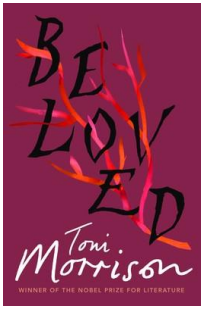
Mistry's novel traces the lives of four people during the State of Emergency in mid-70s India. This is a time of terrifying campaigns of forced sterilization, slum destruction and challenges to the caste system. However, among India's dispossessed, there are loving interactions and relationships between Indians of different religions. This is a novel that both engages and educates.

David Mitchell *Cloud Atlas*



From a nineteenth-century Pacific island through to a post-apocalyptic world, this staggering fractured novel is composed of six different but loosely interconnected stories in as many different genres. *Cloud Atlas* is as inventive as it is compelling.

Toni Morrison *Beloved*



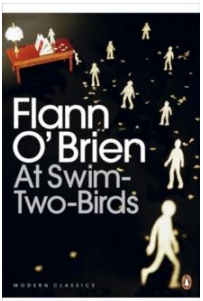
An eviscerating commentary on the psychological effects of slavery, *Beloved* is inspired by the true story of an escaped slave who was prepared to kill her own children rather than see them returned to slavery. Told in flashbacks, nightmares, and memories, the home of former slave Sethe and her surviving children is haunted by the malevolent spirit of her dead daughter, known only as 'Beloved'. An incredibly powerful novel that won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1988 and affirmed Morrison's place as one of the greatest authors of the twentieth-century.

Irene Nemirovsky *Suite Française*



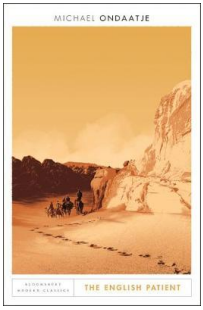
The translator's note to *Suite Française* records that *Storm in June* and *Dolce* were written as the first two volumes of a longer cycle of five novels that was never completed because Irene Nemirovsky died in Auschwitz in 1942. Described by one reviewer as 'beautifully restrained,' *Suite Française* describes the fortunes and misfortunes of a number of characters as they flee Paris in Part One and, in a differently-paced Part Two, as they adjust to living under Nazi occupation.

Flann O'Brien *At Swim-Two-Birds*



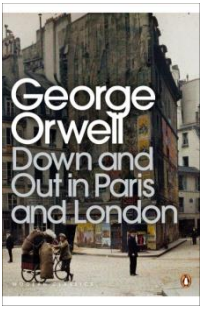
In Flann O'Brien's innovative work, unruly characters strike out on their own paths in life to the frustration of their author. 'A brilliant, beer-soaked miniature masterpiece,' says *Time* magazine.

Michael Ondaatje *The English Patient*



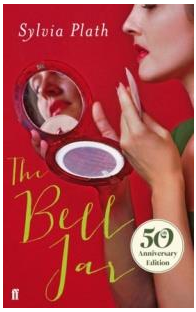
Tuscany, 1945. As the Allies progress through Italy, the retreating Germans lay mines to slow their advance. In a remote, bombed-out former monastery, Hana, a Canadian nurse, looks after her only remaining patient – a badly burned airman known only as the 'English Patient.' She is joined by Caravaggio, a Canadian serviceman who she knows from home, and Kipral Singh, a Sikh sapper in the British Army whose job is to make safe the mines laid by the Germans. In flashbacks and memories, their backstories are told in beautiful, poetic prose and the true identity of the English Patient is revealed. The novel won the Booker Prize for Old Alleynian Ondaatje, whilst the movie by Anthony Minghella won multiple Oscars.

George Orwell *Down and Out in Paris and London*



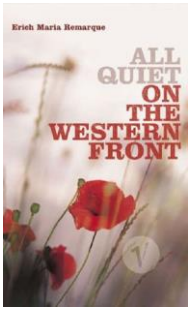
Immerse yourself in 'appalling back stairs squalor' and journey with Orwell amongst the poorest of the poor in his first published book. *Down and Out in Paris and London* is a vivid, sensitive account written from his personal experience in both cities in the late twenties. Funny and moral, this is an entertaining and enlightening read.

Sylvia Plath *The Bell Jar*



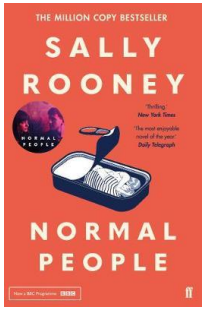
A book that captures the pain and uncertainty of discovering individual identity and the growth into adulthood in a series of unforgettable images. It encompasses madness, depression, gender, and death, and one reviewer described its 'blistering honesty, and a vivid attention to detail'.

Erich Maria Remarque *All Quiet on the Western Front*



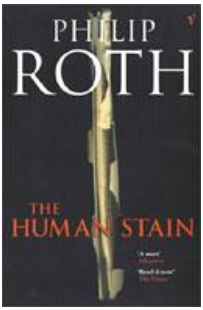
A novel of unrelenting realism, *All Quiet on the Western Front* illustrates the horror of battle action in World War I. Through the voice of Paul Baumer, a 19-year-old volunteer to the German army, the physical agonies of war are depicted with a disconcerting lack of sentiment. A brave and influential book, it was published in Germany in 1929, the same year as Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms.* Not for the squeamish.

Sally Rooney *Normal People*



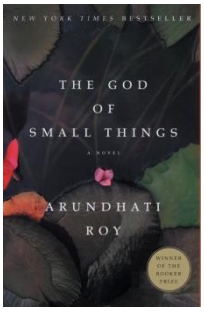
Teenagers Connell and Marianne seem to have little in common. Connell is popular and easy going; Marianne is aloof, intellectual and ostracised by her classmates. At school they pretend not to know each other, but Connell's mother works as a cleaner for Marianne's family, and when Connell goes to her house after school, their first real conversation pitches them into an intense romantic fascination. The book follows them through their school days in rural Ireland to university in Dublin and early adulthood, and examines the effect their hidden bond has on them as they grow up. Waterstone's Book of the Year 2018.

Philip Roth *The Human Stain*



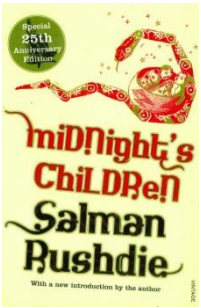
When former college professor Coleman Silk is killed in a car crash, his meticulously crafted past begins to unravel and the secret of his identity is exposed. A story of morality and ideology played out against the background of the impeachment of President Clinton.

Arundhati Roy *The God of Small Things*



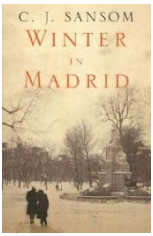
Estha and Rahel are fraternal twins living in Kerala in the 60s and 70s. Roy offers vivid images of India as she depicts their lives, and those of their unusual extended family, with sensitivity and humour and a poetic, playful language that befits the young narrators. The themes of forbidden love, the caste system, and betrayal all bind the characters together, but a tragedy ultimately pulls the family apart.

Salman Rushdie *Midnight's Children*



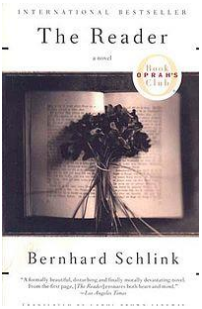
The story of Saleem Sinai, one of 1001 children born on the stroke of midnight on the day that India gained independence from Britain. Each of the children are endowed with an extraordinary talent, and Saleem is blessed with an inner ear that allows him to access the private thoughts and public affairs of India. A rich and magical novel that won Rushdie the Booker Prize.

C J Sansom *Winter in Madrid*



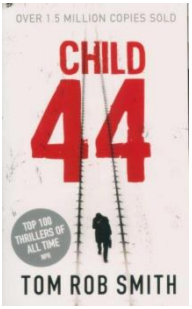
Idealist soldiers and unscrupulous conmen vividly bring to life the horrors of the aftermath of the Spanish Civil War.

Bernard Schlink *The Reader*



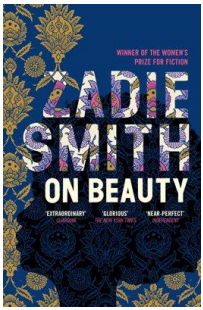
A riveting read that draws the reader deep into the lives and minds of those surviving the German Holocaust and accepting its painful after-effects, raising issues of both personal responsibility and a whole country coming to terms with its past.

Tom Rob Smith *Child 44*



The debut novel by Tom Rob Smith (OA) is the chilling tale of Leo Demidov, a disgraced MGB agent, as he attempts to catch a serial killer in the Soviet Union during the 1950s, but with its genesis in the years of Stalin's Great Terror of the 1930s. *The Secret Speech* continues the drama and Demidov's story concludes in *Agent 6*.

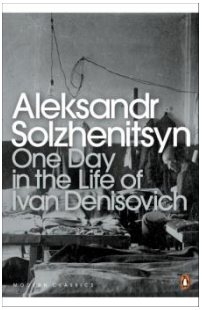
Zadie Smith *On Beauty*



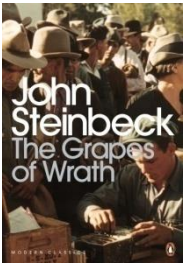
Almost 100 years after the publication of E. M. Forster's *Howard's End*, Zadie Smith brilliantly repurposes his plot of two very different families drawn into each other's orbit by a failed love affair, an unlikely friendship and a hidden legacy. Set on both sides of the Atlantic, Smith's novel is a fascinating take on family life, marriage, the collision of the personal and political, and an honest look at people's self-deceptions. Winner of the Orange Prize for Fiction 2006.

Alexander Solzhenitsyn *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*

A bleak and deeply personal memoir portraying the brutal Stalinist regime under which Ivan is forced out of his home, isolated from his family, and incarcerated in a Siberian labour camp. Survival becomes all in the harshest conditions imaginable.

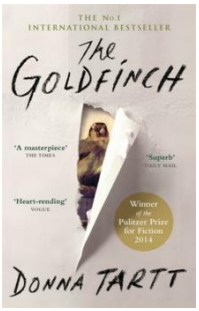


John Steinbeck *The Grapes of Wrath*



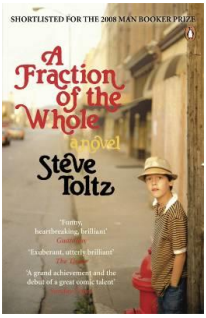
Steinbeck's greatest novel follows the fortunes of the poverty-stricken Joad family as they flee the Oklahoma dustbowl to search for work in the California during the Great Depression. An epic human drama.

Donna Tartt *The Goldfinch*



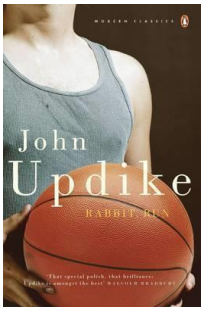
Thirteen-year-old Theodore Decker survives a bombing at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. In the aftermath of the explosion, Theo steals Carel Fabritius's painting 'The Goldfinch'. Theo's story moves from New York City to Las Vegas as friends and family take him in and he learns about the world of art and antiques in a tale of suspense, love, loss, and identity.

Steve Toltz *A Fraction of the Whole*



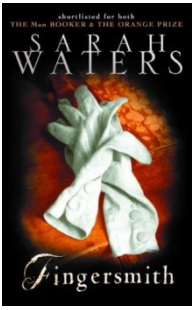
This is a dazzling, wild, left-field adventure story, brimming with ideas and full of dry humour and wit. Jaspers Dean's life has been blighted by a succession of notorious relatives who have spent their days recoiling from anything approaching normalcy. Life lessons from Jasper's dad include ignoring the 'stupid human habit of arbitrarily choosing a time based on fifteen-minute intervals' - he advises meeting people at 7.12 and 8.03 instead. A father and son story with a difference.

John Updike *Rabbit, run*



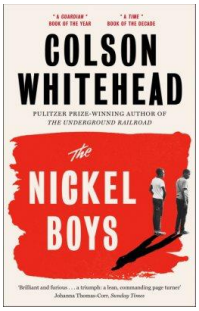
Twenty-six-year-old Rabbit Angstrom, the central character in this book, has been described as 'an older, less articulate Holden Caulfield'. The opening description of him watching a group of boys playing basketball on the street then shedding his coat to join them establishes the mood of nostalgia and frustration with his adult life. If only it was as simple as running away…

Sarah Waters *Fingersmith*



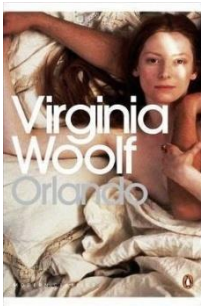
Sarah Waters' early novels bring Victorian London to life and this is one of her best, filled with period detail and a complex plot surrounding an attempt to defraud a wealthy young heiress is full of surprises, gothic drama, and deliciously rich description.

Colson Whitehead *The Nickel Boys*



This relatively short novel packs a punch. In his second Pulitzer prize winning novel, Whitehead draws upon the true story of the Dozier School - a reform school in Florida that operated for 111 years and had its dark history exposed by a university's investigation. Judges of the prize called the novel 'a spare and devastating exploration of abuse at a reform school in Jim Crow-era Florida that is ultimately a powerful tale of human perseverance, dignity and redemption.' A powerful and memorable read that draws you into the lives of the characters.

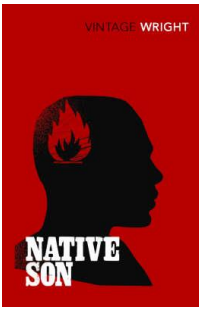
Virginia Woolf *Orlando*



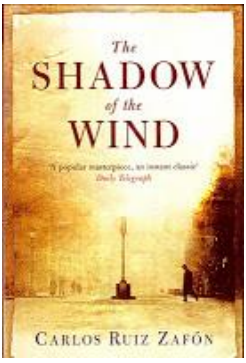
An enjoyable romp through history from the court of Elizabeth I to the Jazz Age as the beautiful and youthful aristocrat Orlando transcends time and gender. This is perhaps Woolf's most accessible novel and a semi-biography inspired by her friend and lover Vita Sackville-West.

Richard Wright *Native Son*

'The day *Native Son* appeared, American culture was changed forever,' wrote Irving Howe, the American Literary critic. What he meant was that no longer could the American people hide from their country's history of racial oppression. *Native Son* tells the story of Bigger Thomas, a disaffected young Black man who lives in a one-room flat on the South side of Chicago with his mother, brother and sister. The white people he serves believe that men like Bigger are always on the verge of violence and crime. This is a deeply disturbing and often chilling novel that does not shy away from the deep injustices of the cradle-to-grave racial divide of America in the 1940s. It is a story that is still painfully relevant today.



Carlos Ruiz Zafón *The Shadow of the Wind*



A dazzlingly brilliant read. 10-year-old Daniel visits the Cemetery of Forgotten Books - a library of obscure titles hidden in the heart of Barcelona. Here he borrows a book by the long-forgotten author Julián Carax, who disappeared in mysterious circumstances. As he grows older, Daniel remains intrigued by the author's story until one day, he meets a figure who is on the hunt to destroy every last copy of Carax's books. Daniel is soon on a life-or-death mission to get to the root of Carax's life story. Along the way, readers get to enjoy Zafón's exquisite gothic lyricism and wonderful array of characters.