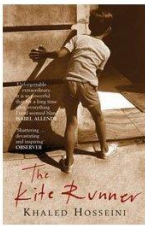


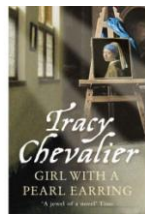
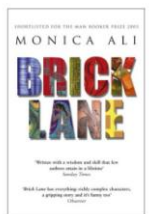
When choosing what to read, it is often difficult to know where to start. This list of books is a list of *suggestions*, each followed by a brief description to give you a flavour of the book. Consider trying an author who is new to you; if you like the book, find another by the same writer. Are you sometimes overwhelmed by a 'big' book? Maybe you could try one of the shorter stories or plays suggested below. These are marked with a 'q' for 'quick read'. Fancy a challenge? Look for the books marked with an *. Remember; reading is one of life's greatest pleasures that has the wonderful advantage of helping you to think critically and develop your own ideas at the same time! Enjoy!

- '*' indicates a more challenging read
- 'q' indicates a quicker read

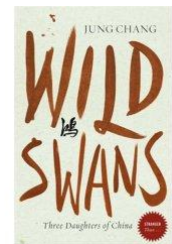
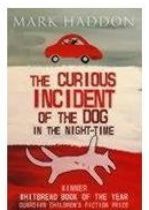
Contemporary fiction



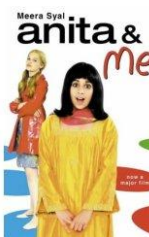
1. BRICK LANE by Monica Ali – a story of love, cultural difference and the human spirit.
2. THE KITE RUNNER by Khaled Hosseini - the gripping tale of a boyhood friendship destroyed by jealousy, fear, and the kind of ruthless evil that goes beyond political difference. Set in Afghanistan.



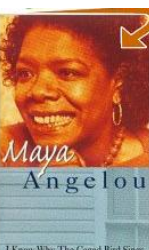
3. THE CURIOUS INCIDENT OF THE DOG IN THE NIGHT TIME by Mark Haddon – an unusual story about a crime-solving Autistic boy.
4. GIRL WITH A PEARL EARRING by Tracy Chevalier – Griet, the young daughter of a tile maker in seventeenth century Holland, obtains her first job, as a servant in the painter Vermeer's household. A story of love, obsession and art.

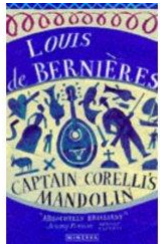


5. ANITA AND ME by Meera Syal - the story of nine-year-old Meena, daughter of the only Punjabi family in a Midlands' mining village. The novel provides a vision of British childhood in the 1960s, a childhood caught between two cultures, each on the brink of enormous change.
6. WILD SWANS (autobiographical) by Jung Chan - the story of three generations of women. Wild Swans tells the whole tumultuous history of China's tragic twentieth century, from sword-bearing warlords to Chairman Mao, from the Manchu Empire to the Cultural Revolution.*



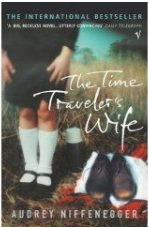
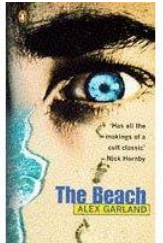
7. I KNOW WHY THE CAGED BIRD SINGS by Maya Angelou - poet Maya Angelou recounts a youth filled with disappointment, frustration, tragedy, and finally hard-won independence. Set in Arkansas, Angelou learns from her grandmother and the tightly-knit black community there.





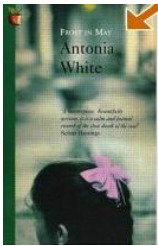
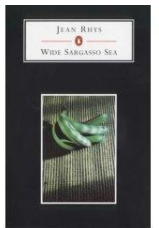
8. CAPTAIN CORELLI'S MANDOLIN by Louis de Bernieres - when the Axis powers reach the Greek island of Cephallonia, a young Italian captain is billeted in the doctor's house. Captain Corelli turns out to be an accomplished musician, and for a while the war seems to suit them well. But then the brutality of the conflict catches up with them.

9. THE BEACH by Alex Garland - on the surface a fast-paced adventure novel; at another level it explores why we search for utopias (perfect worlds), be they mysterious lost continents or small island communes. (q)



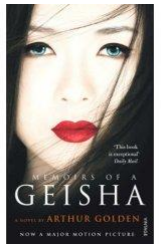
10. THE TIME TRAVELLER'S WIFE by Audrey Niffenegger - A superb tale of time travel and romance

11. WIDE SARGASSO SEA by Jean Rhys - the story of Mr Rochester's first wife. If you liked Jane Eyre you will be fascinated by this alternative viewpoint.



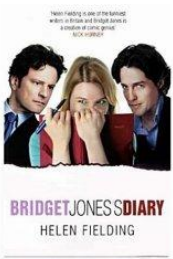
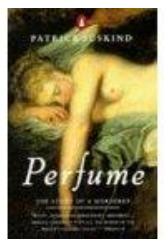
12. FROST IN MAY by Antonia White - an autobiographical account of a life in a strict Catholic boarding school and its impact on her life.

13. MEMOIRS OF A GEISHA by Arthur Golden - the extraordinary story of a geisha girl. Spanning twenty years of Japan's most dramatic history, it uncovers a hidden world of eroticism and enchantment, exploitation and degradation.



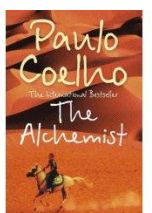
14. THE HITCHHIKER'S GUIDE TO THE GALAXY by Douglas Adams - When Earth is destroyed to make way for a Hyperspatial express route, Arthur Dent discovers that space is big, as he is taken on a hair-raising tour of the Galaxy and its very strange inhabitants, by his friend Ford Perfect. (q)

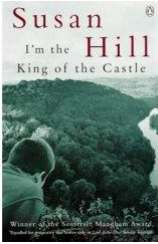
15. PERFUME by Patrick Süskind - Survivor, genius, perfumer, killer: this is Jean-Baptiste Grenouille. He is abandoned on the filthy Paris streets as a child, but grows up to discover he has an extraordinary gift: a sense of smell more powerful than any other human's.



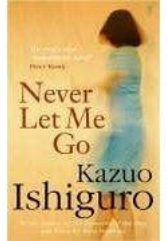
16. BRIDGET JONES'S DIARY by Helen Fielding - Pride and Prejudice for the 21st century!

17. THE ALCHEMIST by Paulo Coelho - Brazilian storyteller Paulo Coelho introduces Santiago, an Andalucian shepherd boy who one night dreams of a distant treasure in the Egyptian pyramids. And so he's off: leaving Spain to literally follow his dream. (q)

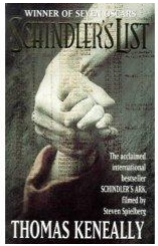




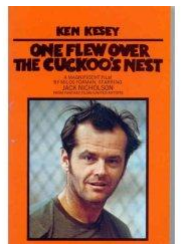
18. I'M THE KING OF THE CASTLE by Susan Hill - "I didn't want to come here". So says the note that Edmund Hooper passes to Charles Kingshaw upon his arrival at Warings. But young Kingshaw and his mother have come to live with Hooper and his father in the isolated Victorian house. To Hooper, Kingshaw is an intruder, a boy to be persecuted.



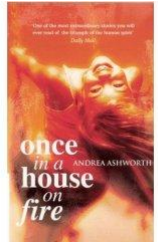
19. NEVER LET ME GO by Kazuo Ishiguro - narrated by Kathy, now 31, "Never Let Me Go" hauntingly dramatises her attempts to come to terms with her childhood at the seemingly idyllic Hailsham School, and with the fate that has always awaited her and her closest friends in the wider world.*



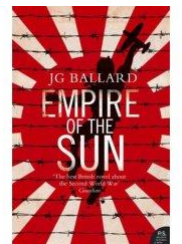
20. SCHINDLER'S LIST by Thomas Keneally - the story of a man who takes it upon himself to employ his cunning and tenacity to the full in order to save 1000 Jews from the concentration camps during the war.*



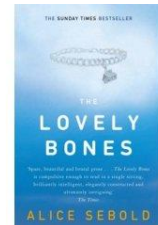
21. ONE FLEW OVER THE CUCKOO'S NEST by Ken Kesey - the unforgettable story of a mental ward and its inhabitants; the tyrannical Big Nurse Ratched and Randle Patrick McMurphy the brawling, fun-loving new inmate who resolves to oppose her.



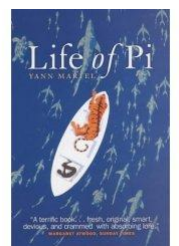
22. ONCE IN A HOUSE ON FIRE by Andrea Ashworth - a child's uncomprehending gaze on the domestic horrors of working-class life when it is dominated by a vicious man and a drunken, self-pitying mother.



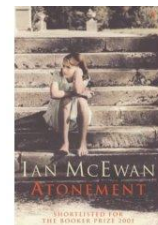
23. EMPIRE OF THE SUN by J.G. Ballard - based on the writer's own experiences, this is the story of a British boy's four-year ordeal in a Japanese prison camp during the Second World War.



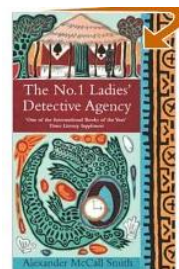
24. THE LOVELY BONES by Alice Sebold - a haunting and heartbreaking novel, unfolds from heaven, where "life is a perpetual yesterday" and where Susie narrates and keeps watch over her grieving family and friends, as well as her brazen killer and the sad detective working on her case.*



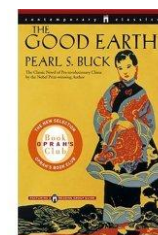
25. LIFE OF PI by Yann Martel - a boy's voyage across the Pacific in a lifeboat with a hyena, a monkey, a whingeing zebra and a tiger called Richard...*



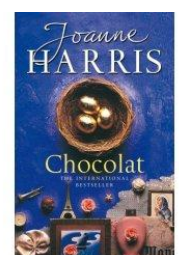
26. ATONEMENT by Ian McEwan - a gripping 'What-happens-next?' narrative that touches on the horrors of WW2.



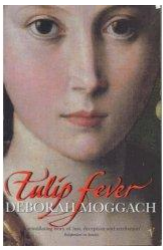
27. THE NO. 1 LADIES DETECTIVE AGENCY by Alexander M. Smith - an African Miss Marple...? (q)



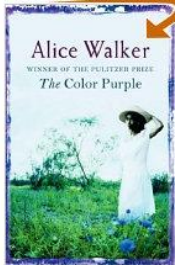
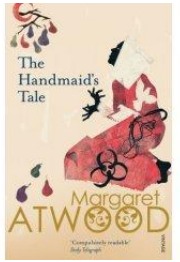
28. THE GOOD EARTH by Pearl Buck - a riveting family saga and story of female sacrifice - a classic of twentieth-century literature.



29. CHOCOLAT by Joanne Harris - war between Church and Chocolate...



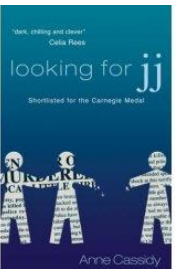
30. TULIP FEVER by Deborah Moggach - set in 1630s Amsterdam, it begins with a Renaissance love triangle: a wealthy, elderly merchant, Cornelis Sandvoort, his beautiful but frustrated young wife Sophia and the painter who enters their life, Jan van Loos.



31. THE HANDMAID'S TALE by Margaret Atwood - a terrifying vision of the future.*

32. THE COLOUR PURPLE by Alice Walker - set in the segregated world of America's "Deep South", this work tells the story of Celie. Raped by the man she calls "father" and having had her two children taken from her, she meets Shug Avery - a glamorous singer and magic maker, and discovers what it means to have love and support.

Teenage fiction

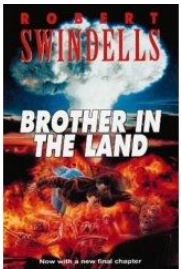
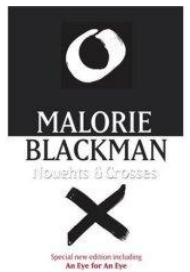


33. TAMAR by Mal Peet - Winner of the Carnegie prize for 2006, this book explores love and betrayal, courage and human tragedy as the storyline dips backwards and forwards from Holland and the grim events of the final freezing winter of the war to a young girl's awakening love in 1995.



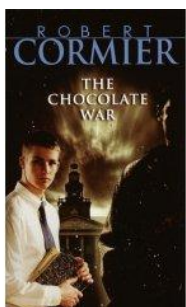
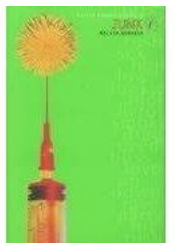
34. LOOKING FOR JJ by Anne Cassidy - Looking for JJ explores the circumstances and motives behind the murder of a child - by her friend. Six years later, JJ has now been released, and has a new identity. But is there any way that she can lead a "normal" life? (q)

35. NOUGHTS AND CROSSES by Malorie Blackman - Callum is a nought - a second-class citizen in a world dominated by the Crosses - and Sephy is a Cross, the daughter of one of the most powerful men in the country. The barriers they would have to cross to be together at first seem little more than minor obstacles to the two idealistic teenagers, but soon those barriers threaten not only their friendship but their lives.

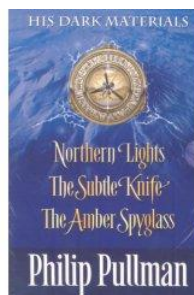


36. BROTHER IN THE LAND by Robert Swindells - teenage Danny is one of the unlucky ones; a survivor, one of those who have come through a nuclear holocaust alive. (q)

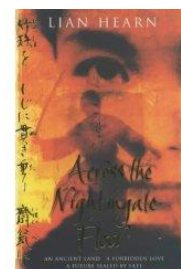
37. JUNK by Melvin Burgess - an exploration of the dark world of the streets and drugs that destroy lives. (q)



38. THE CHOCOLATE WAR by Robert Cormier - the headmaster of Trinity College asks Archie Costello, the leader of the Vigils, a secret society that rules the school, to help with the selling of 20,000 boxes of chocolates in the annual fund-raising effort. Archie sees the chance of adding to his power - he is the Assigner, handing out to the boys tasks to be performed if they are to survive in the school. Freshman, Jerry Renault, a newcomer to the corrupt regime, refuses to sell chocolates. Enormous mental and physical pressure is put on him but he will not give in - the result is an inevitable, explosive tragedy. (q)

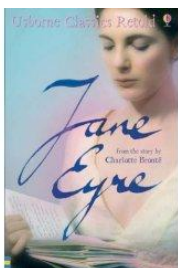
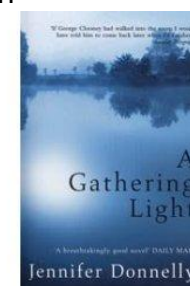


39. ACROSS THE NIGHTINGALE FLOOR by Lian Hearn - a love-fantasy trilogy with a difference. Set in Japan.



40. HIS DARK MATERIALS (trilogy) by Philip Pullman - Lyra's friend Roger disappears. She and her daemon, Pantalaimon, determine to find him. Their quest leads them to the bleak splendour of the North where a team of scientists are conducting unspeakably horrible experiments.

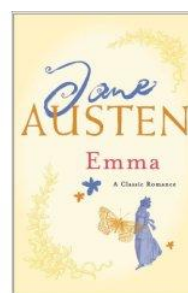
41. A GATHERING LIGHT by Jennifer Donnelly - set in 1906 and built around the real life murder of a young woman in a popular holiday resort this novel is touching, surprising, moving and compelling.



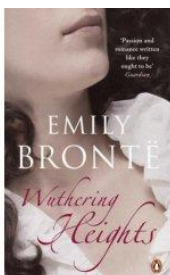
19th Century classics

42. JANE EYRE by Charlotte Brontë - a story of passionate love, hardship and final triumph.*

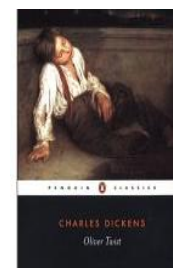
43. EMMA by Jane Austen - the story of Emma Woodhouse, Austen's 18th century matchmaker! If you enjoyed 'Pride and Prejudice' try another Austen classic!*



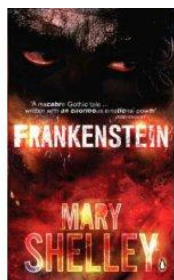
44. WUTHERING HEIGHTS by Emily Brontë - discover the intense passion between the founding Heathcliff and Catherine Earnshaw, and her betrayal of him. As Heathcliff's bitterness and vengeance is visited upon the next generation, their innocent heirs must struggle to escape the legacy of the past.*



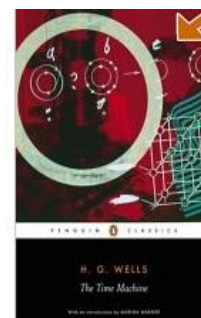
45. OLIVER TWIST by Charles Dickens - Dickens' tale of childhood innocence beset by evil depicts the dark criminal underworld of a London peopled by vivid and memorable characters - the arch-villain Fagin, the artful Dodger, the menacing Bill Sikes and the prostitute Nancy. *



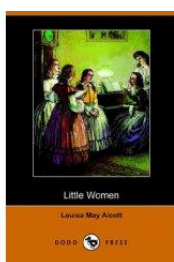
46. FRANKENSTEIN by Mary Shelley - the fable of the scientist who creates a man-monster. The dire and terrifying consequences of giving it life are beyond his imagination, as the creature inflicts murder on the human race.*

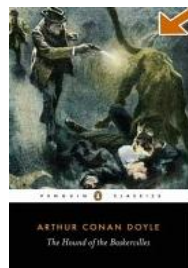


47. THE TIME MACHINE by H. G. Wells - when a Victorian scientist propels himself into the year 802,701 AD, he is initially delighted to find that suffering has been replaced by beauty, contentment and peace. Entranced at first by the Eloi, an elfin species descended from man, he soon realises that this beautiful people are simply remnants of a once-great culture now weak and childishly afraid of the dark. They have every reason to be afraid: in deep tunnels beneath their paradise lurks another race descended from humanity; the sinister Morlocks. And when the scientist's time machine vanishes, it becomes clear he must search these tunnels, if he is ever to return to his own era. (q)

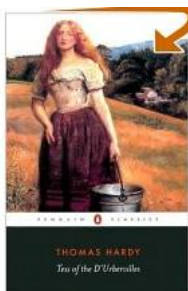


48. LITTLE WOMEN by Louisa May Alcott - the story of a year in the life of the March family. While their father is away in the American Civil War, the four March sisters, Meg, Jo, Beth and Amy, and their mother, work hard to maintain a happy and peaceful home.

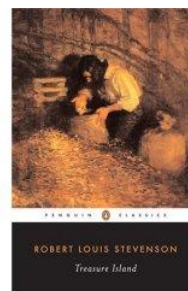




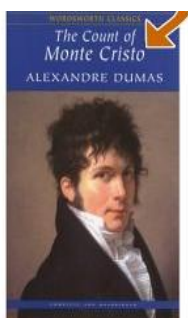
49. THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle - the ancient legend of the Baskervilles has persisted in the family history for generations. It is Sir Charles's mysterious death in the grounds of Baskerville Hall that brings Sherlock Holmes to the scene of one of his most famous and intriguing cases.



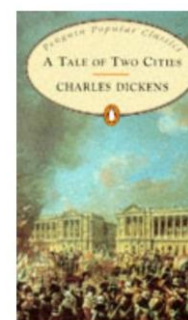
50. TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES by Thomas Hardy - set in the bleak, magical Wessex landscape, Tess's cruel story reveals circumstances slowly closing in on her as she attempts to grasp a few moments of happiness with her lover.*



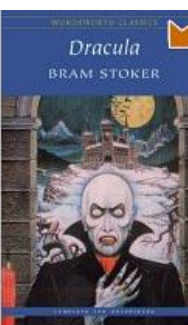
51. TREASURE ISLAND by Robert Louis Stevenson - a tale of pirates and villains, maps, treasure and shipwreck. When young Jim Hawkins finds a package in Captain Flint's sea chest, he could not know that the map inside it would lead him to unimaginable treasure. Mutiny and mayhem ensue.



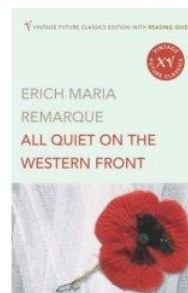
52. THE COUNT OF MONTE CRISTO by Alexandre Dumas - the story of Edmund Dantes, self-styled Count of Monte Cristo. The novel presents a powerful conflict between good and evil.*



53. A TALE OF TWO CITIES by Charles Dickens - after eighteen years as a political prisoner in the Bastille the aging Dr Manette is finally released and reunited with his daughter in England. There two very different men, Charles Darnay, an exiled French aristocrat, and Sydney Carton, a disreputable but brilliant English lawyer, become enmeshed through their love for Lucie Manette. From the tranquil lanes of London, they are all drawn against their will to the vengeful, bloodstained streets of Paris at the height of the Reign of Terror and soon fall under the lethal shadow of La Guillotine.

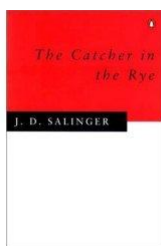


54. DRACULA by Bram Stoker - when Jonathan Harker visits Transylvania to help Count Dracula with the purchase of a London house, he makes a series of horrific discoveries about his client...*



20th Century Classics

55. ALL QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT by E.M. Remarque - the moving story of a young 'unknown soldier' experiencing the horror and disillusionment of life in the trenches.

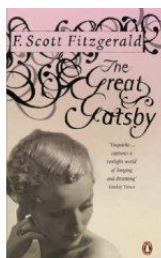


56. THE CATCHER IN THE RYE by J.D. Salinger - what does a boy in his teens think and feel about his teachers, parents, friends and acquaintances? (q)

57. COLD COMFORT FARM by Stella Gibbons - Flora has been expensively educated to do everything but earn her own living. Orphaned at 20, she decides her only option is to go and live with her relatives, the Starkadders, at Cold Comfort Farm...



58. THE GREAT GATSBY by F. Scott Fitzgerald - everybody who is anybody is seen at Gatsby's glittering parties. None of the socialites understand Gatsby. He seems to always be watching and waiting, though no one knows what for. But as the tragic story unfolds, Gatsby's destructive dreams and passions are revealed. (q)



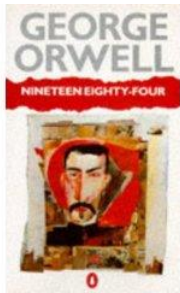


59. THE GO-BETWEEN by L.P. Hartley - a man in his 60s looks back on his boyhood for the first time in 50 years, recalling events that took place on a summer visit to a Norfolk country house at the turn of the twentieth century.

60. REBECCA by Daphne du Maurier - "The two words most commonly used in descriptions of Du Maurier's all-time classic are 'haunting' and 'magical'. Both are accurate." Good Book Guide

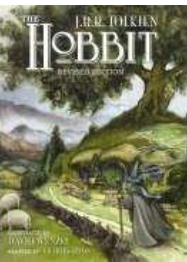
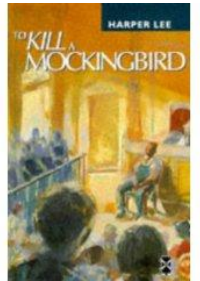


61. I CAPTURE THE CASTLE by Dodie Smith - a wonderfully charismatic narrator and a great story. The diary of a 17-year old girl named Cassandra who lives with her eccentric family in a dilapidated castle.



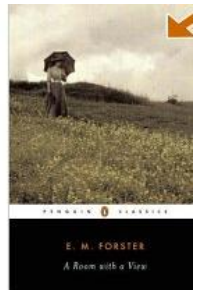
62. 1984 by George Orwell - hidden away in the Record Department of the sprawling Ministry of Truth, Winston Smith skilfully rewrites the past to suit the needs of the Party. Yet he inwardly rebels against the totalitarian world he lives in, which demands absolute obedience and controls him through the all-seeing telescreens and the watchful eye of Big Brother, symbolic head of the Party.*

63. TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD by Harper Lee - set in America in the 1930s. A beautifully-written and compellingly down-to-earth story of a rural childhood. This book explores many issues including racism and prejudice in the southern states of America.



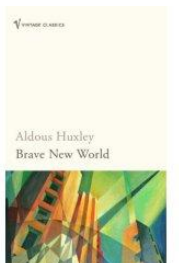
64. THE HOBBIT by J.R.R. Tolkien - an unassuming and rather plump hobbit, Bilbo Baggins finds himself drawn into adventure by a wizard named Gandalf and 13 dwarves bound for the Lonely Mountain, where a dragon named Smaug hordes a stolen treasure...

65. A ROOM WITH A VIEW by E.M. Forster - Forster's social comedy is a witty observation of the English middle classes as they holiday abroad in Florence. One of these tourists is Lucy Honeychurch, a young girl whose heart is awakened by her experiences in Italy.

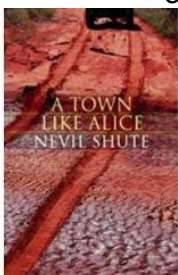


66. THE PRIME OF MISS JEAN BRODIE by Muriel Spark - she is a schoolmistress with a difference. Proud, cultured, romantic, her ideas are progressive, even shocking. And when she decides to transform a group of young girls under her tutelage into the "creme de la creme" of Marcia Blaine school, no one could predict the outcome...

67. BRAVE NEW WORLD by Aldous Huxley - far in the future, the World Controllers have created the ideal society. Through clever use of genetic engineering, brainwashing and drugs all its members are happy consumers. Bernard Marx seems alone, the only one who wants to break free...

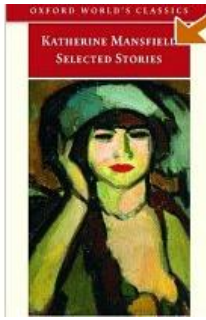


68. A TOWN LIKE ALICE by Nevil Shute - set during and after World War II, this novel tells the story of an Englishwoman and an Australian who meet in Malaya. Their love spans continents and survives horrendous suffering and years of separation.





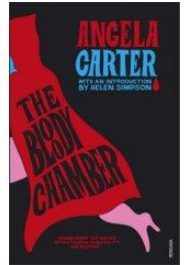
Short Stories



69. THE DUBLINERS by James Joyce (short stories) - sequence of stories depicting middle-class Catholic life in Dublin. The frustrations of childhood, disappointments of adolescence and mystery of sexual awakening are related with clarity and sensitivity.*



70. SELECTED SHORT STORIES by Katherine Mansfield - graceful, delicate and quietly devastating, Mansfield explores the impact of apparently trivial incidents on her characters' inner lives.

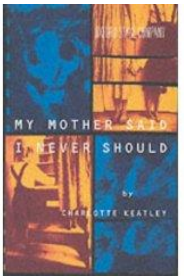


71. THE BLOODY CHAMBER by Angela Carter - from familiar fairy tales and legends - Red Riding Hood, Bluebeard, Puss in Boots, Beauty and the Beast, vampires and werewolves - Angela Carter has created an absorbing collection of dark, sensual, fantastic stories.



Modern Plays

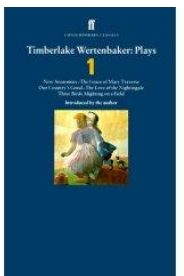
72. THE ISLAND by Athol Fugard - a South African writer, Fugard presents the story of two prisoners jailed on the infamous Robben Island. (q)



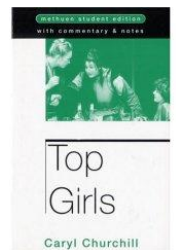
73. CAT ON A HOT TIN ROOF by Tennessee Williams - the tragic lives of a guilt-ridden alcoholic, his frustrated wife and a tyrannical patriarch are violently exposed in Williams' famous play.



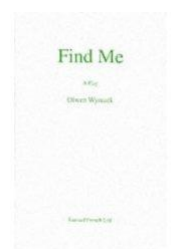
74. MY MOTHER SAID I NEVER SHOULD by Charlotte Keatley - an exciting play about three generations of women in one family. (q)



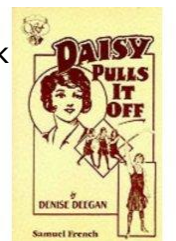
75. TOP GIRLS by Caryl Churchill - a play which looks at the political costs of women rising to the top.



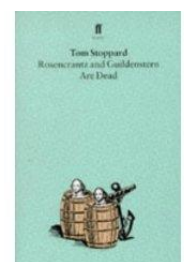
76. LOVE OF THE NIGHTINGALE by Timberlake Wertenbaker - draws upon the myth of Philomele and the ideas of metamorphosis. It examines the bond between sisters, the often devastating effects of love and the nature of Greek tragedy.



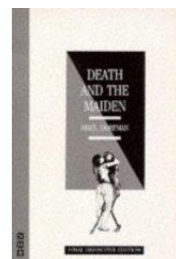
77. DAISY PULLS IT OFF by Denise Deegan - set in a girls public school in the 1920s, Daisy rises to the challenge of being judged as "an elementary school pupil". Funny but with a serious message. (q)



78. FIND ME by Olwen Wymark - Verity Taylor is a problem child. Her parents don't seem to be coping and no-one she gets referred to seems to do any better. Based on real experience, this is an intense and engaging story of a deeply misunderstood girl. (q)



79. DEATH AND THE MAIDEN by Ariel Dorfman - torture, rape, revenge, guilt, truth. A moving portrayal of a woman undertaking the final stages of recovery from an incident that has scarred her for life. This play explores the sinister triumph of a woman settling a terrible score.*



80. ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN ARE DEAD by Tom Stoppard - two minor characters from "Hamlet" offer a different view of a tragic hero.*

81. A RAISIN IN THE SUN by Lorraine Hansberry - a black family's struggle for equality in 1950s Chicago.

