

READING FOR PLEASURE

SOME RECOMMENDED FICTION FOR FIRST AND SECOND YEARS

Starcrossed by Josephine Angelini

When the beautiful and mysterious Delos family arrive on Nantucket Island, Helen Hamilton's teenaged life is turned upside down. Helen is disturbed by the initial hatred she feels towards the handsome Lucas Delos but this antipathy soon turns into a powerful mutual attraction. However, the course of Helen and Lucas's love does not run smoothly, as Helen makes the shocking discovery that, like the Delos's, she is descended from Greek gods and bound by an ancient curse to be Lucas's enemy. This tale of starcrossed

lovers is clearly aimed at the *Twilight* market but Helen is a stronger character both physically and mentally than Meyer's Bella. Angelini's text is peppered with humour, including ironic vampire references, often courtesy of Helen's straight-talking best friend Claire, who has a growing attraction of her own to Lucas's cousin, Jason.

This fusion of *Twilight* and *Percy Jackson* is appealing and readers will undoubtedly be left wanting more.



Reading Age 12+

Interest Level 14+



Chasing Vermeer by Blue Balliett



When three mysterious letters are sent to three strangers, a set of events are set in motion that bring together two young students on a quest to find a missing painting. Petra and Calder are both clever students who love school and their new teacher, Ms. Hussey. Inspired by Ms. Hussey's ability to shirk rules and explore the

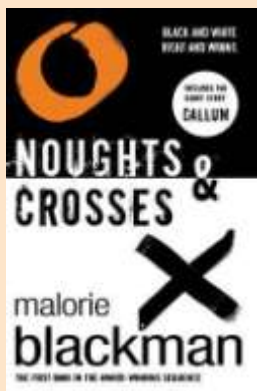
unexplainable, Petra and Calder set out to solve the mysterious disappearance of Vermeer's 'A Lady Writing'. Filled with secret puzzles, encrypted text, colourful characters, and a surprise ending, Chasing Vermeer is a brilliant story, told from the ingenious perspectives of its two 12-year-old protagonists. The story's hidden clues and interesting plot twists leave the reader in eager anticipation for Petra and Calder's next adventure.

Reading Age 9+

Interest Level 9-12

Noughts and Crosses by Malorie Blackman

This exceptional offering from Malorie Blackman is possibly her best novel yet. The population is divided into two main groups; the white Noughts are second-class citizens, and the black Crosses are highly-revered and perceived as the superior race.



15-year-old Callum is a Nought, and his best friend, Sephy, as well as being a Cross, is also the daughter of one of the most influential politicians in the country. The story focuses on their relationship, which is frowned upon by society, and explores the discrimination they encounter at every turn.

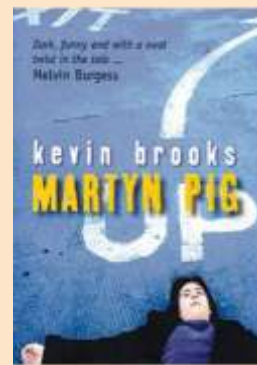
By reversing traditional racial stereotypes and presenting the White population as the oppressed race, Blackman has cleverly shown racial prejudice from a different perspective. As well as being a compelling tale of love and friendship, this is an outstanding and thought-provoking exploration of the futility of prejudice.

Reading Age 12+

Interest Level 12-16

Martyn Pig by Kevin Brooks

Martyn Pig leads a fairly dismal life, living alone with his drunken, abusive father. During a violent outburst, Martyn pushes his dad in self-defence and accidentally kills him. When his friendly neighbour, Alex, discovers his awful secret, she takes charge, helping him to dispose of the body, and entangling Martyn in an increasingly complicated web of deceit. In his debut novel, Brooks successfully combines suspense, humour, and an unexpected twist, to create a darkly comic thriller that will grip readers right up to the final page.



Reading Age 11+

Interest Level 12+

Takeshita Demons by Cristy Burne

When Miku moved to England from Japan, she never imagined that evil spirits would follow her. But one day an unusual looking supply teacher appears at school, and Miku suspects she may be a demon in disguise. Trapped in a snow storm, Miku is left to look after her baby brother with her best friend Cait. When her brother is kidnapped they must do all they can to get him back, including taking on a flying screaming head with razor-sharp teeth! *Takeshita Demons* is a unique adventure story, and a must-read for all fans of Manga.



Reading Age 9+

Interest Level 9+

All American Girl by Meg Cabot

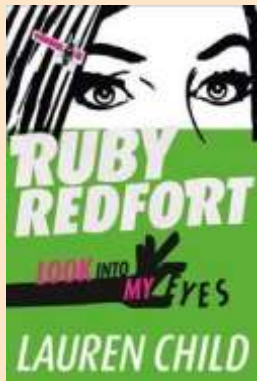
Teenager Sam is the All American Girl of the title, a privileged youngster with caring parents and two sisters, all of whom live in comfortable, middle-class Washington D.C. One day, quite by chance, she just happens to save the life of the President. This brings her instant fame and changes her life in ways she never imagined; in the process she learns a lot about herself and those around her. This very 'girly' book is full of talk about clothes, hairstyles and pop stars, but it also tackles the serious issues of loyalty and consideration of others. Fluffy and fun.

Reading Age 12+

Interest Level 12+

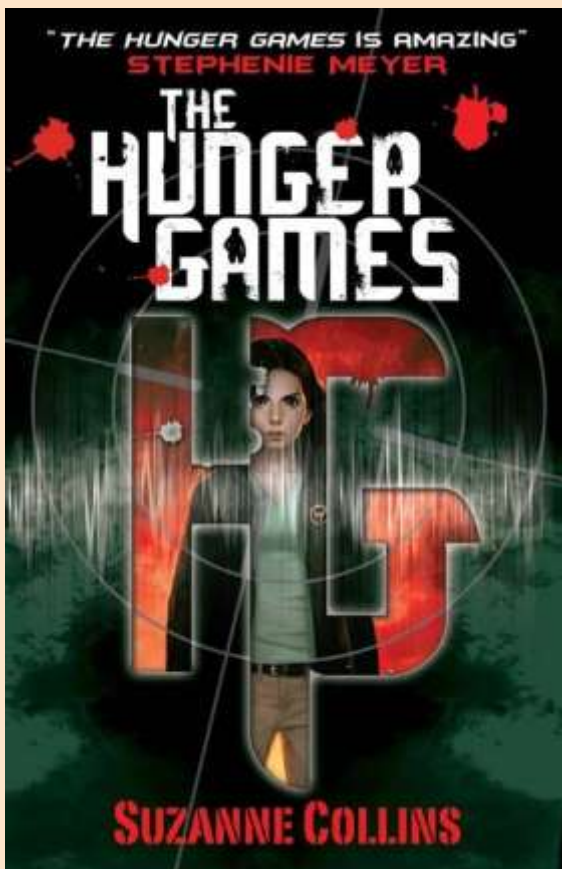
Ruby Redfort: Look into my Eyes by Lauren Child

Ruby Redfort is no ordinary 13 year-old school girl. Blessed with an extraordinary talent for spotting things which others seldom notice, Ruby lands an undercover job as a code-breaker for secret-spy organisation, Spectrum. When both the Redforts' furniture and their housekeeper go missing, the mysterious 'butler' Hitch appears at their doorstep to offer his services. His arrival marks the beginning of a code-cracking quest in which Ruby attempts to thwart the plans of the evil 'Fools Gold Gang' to steal a priceless historic artefact. The first of Lauren Child's new teen novels, *Look into My Eyes* surprises and delights as it takes us on an exhilarating adventure, combining witty humour, dastardly villains and a fabulous new teenage heroine.



Reading Age 12+

Interest Level 12+



The Hunger Games by Suzanne Collins

Welcome to Panem: its Capitol repressively rules twelve satellite Districts, enslaving the populations as workers and controlling them through hunger. This harsh rule culminates in the annual Hunger

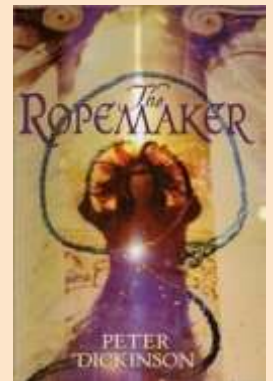
Games – from each District, one female and one male Tribute are forcibly selected for a terrifying reality TV game-show in which contestants literally fight to the death. But Katniss Everdeen is no ordinary Tribute: she's used to surviving in the wild and in the unpredictable, hostile arena, she's not giving up. Katniss and fellow District 12 Tribute, Peeta, become pawns in a complex political game in this scarily believable, highly addictive dystopian vision (how far might reality TV actually go?!) It's a compelling story of survival, which challengingly explores ideas about society, control and freedom.

Reading Age 13+

Interest Level 13+

The Ropemaker by Peter Dickinson

For generations, a spell cast by a powerful wizard has protected the Valley from the Emperor's destructive army. However, when the magic begins to weaken, Tilja and Tahl, along with their respective grandparents, embark on a dangerous journey in an attempt to restore it. Tilja gradually comes to learn that she has magical powers, which can be used to counterbalance the evil magic that they encounter on their quest. This rich fantasy adventure takes the reader on an exciting, magical journey, with many surprises along the way.



Reading Age 12+

Interest Level 12+

Holly Starcross by Berlie Doherty

Holly Starcross is having an identity crisis. She lives with her mom, Henry (her mother's partner) and her half-brother and sisters. She has a great best friend and a crush on the cutest boy in school, but she keeps asking herself the question, 'who am I?' When her long last father turns up out of the blue, Holly is forced to face up to her past and reassess her future. This is a beautifully told story about the confusion of growing up and the pain caused by family separation and torn loyalties.



Reading Age 10+

Interest Level 10-14

Wilderness by Roddy Doyle

Teenage Gráinne is meeting her mother for the first time since she walked out when she was a child. To allow her some space for this momentous encounter her step-mother and step-brothers Tom and Johnny have left for a holiday in the Finnish wilderness. Whilst Gráinne comes to terms with her own conflicting emotions, her brothers are forced to grow up quickly when the excitement of their Finnish adventure turns sour with the disappearance of their mother on a sleighing expedition. As ever, Doyle's tone is warm and inviting; the juxtaposition of the parallel stories works well, with believable, realistic exchanges between the cheeky young brothers and the inner-conflict of their sister adding emotional depth to the story.



Reading Age 10+
Interest Level 11+

i-ssassins

by Christopher Edge

Luke Kitson is training with ELITE, a crack team of young hackers used by MI5 and currently investigating YourLife, a new social networking site with vast ambitions. But disappearances begin – first members of the site, next MI5 agents, and finally one of the ELITE hackers. Luke must infiltrate YourLife's skyscraper headquarters and find his friend. One hundred floors. One thousand people who will do anything to stop him. Can Luke prove that he belongs to the ELITE?



Reading Age 10+
Interest Level 10 -14



Bog Child by Siobhán Dowd
Northern Ireland in 1981 is a confusing place to grow up. The Troubles are at their height and Fergus's brother is on hunger strike in prison. His parents are always arguing and the world around Fergus seems beset by conflict and unrest. One day while digging for

peat with his uncle, Fergus unearths the body of a perfectly preserved Iron-Age girl. As her tragic story unfolds in his dreams, we learn more of his own burgeoning love life and hopes for the future. This is a beautifully written coming-of-age tale, which deals with themes of mortality, peace and sacrifice. Fergus is an immensely likeable character whose story, along with that of the bog child, will long stay with those who read it.

Reading Age 12+
Interest Level 12+

Coraline by Neil Gaiman

One day Coraline unlocks a mysterious door that opens onto another world, a twisted parody of Coraline's own dimension. She discovers something very sinister about her 'other mother', who has trapped her real parents and plans to keep the family there forever. As Coraline tries to escape, she is faced with a fantastical series of macabre and bizarre situations. Excellently written, and superbly original, *Coraline* is well suited to those who enjoy reading about the weird and the wonderful with a dash of horror and humour. It is destined to become a classic modern fairytale.



Reading Age 11+
Interest Level 12+

Witch Breed by Alan Gibbons

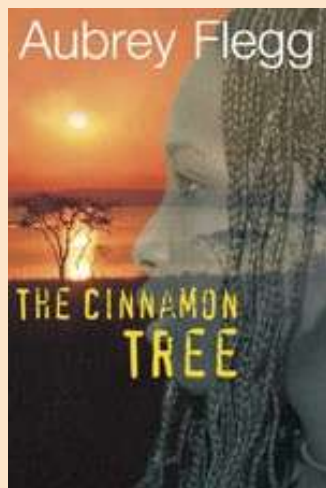
Paul Rector is an ordinary schoolboy when the bodies start to turn up on the streets of East London. Somebody is duplicating the Jack the Ripper murders. Strangely, there are no marks on the bodies. It is as if they have been scared to death.



As Paul starts to follow this baffling case something stirs inside him, a sense of recognition ... and disturbance. Somehow his destiny and that of the Ripper are entwined. So begins a terrifying journey into the dark heart of London.

Reading Age 11
Interest Level 11

The Cinnamon Tree by Aubrey Flegg



Stepping on a landmine remaining from a civil war, Yola loses her leg below the knee. In her culture she has become unmarriageable. Then Yola meets Hans, sent to de-mine the area, and travels to hospital in Ireland for treatment, where she meets Fintan, and discovers the extent and power of the international arms trade, controlled

by ruthless and dangerous people thousands of miles away from the conflicts. A deeply thought-provoking and compassionate novel, with a powerful and engaging heroine whose experience underlines how little we understand about the values and sophistication of African culture. Readers will also realize the high degree of involvement of European arms dealers in distant wars, and the terrible outcomes resulting from their selfish actions.

Reading Age 9+

Interest Level 10+

Flush by Carl Hiaasen

Noah's dad can be very impulsive and when he finds out someone is illegally dumping sewage in the sea, spoiling the beaches and endangering the wildlife, he sinks the boat responsible. With their Dad in prison, it is up to Noah and little sister Abby to put together a plan to clear his name and stop the dumping. Noah's plan proves to be both difficult and dangerous, so it's a relief to have the help of some unusual and mysterious allies. This is an engaging and light-hearted thriller about issues that matter: justice, family and the environment. The Paine family are well-drawn and likeable, the pace easy and flowing and the villains not quite as wicked as we suspected.



Reading Age 9+

Interest Level 10+

Silverfin by Charlie Higson

Meet Bond. James Bond. But not as you will have seen him before... James is a recently orphaned boy starting his first term at Eton. He is popular and adept at school but his only stumbling block is the bully George Hellebore, son of the boorish Lord Hellebore. When James goes to stay in rural Scotland with his Aunt and Uncle, he befriends 'Red' Kelly, who is in Scotland to investigate the mysterious disappearance of his young cousin, last seen fishing in Lord Hellebore's nearby estate. James sets out on a path of investigation which soon leads him to Hellebore's castle and the terrifying experiments happening within ... This book weaves a fascinating back history for the world's most famous spy and contains plot twists and action that will delight boys and girls too.

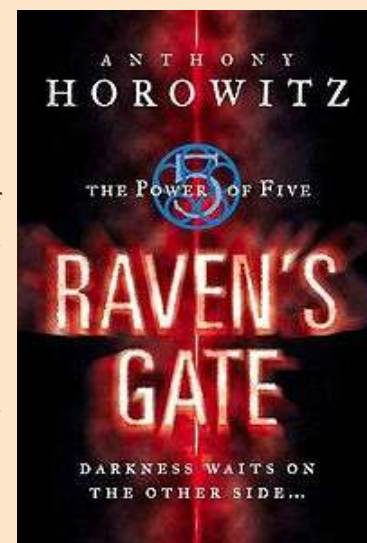


Reading Age 9+

Interest Level 9-14

Raven's Gate by Anthony Horowitz

In trouble with the law and facing prison, Matt Freeman opts for an experimental fostering programme. But Lesser Malling is eerie, the villagers decidedly hostile and his new 'mother' emanates menace. Desperate to escape, Matt finds everyone he turns to ends up unpleasantly dead. Matt slowly uncovers a story of ancient dark powers held at bay by the mysterious Raven's Gate, the villagers hell-bent on releasing them. Only Matt, the four shadowy others he encounters in recurring dreams and the shadowy Nexus group can stop them. Horowitz aimed for 'shivery horror' and he's succeeded! Suspense pervades *Raven's Gate*, with its snaking plot of sinister twists and unpleasant dead-ends. Matt is likeably believable and the final pages definitely leave the reader wanting more!



Reading Age 10+

Interest Level 11+

Young Sherlock Holmes by Andy Lane

The year is 1868, and Sherlock Holmes is fourteen. With his father suddenly posted to India, and his mother mysteriously 'unwell', Sherlock is sent to stay with his eccentric uncle and aunt in their vast house in Hampshire. So begins a summer that leads Sherlock to uncover his first murder, a kidnap, corruption and a brilliantly sinister villain of exquisitely malign intent ...

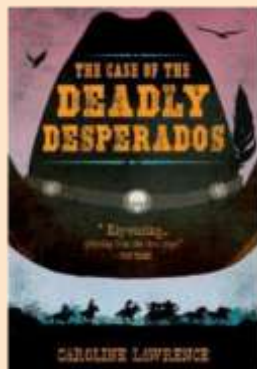


The Death Cloud is the first in a series of novels in which the iconic detective is reimagined as a brilliant, troubled and engaging teenager – creating unputdownable detective adventures that remain true to the spirit of the original books.

Reading Age 10+
Interest Level 10+

The Case of the Deadly Desperados: Book one of the Western Mysteries series by Caroline Lawrence

P.K. Pinkerton has trouble reading people and trouble expressing his emotions but he is not stupid and realises that the murder of his foster parents spells big trouble. As P.K. runs from a bloodthirsty gang of ruthless desperados, he is unsure what they are after, unsure where he is going and unsure who to trust. After a series of unlikely adventures and mishaps in the Wild West town of Virginia City, P.K. finds himself at the bottom of a deep mine shaft, certain he is soon to die, but determined to share his story with the world. In this atmospheric and witty Wild West adventure, a vibrant cast of characters teaches P.K. as much as he has ever learned about himself, life and human nature.



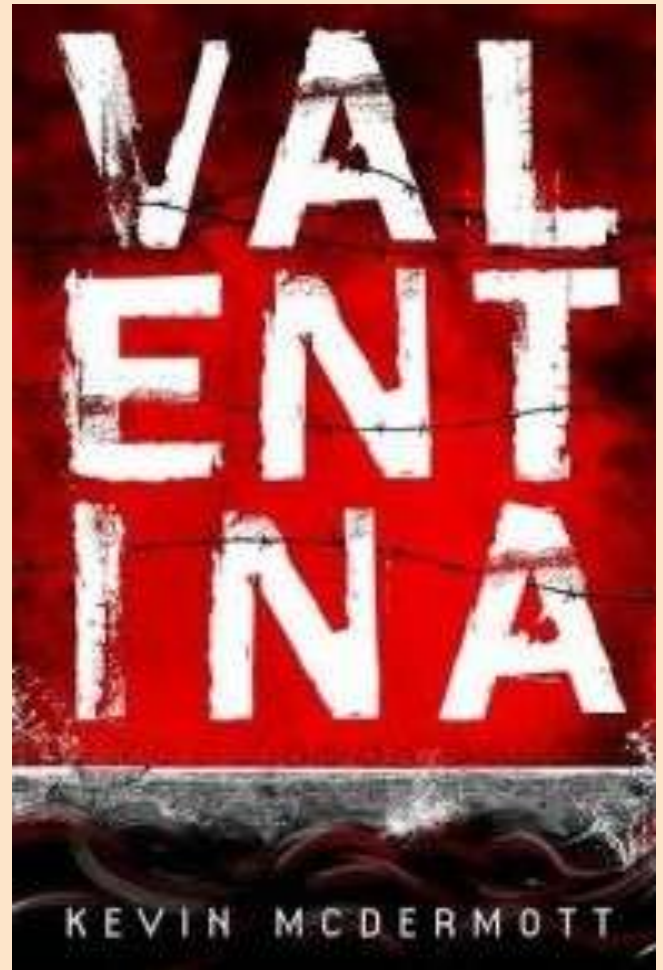
Reading Age 9
Interest Level 10-14

Six Words and a Wish by Karen McCombie

Jem may have an eccentric family – her dad is a professional clown and their house is filled with Christmas decorations all year round, but they are loving and she also has a brilliant best friend in Iris; but since her sister, Gracie, disappeared two years ago, Jem can't stop blaming her younger self for pushing her moody older sibling away. Jem manages

to put her worries aside and forms a band with her friends Iris and Max and soon develops a crush on Max's friend, Ben! However, mysterious things keep happening that remind Jem of Gracie, prompting her to wonder if her sister might be about to make a reappearance. This gentle book is filled with humour and teenage banter; readers are left guessing about what has happened to Gracie up until the very end.

Reading Age 11+
Interest Level 12+



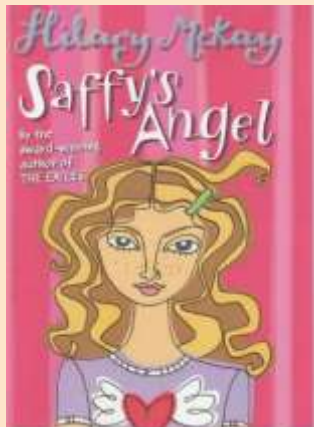
Valentina by Kevin Mc Dermott

Most of the world is burning or flooded. The temperate zones are still habitable – and one small island is teeming with climate refugees. Life in the Badlands is dangerous, disease-ridden, violent and controlled by gangsters and terrorists. But Valentina lives high in the privileged Citadel, at the heart of the heavily protected Green Zone. She is the president's daughter, sheltered, spoilt and arrogant. When she makes a secret trip to the Badlands, however, with her friends, Pippa and Damian, she is forced to face up to the realities of life on the island and to the responsibilities her position brings with it.

Reading Age 11+
Interest Level 12+

Saffy's Angel by Hilary McKay

Families don't come much stranger than Saffron's. The children are all named after paints on a colour chart, their mother spends most of her time locked in the garden shed, and the family home (inexplicably named 'Banana House') is teeming with guinea pigs. A few years previously, Saffy discovered that her brothers and sisters are actually her cousins (her



real mother died when she was small), but it is her grandfather's death that suddenly triggers distant memories. Aided by her wheelchair-using neighbour Sarah, Saffy starts to investigate. This is an uplifting story about an eccentric family encased in chaos, but also full of intense warmth and loyalty.

Reading Age 9+
Interest Level 9-13

When the Snow Fell by Henning Mankell

A touching story of growing up and discovering what really matters. Joel makes three New Year's resolutions: To see a naked lady, to toughen himself up so that he can live to be, to see the sea. How he sets out to fulfil these is a moving story of self-discovery.



Reading Age 11+
Interest Level 11+

Billy Elliot by Burgess Melvin



Billy Elliot's not like his Dad. He doesn't want to learn boxing or be a miner. Instead, he is fascinated by the grace and magic of ballet and is determined to dance. Set at the time of the miner's strike, the story traces Billy's fight against the prejudice of a northern community and family. Hugely popular with students.

Reading Age 11
Interest Level 12+

Twilight (Graphic Novel) by Stephanie Meyers

When Isabella Swan moves to the gloomy town of Forks and meets Edward Cullen, her life takes an exciting and terrifying turn. With his pale skin, good looks and supernatural gifts, Edward is both irresistible and mysterious. Up until now, he has managed to keep his true identity hidden, but Bella is determined to uncover his dark secret ...

Reading Age 11
Interest Level 11+

Private Peaceful by Michael Morpurgo

Set in the First World War, *Private Peaceful* charts eight hours in the life of Tommo, a young soldier at the Front, as he looks back over the formative events of his life: his father's early death, his relationship with his loving mother and brothers, Big Joe and Charlie, and their beloved schoolfriend Molly – all set among an evocative and beautifully realised rural landscape. Passionate, beguiling and moving, the book is also an unflinching examination of the horrors of war and the injustice surrounding the execution of soldiers by firing squad, on the – often false – grounds of desertion or cowardice.



Reading Age 10+
Interest Level 10-13

Farm Boy by Michael Morpurgo

"There's an old green Fordson tractor in the back of Grandpa's barn, always covered in cornsacks." This tractor has a story – a story that unfolds when the old man takes his grandson into his confidence and discloses his secret. Rich with historical detail and beautifully illustrated, this is a touching and inspirational portrayal of farming life and familial ties.



Reading Age 8+
Interest Level 10 +

The Recruit by Robert Muchamore

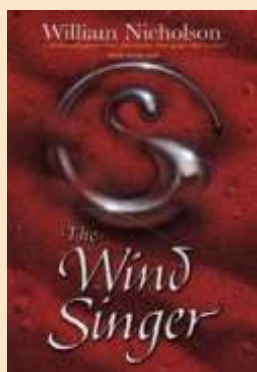


James Choke, is a normal English 12 year old boy who goes to a normal English school, until, after his mother's death he is obliged to go to a children's home where he is recruited by Cherub, a top secret government agency that recruits children as spies ...The novel charts his transformation from couch potato into a skilled CHERUB agent.

Reading Age 10+
Interest Level 11-13

The Wind Singer by William Nicholson

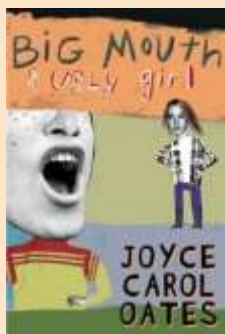
This is a stunningly original fantasy, set in the mythical city of Aramant, where every household is judged solely on its members' ability to perform in examinations. Only one family has the strength to rebel, fighting the system, and, in doing so, risks all. Leaving their parents and baby sibling behind, Bowman and his sister, Kestrel, embark on a dangerous journey in search of secrets which will make the 'wind singer' sing once again, thus restoring normality to their world. Their epic quest is depicted with a perfect balance of drama, tenderness and a touch of humour.



Reading Age 11+
Interest Level 11+

Big Mouth and Ugly Girl by Joyce Carol Oates

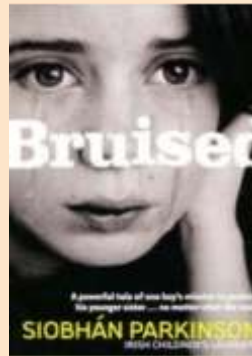
Matt Donaghy has always been a big mouth but its never got him into trouble – until one day when two detectives escort him out of class for questioning. The charge? Matt has been accused of threatening to blow up Rocky River High School. Ursula Riggs has always been 'an ugly girl'. In other words, she has no time for petty high-school stuff like friends and dating. Ursula is content with minding her own business. And she doesn't even really know Matt Donaghy. But Ursula knows injustice when she sees it and she's not afraid to speak out.



Reading Age 12+
Interest Level 12-15

Bruised by Siobhan Parkinson

Fourteen-year-old Jonathan lives with his eight-year-old sister Julie and their mother who is a drunk. Everything has changed since their Da moved out and and has got even worse since Gramma died. Now there is no proper food on the table, no clean clothes, they have to look after themselves the best they can. Until one day Ma hits Julie and Jonathan decides the only way to protect his sister is to run away.



Written by Irish Children's Laureate Siobhan Parkinson, Bruised explores themes of bullying, abuse and neglect in families and how they repeat themselves through the generations. Told in a fresh and original way via the unreliable narration of Jonathan who reveals layers of his story as he comes to terms with his life.

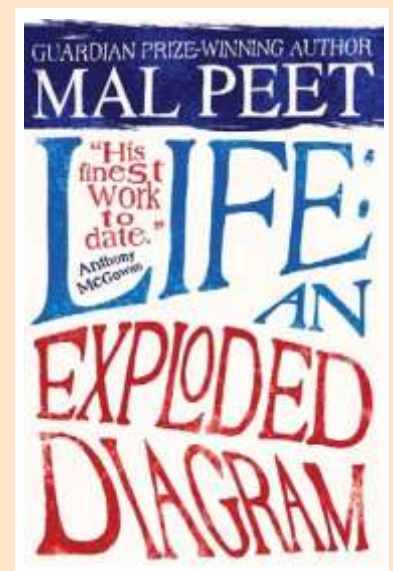
Reading Age 11+
Interest Level 11+

Life: An Exploded Diagram by Mal Peet

Clem is a working-class boy who has made it to the local grammar school; his home life in 1960s Norfolk is permeated by his parent's unhappy marriage and the forbidding presence of his curmudgeonly grandmother. When Clem meets the beautiful Frankie, the daughter of a wealthy local landowner, the pair are immediately attracted to each other and embark upon a clandestine relationship. Clem's coming-of-age story is woven around a tense account of the mounting Cuban Missile Crisis and the looming threat of nuclear war, until the two story-strands meet in a shocking and unexpected climax to the novel.

This deftly written book from an award-winning author will provide an engrossing and thought-provoking read for teenagers and adults alike.

Reading Age 13+
Interest Level 14+



Just In Case by Meg Rosoff

Fate is watching David Case and the fifteen year-old soon becomes consumed by the fear that it is going to catch up with him. David feels doomed and even changing his name to Justin and adopting an edgy new image does not seem to protect him entirely from its clutches. In trying to escape fate, Justin embarks on a voyage of self discovery, finding solace in the company of beautiful and eccentric photographer Agnes, his baby brother Charlie and his imaginary dog, Boy. But will he find the strength to fight fate in one last terrifying encounter? This quirky, off-beat novel acutely depicts the feelings of pain and alienation felt by many adolescents. At times both surreal and existential, this is a gripping second novel from the acclaimed author of *How I Live Now*.



Reading Age 12+

Interest Level 12+

The Boy Who Lost His Face by Louis Sachar

Desperate to be accepted by the 'in-crowd' David helps to steal Old Mrs. Bayfield's cane, but is immediately wracked with guilt. When everything in his life starts to go wrong, he becomes convinced that Mrs. Bayfield has put a curse on him. He is taunted by his classmates, and his best friend, Scott, makes fun of him to gain popularity with the bullies. To make matters worse he is smitten with classmate Tori Williams, but unable to ask her out in case the curse strikes again. Luckily his new friends, Larry and Moe, are on hand to help him confront the 'bullies' and overcome the 'curse'. This is a funny thought provoking insight into the mind of an anxious teenager. David is an immensely likeable protagonist and his relationships with his family, friends and enemies is thoroughly convincing.



Reading Age 10+

Interest Level 10-12

Undercover Angel by Dyan Sheldon

Twelve year-old Elmo is embarrassed by his environmental activist mother and wishes he had a 'normal' family. He is excited when the Bambers, their wealthy neighbours, adopt a child from South America, but his dreams of befriending the child and persuading the Bambers to also adopt him are

shattered when Elmo discovers that, not only is she a girl, but she is an undercover angel sent to ensure Elmo helps his mother to save the planet! A very funny tale with an environmental message.

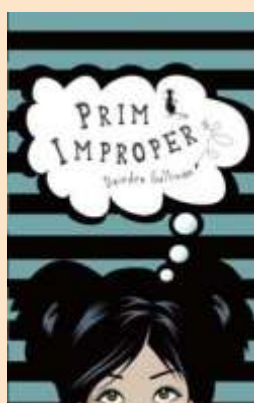


Reading Age 9+

Interest Level 9-12

Prim Improper by Deirdre Sullivan

Younger teenagers will enjoy the story of Primrose, who has to deal with all the usual afflictions of her age and stage (disloyal friends, super-embarrassing father, an emerging interest in boys) as well as a few that are much more serious (raw grief and a shrink who's driving her crazy). Deirdre Sullivan nails the uneasy mixture of self-obsession and insecurity that defines her principal character and captures accurately Prim's utter conviction that she is the most interesting person on the planet. *Prim Improper* is written with a light touch and a good ear for teenage vernacular. It should strike a chord with girls who know just how hard it is to be 13 – and will send shivers down the spine of any parent who happens to pick it up to read a few pages, only to have confirmed what they have always suspected about how their teenage daughters perceive them.



Reading Age 10+

Interest Level 10-13

The King Arthur Trilogy by Rosemary Sutcliffe

One volume combines Rosemary Sutcliffe's three classic books about King Arthur and his knights. Beginning before Arthur's birth and ending with the disintegration of the brotherhood of the Round Table, this retelling of the ancient legends takes readers on a magical journey through Briton of the Dark Ages. This traditional re-telling of the Arthurian legend has few of the bells and whistles of Harry Potter or other contemporary tales of witches and wizards. Sutcliffe's prose is clear and unfussy. A book for an established reader.

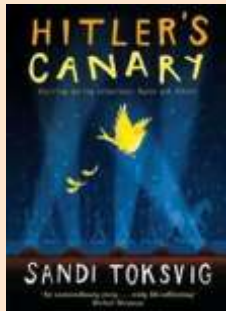


Reading Age 10+

Interest Level 10-13

Hitler's Canary by Sandi Toksvig

Ten-year old Bamse is asleep on Henry the V's throne when the German's invade Copenhagen. Son to one of Denmark's most famous actors, Bamse grows up in a world of drama and make-believe, but during the Nazi occupation everything that was once comfortable and familiar is threatened, and his way of life is changed forever. This story uniquely portrays the war through the eyes of a child stuck between the need for safety and the desire to help. Hitler's Canary, ultimately, is about the courage and heroism of ordinary citizens in a time of danger and strife. Bamse himself stands as a metaphor for the extraordinary efforts of the Danes to save their Jewish countrymen: in the face of courage and goodness, power and size will remain fallible.



Reading Age 9+
Interest Level 9-12

Bartolomé: The Infanta's Pet by Rachel Van Kooij

17th-century Madrid is not a kind place for a dwarf like Bartolomé, and his family has to keep him hidden in a small back room. His dream is to be able to read and write, and when he hears that a dwarf like himself works in the King's court, he is heartened, knowing that he could have the chance to make something of himself, too. Then a plan goes awfully wrong, and the king's little daughter, the Infanta, sees Bartolomé and wants to have him as her 'human dog'. Colourful, gripping, and written with real warmth, this is an inspiring story of courage and hope.



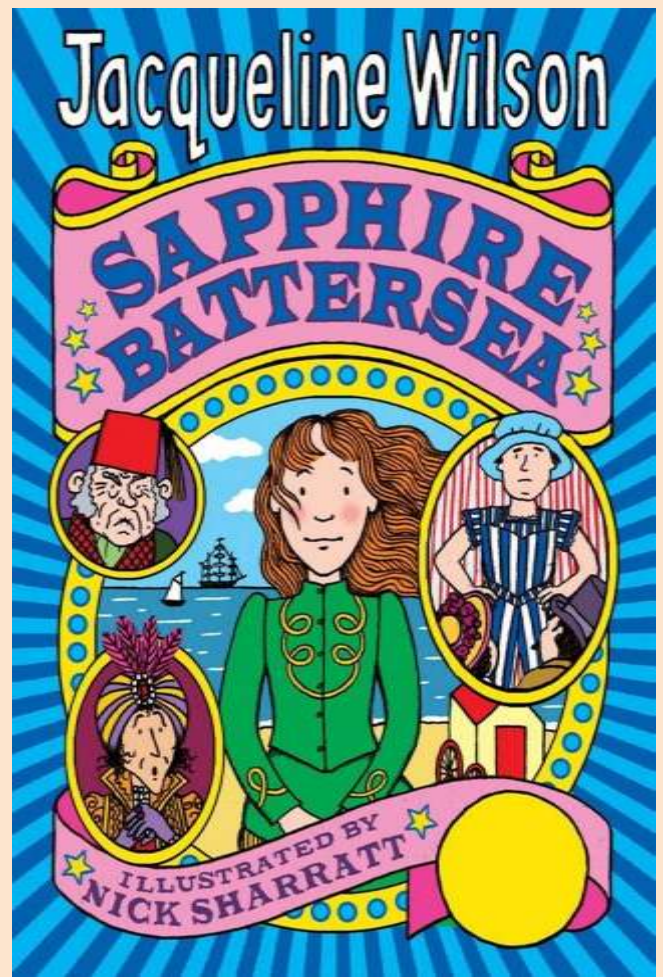
Reading Age 10 +
Interest Level 11+

Sapphire Battersea by Jacqueline Wilson

The sequel to Hetty Feather, which described the experience of a child left at London's Foundling Hospital, and how she eventually discovered her mother, who was secretly working there. When another inmate reveals this, Hetty's mother is dismissed, and Hetty herself sent into service. There, Wilson reveals, the servants are frequently far more honest and kindlier than their masters, and that practicing Christians are not necessarily as charitable as they profess to be. Hetty (aka Sapphire, after her blue eyes) remains as forthright and ingenious as

ever, battling for herself and her sick mother, from the scullery to the freak show. This is another fact-filled and exciting slice of working-class Victorian life, showing readers how young people used to live.

Reading Age 8+
Interest Level 9+



Enchanted Glass by Diana Wynne Jones

When "Professor" Andrew Hope inherits Melstone House from his grandfather, Jocelyn Brandon, he's not aware at first of what he's taken on. First, there's the house itself; not only has he inherited the physical property, but also his grandfather's "field-of-care" – a magical demarcation zone running around the surrounding fields and paths. This will come to be the crux of the story, but in the meantime Andrew is too busy coping with all the other new influences in his life – in the form of a superb cast of characters, including Aidan Cain, a runaway 12-year-old distant relation who comes to stay.



Reading Age 11
Interest 11+

BRIEF REVIEW OF TEXTS PRESCRIBED FOR EXAMINATION IN LC ENGLISH, 2015

ABRAHAMSON, Lenny (Dir) **Garage**

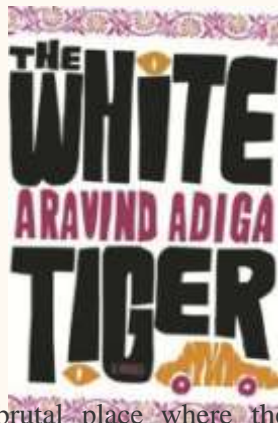


Set over the course of a summer Garage tells the story of Josie, who works in a run-down garage somewhere in the middle of the country. Pat Shortt turns in a finely judged performance as Josie, the simple-minded and gentle central character. The film focuses on Josie and his experience and appreciation of the world. The turning

point in the film comes when a fellow worker invites Josie to join him and his teenage friends for a few beers late at night. A new chapter opens in Josie's life, awakening feelings that he struggles to control, with tragic consequences. While there are moments of comedy, the film is, ultimately, heart-breaking.

ADIGA, Aravind **The White Tiger**

Aravind Adiga's debut novel won the Booker prize. The novel paints an unflattering picture of Indian society, where corruption and servitude are part and parcel of daily life. The central character is the uneducated son of a rickshaw puller who becomes an entrepreneur and a murderer. In the manner of Dickens, Adiga points out the moral vacuum at the heart of economic and industrial expansion.



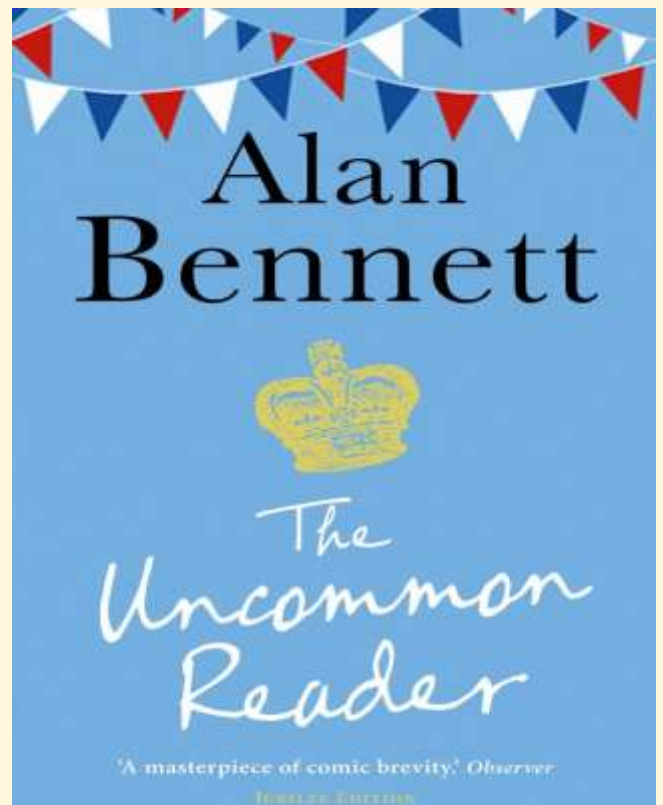
The India of the novel is a brutal place where the strongest survive. What makes the novel so readable is the fact that it is narrated by the central character, the mouthy, megalomaniac Bairam Halwai, who tells his tale of bribery, corruption, traffic jams, theft and murder, with admirable energy and panache.

AUSTEN, Jane **Pride and Prejudice**

There are five Bennet sisters living at Longbourn: the irrepressible Lizzie; the quiet, beautiful Jane; the wildly silly Lydia; the impressionable Kitty and the pious and sententious Mary. Five sisters in search of husbands; a ridiculous mother; a long-suffering and neglectful father; the proud Darcy; the charming Bingley; the unscrupulous Wickham; the comical Mr Collins. In short, Austen at her brilliant best.

BENNETT, Alan **The Uncommon Reader** **NEW TEXT**

In Bennett's amusing novel, the Queen is portrayed as charming, lively and intelligent. More importantly she is a reader and lover of books who is convinced of the transformative power of books in our lives. Part fairy-tale, part treatise on reading, the novella is full of quirky humour. The Queen becomes an avid reader when her corgis discover the mobile library of the City of Westminster. In Bennett's book, reading is a democratic practice that goes beyond class,

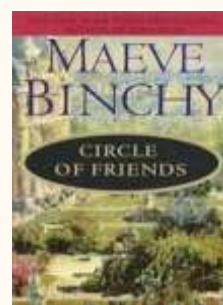


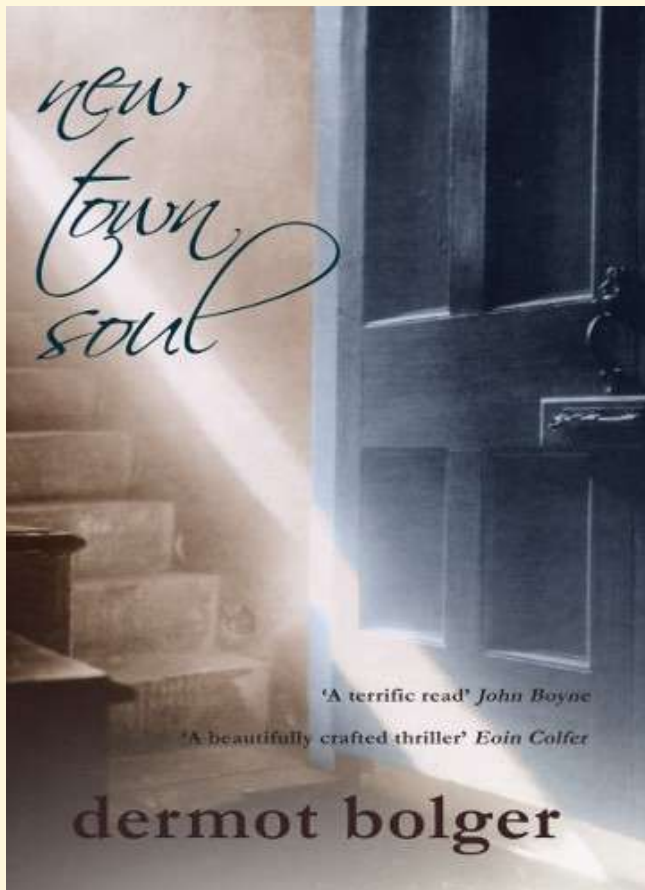
upbringing and education. It allows you to stand in other people's shoes and imagine a new life for yourself. Is there an English teacher who will disagree?

BINCHY, Maeve **Circle of Friends**

Although this is a long novel, it is not a daunting read. Set in Ireland in the late 50s, the novel tells the story of Eve and Benny two friends from the small town of Knockgleng, who go to Dublin to attend university.

Their encounters with Jack Foley and Nan Mahon teach them about true friendship. Binchy's warm, conversational style, as she charts the up and downs of the two friends in life and love, engages the reader and makes us empathise with her heroines.



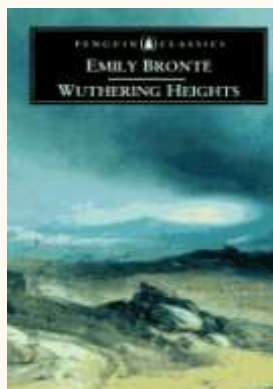


BOLGER, Dermot *New Town Soul* **NEW TEXT**

A derelict house in the Dublin suburb of Blackrock, a teenage boy and a girl, a dead father who was a rock musician, a new friend who wields hypnotic power and a strange old man are the ingredients of Dermot Bolger's *New Town Soul*. The novel mixes the traditional ghost story (*The Hell Fire Club*) with the modern teenage novel. In the novel immortality is a dreadful burden and the mortal world, with its sadness and death, the more attractive option. Creepy and scary, the novel gallops along at a great pace and teenage readers will enjoy and identify with the central characters, Joey and Geraldine.

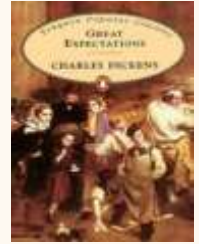
BRONTË, Emily *Wuthering Heights*

Classic romantic novel of consuming passions, played out against the wild Yorkshire moors. Cathy and Heathcliff are the unhinged, tempestuous lovers, who wreak havoc all round them. A dense, overwritten, overwrought tale of passion, jealousy and revenge. A demanding read but who can resist its peculiar madness: I am Heathcliff! He's always, always in my mind; not as a pleasure, any more than I am always a pleasure to myself, but as my own being.



DICKENS, Charles *Great Expectations*

Considered by many to be Dickens's greatest work, this is the story of Pip, who owes his good fortune to a mysterious benefactor. Full of memorable characters, including the bitter Miss Havisham and the fearsome Magwitch, Dickens explores family, identity and class, as well as love, rejection and kindness. As ever in Dickens, drama, pathos and satire are combined to great effect. Brilliantly plotted and paced, this is a fantastic introduction to Dickens.



FITZGERALD, F. Scott *The Great Gatsby*

Fitzgerald's novel on the search for love and meaning; the lure of money and power; the difference between the wealthy and the social elite; and the moral and social fog that surrounds the restless Jay Gatsby. The novel is a satire on the lives of the idle nouveau riche. And yet, Fitzgerald seems to be as seduced by Gatsby as he is appalled by the emptiness of his life. And Gatsby's life represents the triumph of style over substance. It's a novel that a new generation of readers, accustomed to 'celebrity culture' will understand immediately. And they will also appreciate the way in which Fitzgerald uses the automobile to highlight the emptiness of The American Dream, where wealth is pursued as an end in itself and the pursuit proves futile. Of course this did not prevent Fitzgerald from aping the lifestyle of Gatsby in his private life... First published in 1925, the novel still retains its freshness and energy.



FRIEL, Brian *Translations*

Friel's play, set against the background of the British survey of Ireland in 1833, in which the countryside was mapped and place names recorded in anglicised form, explores the relationship between two cultures and two languages. The complicated relationship between Ireland and England is explored through the lives and loves, the hopes and disappointments of a small set of characters in the town of Baile Beag. The love story between Maire and Lieutenant Yolland anchors the play and brings into focus many of its themes, including the conflict between the generations. And the play touches on the conflict between economic development and the erosion of culture which will almost inevitably follow it, in a way that speaks to our current national concerns. The uncertain ending of the play adds to the dramatic impact. Gentle, humorous, thoughtful, inventive, challenging, *Translations* presents Friel at the height of his powers.



HOOPER, Tom (Dir) *The King's Speech* (Film)

NEW TEXT

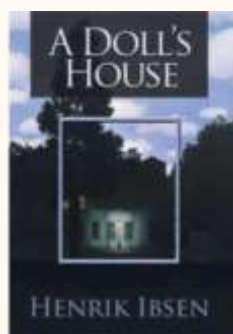
This is less a film about a king and more about a private and shy man overcoming his debilitating stammer with the aid of charismatic therapist. The relationship between therapist (speech therapist? psychoanalyst?) and patient becomes something of a bromance, facilitated by the king's loving, practical and capable wife. There are great performances from all three leads- Colin Firth, Helena Bonham Carter and Geoffrey Rush. The film, set in the 1920s and 1930s, tells the true story of King George VI and Lionel Logue, the Australian who helped him face the terrifying demands of public speaking, demanded by his title and position. The film does skip over the loaded political context – the rise of Hitler – in favour of the personal story. *The King's Speech* is very British affair,



with an abundance of stiff-upper lips, beautifully costumed characters and expensively furnished rooms. However it is far more than a period piece and delivers drama and emotion with style and panache.

IBSEN, Henrik *A Doll's House*

Ibsen's play on the need for freedom and the oppressive effects of middle-class values in a patriarchal society, written in 1879, still packs a punch. There are enough symbols and symbolic motifs to engage most students, while Nora's decision to leave the insufferable Torvald is sure to generate heated classroom debate on the



responsibility of the individual to herself versus her responsibility to her family. There are many echoes of Ibsen's work in Friel's *Dancing at Lughnasa*.

ISHIGURO, Kazuo *Never Let Me Go*

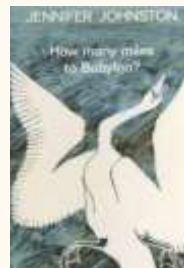
Ishiguro's dystopian novel explores the dangers of scientific advances in contemporary society. Hailsham is a seemingly idyllic boarding school in the heart of the English countryside, dedicated to the welfare of the children who reside there. However, through the narrative of Kathy H, a 'carer' at the

school, the dark secret of the institution is revealed. The school is a sham a place as twisted as Miss Havisham's eerie residence in *Great Expectations*. The children at Hailsham are 'donors', cloned to provide healthy organs so that other 'normal' people might live. So slyly does the truth of the society creep up on you in the reading of the novel that the impact is unforgettable. Margaret Atwood described the novel as like a cross between Enid Blyton and *Blade Runner* and this catches something of the strangeness of the work. Written in his customary spare, flat style, this is a novel of real power and purpose, in the tradition of Orwell. It brilliantly mimics society's ability to cover morally dubious practices under euphemism and scientific language and make the monstrous seem normal.



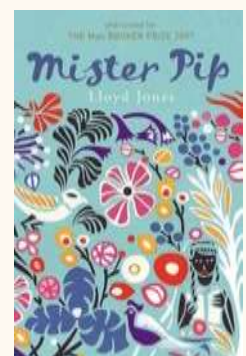
JOHNSTON, Jennifer *How Many Miles to Babylon?*

Two boys, separated by class and religion, grow up as friends on a large country estate. Their relationship is frowned upon and they are forced apart. When WW1 begins, both young men leave to fight. We follow their careers separately until they meet again near the dramatic and moving end of the novel. Brilliantly written, with a number of superb set pieces, Johnson's novel is a meditation on class, war, loneliness and loss. A great favourite among students.



Jones, Lyod *Mister Pip*

Set in Papua New Guinea during the Civil War of the 1990s, Lyod Jones's brilliant novel brings together the atrocities of war, Charles Dickens, and the art of storytelling. The novel is narrated by 13-year old Matilda. As the story opens, the school has closed, the teachers have fled, and a blockade has cut her village off from the outside



world. The only remaining white man is Mr Watts. He feels at home in the jungle and he loves Dickens. He starts to teach school hoping to make the classroom 'a place of light'. When he promises to introduce them to Mr Dickens, the children imagine someone bearing food and medicine. What they get instead is Mr Watt's reading of *Great Expectations*. When the book is burnt, the novel takes an unexpected turn. The novel manages to be charming and brutal, dreamy and clear-eyed in one.

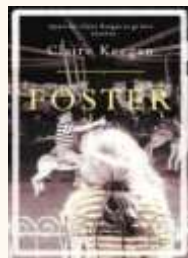
KAY, Jackie *Red Dust Road*

This is Jackie Kay's brilliant, humorous, compassionate account of her search for her birth parents. With great skill Kay charts her emotions as she meets the man and woman who gave her up for adoption, both of whom want her existence to remain the secret she has always been. Kay is compassionate towards her birth parents. However, she writes with love and warmth about the parents who raised her. Written with the flair of a poet and a novelist, this is a lovely meditation on family, love, loyalty and the right to know who we are and where we come from.



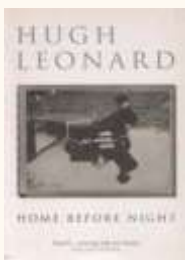
KEEGAN, Claire *Foster*

A young girl spends the summer with her aunt and uncle on a farm in Wexford, following the birth of the latest child in her large family. There she encounters kindness, love and an attentive caring that she has never known. She also learns that her aunt and her husband share a tragic secret. But too soon the summer ends and she has to go back home. In a little over eighty pages, Keegan tells a heart-breaking and beautiful story. Short, precise and brilliant.



LEONARD, Hugh *Home Before Night*

Leonard's charming, witty, nostalgic memoir of growing up in Dalkey with his much loved Da and his fierce, though good-hearted, mother. The memoir captures the 30s and 40s brilliantly. It has some great set pieces delivered with real skill and insight and vivid portraits of a host of memorable characters. Yes, it is sentimental, in the way that Dickens is sentimental, but none the worse for that. The prose is clear, simple and elegant. Young writers will learn a great deal about personal writing from reading a master at work.



LESSING, Doris *The Grass Is Singing*

Dark, brooding and gripping, Lessing's novel is a study in the psychology and exercise of power and the politics of gender and race. Set in Africa it tells the story of the life and murder of Mary Turner, wife of a struggling farmer. Lessing portrays Mary as a flawed and weak person, who is trapped in a marriage and a life from which she cannot escape. Strong forceful writing on the corrupting



influence of both colonialism and patriarchy which, by concentrating so intently on the story of Mary Turner, never strays into abstraction.

LONCRINE, Richard (Dir) *Richard III (Film)*

Loncraine's fast-paced adaptation of Richard III is set in an imaginary England of the 1930's. Richard is the totalitarian dictator, motivated by ambition and a desire for revenge, who crushes all who stand in his way. Richard is played with real verve by Ian McKellen who draws you into his schemes and amoral life with roguish charm and wit. A terrific film that really catches the intoxication and smell of power, desire and ambition. Loncraine's film will generate discussion and debate.



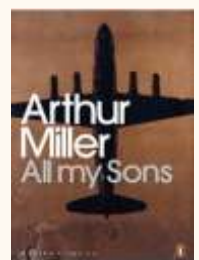
McCarthy, Cormac *The Road*

McCarthy's post-apocalyptic novel tells the journey undertaken by a father and his young son over a period of several months, across a desolated American landscape, following an unnamed catastrophe that has destroyed much of civilization and almost all life on earth. The journey is harrowing and the man and boy encounter horrors on the way. The novel ends on a note that may be read as optimistic. A novel of despair, endurance and love which raises important questions about the nature of humanity and the conflict between the need to survive and the need to connect with other human beings. The novel takes much of its force from the context of 9/11 and the environmental disaster that may follow from global warming. A harrowing and emotionally shattering read that is also tender and compelling.



MILLER, Arthur *All my Sons*

Miller's play about Joe Keller, a family man, who sacrifices everything, including his honour and integrity, in order to make his family prosper. The play is set in August 1947, in the mid-west of the U.S.A. During the Second World War, Joe's factory manufactured parts for military aircraft. Rather than lose a contract Joe knowingly shipped out defective parts to the military. Twenty planes were lost. At his trial, Joe denied he knowingly shipped out the defective parts. Now, two years after the end of the war, the full horror of his action is revealed, and his past deed comes back to haunt him. As in a Greek tragedy, the true story emerges with devastating consequences for the family Joe sought to support.



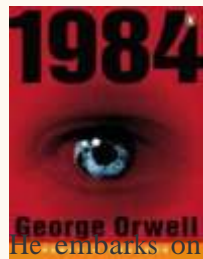
O'CASEY, Sean Juno and the Paycock

O'Casey's classic play set in the Dublin tenements during the Civil War, in which the dignity and heroism of women are set against the bluster and selfishness of men. Tragedy with a comic touch, and an exuberant sense of language.



ORWELL, George Nineteen Eighty-Four

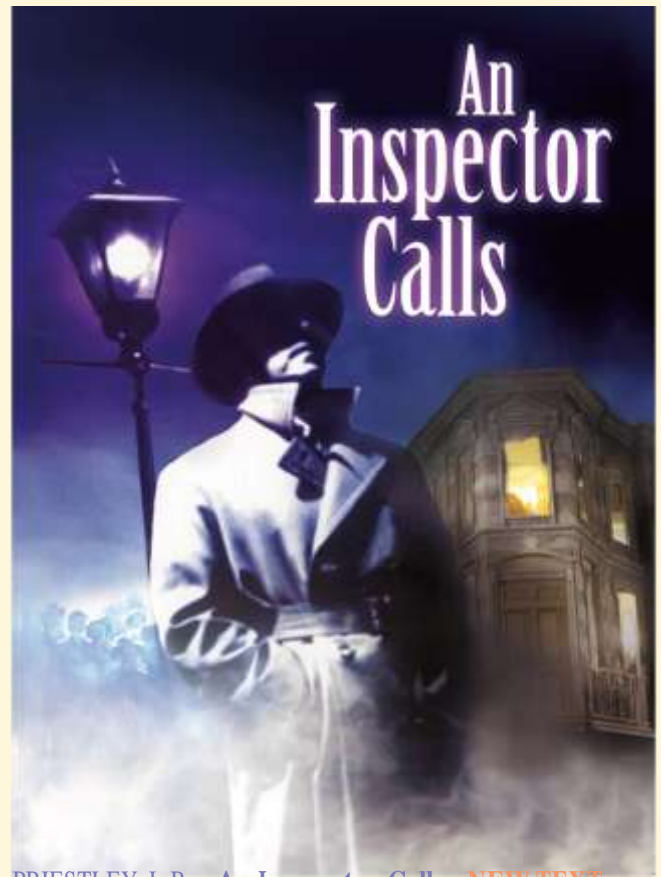
Orwell's dystopian novel on a future society in which state surveillance pervades all aspects of the lives of citizens, and the private world of relationships and emotions is driven underground. In the world of the novel the Party rules over the proles and keeps them in subjection. Total allegiance is demanded not only in body but in mind, too. The leader of the totalitarian state is Big Brother whose leadership condemns reason and individuality. Winston Smith, the central character of the novel, who rewrites past newspaper articles to make them fit with the party's version of the truth, hates the Party and harbours rebellious thoughts. He embarks on a clandestine love affair with Julia with almost inevitable consequences.



Orwell's novel is part political polemic, part science-fiction. Interestingly, the new global economy and the pervasive of mass media have created a more benign version of the future that Orwell imagined, while the 'reality-television' programme Big Brother pays its own kind of homage to Orwell.

PICOULT, Jodi My Sister's Keeper

A popular best-seller which, like Ishiguro's *Never Let me Go*, explores the ethics of modern medicine. The central character is Anna, a bright 13-year-old, who has acted as a donor for her older sister, who suffers from leukaemia. When her sister needs a kidney, Anna takes legal action for the right to decide the medical procedures to which she will or will not be subjected. Told from a variety of perspectives, the novel nimbly moves through the emotional, legal and familial repercussions of Anna's decision. Not all of the novel works, but it does race along at a break-neck speed and ends with a real surprise, though the final twist of the plot may tie things up far too neatly for some readers. Picoult's books are a publishing sensation, devoured by many youthful readers. Read *My Sister's Keeper* to find out why. (422 pages)

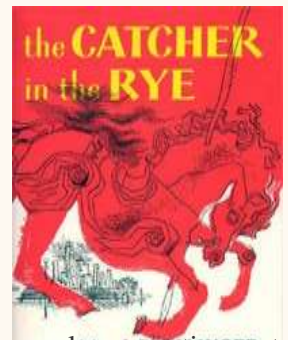


PRIESTLEY, J. B. An Inspector Calls NEW TEXT

First performed in 1946 *An Inspector Calls* focuses on one night in the lives of the Birlings, a successful middle-class family, with social ambitions. The family are celebrating. However their evening is interrupted by the visit of an Inspector Goole. He is investigating the suicide of a young woman. Under his questioning, the various members of the family are shown to have been responsible for ruining the young woman's life. Part detective story, with a ghostly feel, and part drawing-room drama, the play combines popular theatre with social comment.

SALINGER, J. D. The Catcher in the Rye

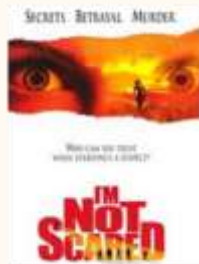
The original of the species. Salinger's 1951 novel tells the trials and tribulations of Holden Caulfield, the conflicted teenager. Though not written when Teenage Fiction was recognised as a distinct genre, the novel hits many of the notes of the genre: teenage angst, alienation, rebellion, sexual fantasy, loneliness and the desire for freedom from suffocating norms. Holden is loud-mouthed and the novel was frowned upon (and in some places continues to be) for its profanity and treatment of sexual matters. A favourite among male teachers of a certain age!



SALVATORE, Gabriele (Director)

I'm Not Scared (Io Non Ho Paura) (Film)

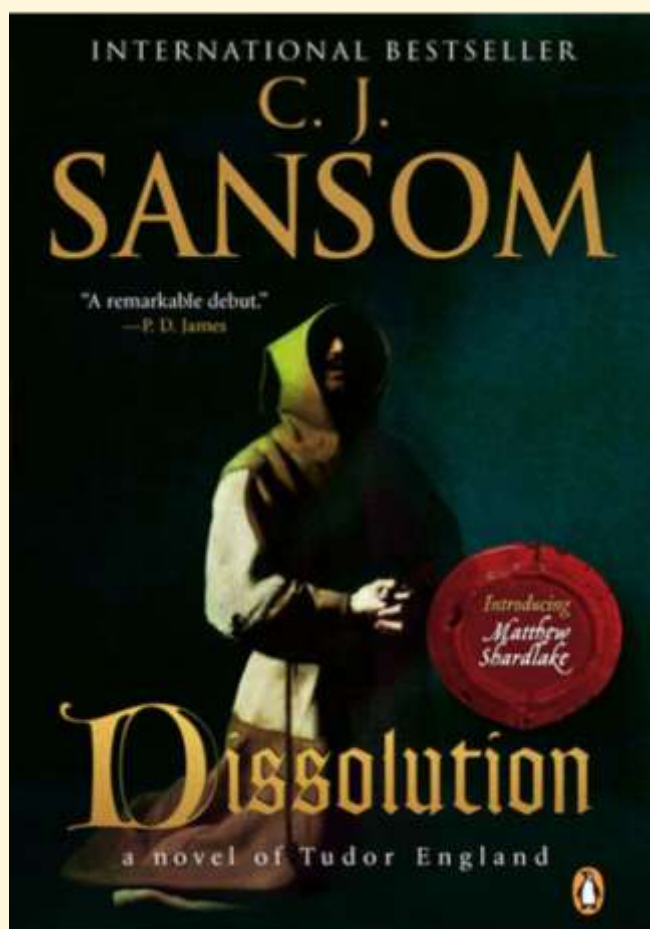
Set in the southern most tip of Italy over a long, hot summer, I'm Not Scared is a coming-of-age film that bristles with suspense and menace. The film's narrative focuses on ten-year-old Michele. He hangs out with a gang of friends; adores his frequently-absent father; and fights with his beautiful and troubled mother. By accident, he stumbles across a boy held captive in a pit. Curious and fascinated, he treats the discovery as a guilty secret and begins to visit the boy on a regular basis. To his dismay he finds out that his father is one of the gang who have kidnapped the boy and who are demanding a ransom from his wealthy father. His mother dreams of the lovely things the money will allow her family to do. Michele thinks of the young boy in the pit. What makes the film so successful is the way in which the moral conundrum is played out, allied to the brilliant visual style of the film-making, where so many memorable images speak to the themes of the film. In a word: terrific.



Shardlake, is like a Tudor version of the TV detective, Lewis. If you like the Tudor period, and if you like Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose*, you will like *Dissolution*. Sansom is really good at evoking the sights and smells of the monastery and capturing the social tumult of the period. A well-written and well-plotted historical crime novel.

SCOTT, Ridley (Dir) Blade Runner (Film)

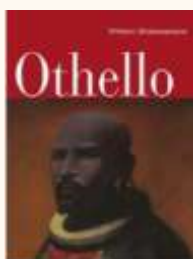
Now thirty years old, Scott's film has lost none of its power and influence. A brilliant dystopian version of the future, where human-like replicants, who want to live as humans, are hunted down and eliminated. The cinematography and design are superb. *Blade Runner* is as much a classic film noir as a science-fiction movie. Harrison Ford has never been better as the world-weary investigator/agent hunting the replicants. A meditation of corporate culture, human creativity, cultural dissolution, paranoia, fear and control, as well as a sad-eyed hymn to love and desire. Just don't try to make sense of the title.



SANSOM, C. J. Dissolution NEW TEXT

A historical novel with a crooked-back lawyer who investigates criminal going-ons in a monastery. Set during the reign on Henry VII, the hero, Matthew

SHAKESPEARE, William Othello



What happens when a great soldier, general and poet is asked to govern in a place beyond the influence of civil society? What happens when a lover and husband is challenged to govern his emotions when his sexual jealousy is aroused? What happens when a young wife fails to believe the worst of her husband? This is Shakespeare's exploration of ungoverned emotions and appetites, and the destruction wrought by jealousy and hatred. The play is an extraordinary mix of the public and the intimate, of love and irrationality, of sense and nonsense. *Othello* is a powerful play in spite of its creaky plot (Why does Iago hate Othello so? Why does Othello rush to condemn his friend and his blameless wife?)

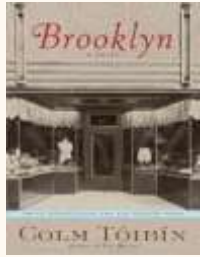
SHAKESPEARE, William King Lear

For many *Lear* is Shakespeare's greatest play. The powerful king who is self-indulgent and open to flattery; the foolish king who banishes his friends and loving daughter; the powerless king who suffers and grows wise; the wise king who fears he is not in perfect mind and whose heart is broken. Add to this the acerbic wit of the Fool and the machinations of the evil sisters and you have one mighty play.



TÓIBÍN, Colm **Brooklyn**

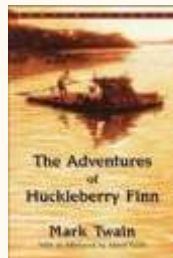
Toibin's tale of emigration and return plays on the themes of possibility and freedom and gives an ironic turn to a familiar tale. Eilis Lacey does not want to leave Enniscorthy and go to New York but, dutiful daughter that she is, she does what her mother and her older sister think best for her and lands in Brooklyn. There she meets Tony, and puts down roots, though she



never finds the courage to tell her family back home about the Italian American boy she has married in secret. Summoned back to Ireland Eilis discovers that America has made her glamorous and desirable and her prospects at home seem more appealing than returning to Tony and Brooklyn. In a neat and ironic shift, American, the land of opportunity, now appears as an obstacle in the way of obtaining the heart's desire. A really good take on the themes of identity, belonging. The final choice made by the heroine will generate classroom discussion and debate. Written in Toibin's plain, unadorned style, this will prove a popular choice with students.

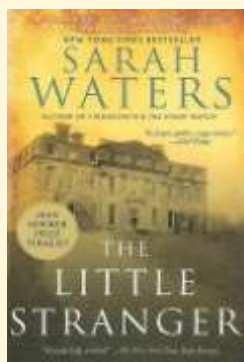
TWAIN, Mark **Huckleberry Finn**

First published in 1884, the novel charts Huck's adventures on a raft in the Mississippi river. A scathing attack on racism and prejudice, the novel works best when it describes life on the raft and the relationship between Huck and Jim. Some may find the satirical treatment of southern manners and attitudes tiresome and the novel is far longer than it needs to be. Interestingly, there is still animated debate on whether the novel is racist in its underlying attitudes.



WATERS, Sarah **The Little Stranger** NEW TEXT

A gothic-style novel set in an old country house in the English countryside in the 1940s. The novel deals with love, social mobility and upheaval in the post-war period. There is also a supernatural element with a ghostly presence, which has more than a hint of evil. A moody and atmospheric novel dealing with insanity, poltergeists, family secrets and disappointed love. And it wouldn't be an English novel if it didn't deal with issues of class. Farraday is the local doctor whose scientific rationalism is challenged by the things that go bump in the night in the crumbling pile of Hundreds Hall. A little overlong but a very fine contemporary novel.



WELLES, Orson (Dir)

Citizen Kane NEW TEXT

Following the death of a publishing tycoon, news reporters scramble to discover the meaning of his last word, "Rosebud". What follows is an investigation of the the life and legacy of the fictional newspaper magnate, Charles Foster Kane. It is the story of a life told and retold, though flashback, from different perspectives by different witnesses. The more we learn the less there is to see and understand. Kane is a hollow man. Critics admire the film's use of the language of cinema to tell the story. The shots are unusual; the film looks shadowy and dark; the soundtrack is terrific and the structure is non-linear. It is film designed and conceived as art. Welles' directorial debut, Citizen Kane regularly features on lists of the greatest films ever made.



WILDER, Thornton **Our Town** NEW TEXT

Like Priestley's An Inspector Calls, Wilder's play is a well-made three act drama. Narrated by the Stage Manager, the play tells of the lives of the inhabitants of a small town in Massachusetts in the early years of the twentieth century. Dealing with the drama of everyday life – work, love, family, birth and death – Wilder's play is affectionate and compassionate and celebrates ordinary life even as it suggests that we are often too blind to appreciate how extraordinary ordinary life can be. Wilder's deliberately draws attention to the artificiality of theatre but, paradoxically, this ploy brings the audience closer to the character and events on stage. A thoughtful and sometimes beautiful meditation on transience and the ties that bind.



WINTERSON, Jeanette **Why Be Happy When You Could Be Normal?** NEW TEXT

This is a brilliant, moving memoir, combining sorrow and despair with extraordinary resilience and forgiveness. The unforgettable title comes from a question posed by the writer's adopted mother, as she evicts the sixteen-year-old narrator from the family home. The reason for the eviction is the discovery of her adopted daughter's sexual and romantic attachment to another girl. Divided into two parts, the first tells the story of Winterson's bizarre childhood, where reading became the source of comfort and escape. The second part chronicles her search to find her birth mother, following the break-up of a long-term relationship. What is most impressive here is the absence of rancour and the peace she makes with those whom she might have hated.

