

Classic Literature for High School Students

American Literature

Agee, James

A Death in the Family

Story of loss and heartbreak felt when a young father dies.

Anderson, Sherwood

Winesburg, Ohio

A collection of short stories lays bare the life of a small town in the Midwest.

Baldwin, James

Go Tell It On the Mountain

Semi-autobiographical novel about a 14-year-old black youth's religious conversion.

Bellamy, Edward

Looking Backward: 2000-1887

Written in 1887 about a young man who travels in time to a utopian year 2000, where economic security and a healthy moral environment have reduced crime.

Bellow, Saul

Seize the Day

A son grapples with his love and hate for an unworthy father.

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Cather, Willa

My Antonia

Immigrant pioneers strive to adapt to the Nebraska prairies.

Chopin, Kate

The Awakening

The story of a New Orleans woman who abandons her husband and children to search for love and self-understanding.

Clark, Walter Van Tilburg

The Ox-Bow Incident

When a group of citizens discovers one of their members has been murdered by cattle rustlers, they form an illegal posse, pursue the murderers, and lynch them.

Cormier, Robert

The Chocolate War

Jerry Renault challenges the power structure of his school when he refuses to sell chocolates for the annual fundraiser.

Crane, Stephen

The Red Badge of Courage

During the Civil War, Henry Fleming joins the army full of romantic visions of battle which are shattered by combat.

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Dorris, Michael

A Yellow Raft in Blue Water

Three generations of Native American women recount their searches for identity and love.

Ellison, Ralph

Invisible Man

A black man's search for himself as an individual and as a member of his race and his society.

Faulkner, William

As I Lay Dying

The Bundren family takes the ripening corpse of Addie, wife and mother, on a gruesomely comic journey.

Gaines, Ernest

The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman

In her 100 years, Miss Jane Pittman experiences it all, from slavery to the civil rights movement.

Hawthorne, Nathaniel

The Scarlet Letter

An adulterous Puritan woman keeps secret the identity of the father of her illegitimate child.

Heller, Joseph

Catch-22

A broad comedy about a WWII bombardier based in Italy and his efforts to avoid bombing missions.

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Hurston, Zora Neale

Their Eyes Were Watching God

Janie repudiates many roles in her quest for self-fulfillment.

Kesey, Ken

One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest

A novel about a power struggle between the head nurse and one of the male patients in a mental institution.

Lewis, Sinclair

Main Street

A young doctor's wife tries to change the ugliness, dullness and ignorance which prevail in Gopher Prairie, Minn.

McCullers, Carson

The Member of the Wedding

A young southern girl is determined to be the third party on a honeymoon, despite all the advice against it from friends and family.

Melville, Herman

Moby-Dick

A complex novel about a mad sea captain's pursuit of the White Whale.

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Morrison, Toni

Sula

The lifelong friendship of two women becomes strained when one causes the other's husband to abandon her.

O'Connor, Flannery

A Good Man is Hard to Find

Social awareness, the grotesque, and the need for faith characterize these stories of the contemporary South.

Parks, Gordon

The Learning Tree

A fictional study of a black family in a small Kansas town in the 1920s.

Plath, Sylvia

The Bell Jar

The heartbreaking story of a talented young woman's descent into madness.

Potok, Chaim

The Chosen

Friendship between two Jewish boys, one Hasidic and the other Orthodox, begins at a baseball game and flourishes despite their different backgrounds and beliefs.

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Salinger, J.D.

The Catcher in the Rye

A prep school dropout rejects the "phoniness" he sees all about him.

Sinclair, Upton

The Jungle

The deplorable conditions of the Chicago stockyards are exposed in this turn-of-the-century novel.

Steinbeck, John

The Grapes of Wrath

The desperate flight of tenant farmers from Oklahoma during the Depression.

Stowe, Harriet Beecher

Uncle Tom's Cabin

The classic tale that awakened a nation about the slave system.

Tan, Amy

The Joy Luck Club

After her mother's death, a young Chinese-American woman learns of her mother's tragic early life in China.

Vonnegut, Kurt

Slaughterhouse-Five

Billy Pilgrim, an optometrist from Ilium, New York, shuttles between World War II Dresden and a luxurious zoo on the planet Tralfamadore.

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Walker, Alice

The Color Purple

A young woman sees herself as property until another woman teaches her to value herself.

Welty, Eudora

Thirteen Stories

A collection of short stories about people and life in the deep South.

Wolfe, Thomas

Look Homeward, Angel

A novel depicting the coming of age of Eugene Gant and his passion to experience life.

Wright, Richard

Native Son

Bigger Thomas, a young man from the Chicago slums, lashes out against a hostile society by committing two murders.

World Literature

Achebe, Chinua

Things Fall Apart

Okonkwo, a proud village leader, is driven to murder and suicide by European changes to his traditional Ibo society.

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Allende, Isabel

House of the Spirits

The story of the Trueba family in Chile, from the turn of the century to the violent days of the overthrow of the Salvador Allende government in 1973.

Austen, Jane

Pride and Prejudice

Love and marriage among the English country gentry of Austen's day.

Balzac, Honore de

Pere Goriot

A father is reduced to poverty after giving money to his daughters.

Borges, Jorge Luis

Labyrinths

An anthology of literary fireworks based on Borges' favorite symbol.

Bronte, Charlotte

Jane Eyre

An intelligent and passionate governess falls in love with a strange, moody man tormented by dark secrets.

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Bronte, Emily

Wuthering Heights

One of the masterpieces of English romanticism, this is a novel of Heathcliff and Catherine, love and revenge.

Camus, Albert

The Stranger

A man who is virtually unknown to both himself and others commits a pointless murder for which he has no explanation.

Carroll, Lewis

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland

A fantasy in which Alice follows the White Rabbit to a dream world.

Cervantes, Miguel de

Don Quixote

An eccentric old gentleman sets out as a knight "tilting at windmills" to right the wrongs of the world.

Conrad, Joseph

Heart of Darkness

The novel's narrator journeys into the Congo where he discovers the extent to which greed can corrupt a good man.

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Defoe, Daniel

Robinson Crusoe

The adventures of a man who spends 24 years on an isolated island.

Dickens, Charles

Great Expectations

The moving story of the rise, fall, and rise again of a humbly-born young orphan.

Dostoevski, Feodor

Crime and Punishment

A psychological novel about a poor student who murders an old woman pawnbroker and her sister.

Eliot, George

The Mill on the Floss

Maggie is miserable because her brother disapproves of her choices of romances.

Esquivel, Laura

Like Water for Chocolate

As the youngest of three daughters in a turn-of-the-century Mexican family, Tita may not marry but must remain at home to care for her mother.

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Flaubert, Gustave

Madame Bovary

In her extramarital affairs, a bored young wife seeks unsuccessfully to find the emotional experiences she craves.

Forster, E.M.

A Passage to India

A young English woman in British-ruled India accuses an Indian doctor of sexual assault.

Fuentes, Carlos

The Death of Artemio Cruz

A powerful Mexican newspaper publisher recalls his life as he lies dying at age 71.

Garcia Marquez, Gabriel

One Hundred Years of Solitude

A technique called magical realism is used in this portrait of seven generations in the lives of the Buendia family.

Gogol, Nikolai

The Overcoat

Russian tales of good and evil.

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Grass, Gunter

The Tin Drum

Oskar describes the amoral conditions through which he has lived in Germany, both during and after the Hitler regime.

Hardy, Thomas

Tess of the D'Urbervilles

The happiness of Tess and her husband is destroyed when she confesses that she bore a child as the result of a forced sexual relationship with her employer's son.

Huxley, Aldous

Brave New World

A bitter satire of the future, in which the world is controlled by advances in science and social changes.

Joyce, James

A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man

A novel about a young man growing up in Ireland and rebelling against family, country, and religion.

Kafka, Franz

The Trial

A man is tried for a crime he knows nothing about, yet for which he feels guilt.

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Lawrence, D.H.

Sons and Lovers

An autobiographical novel about a youth torn between a dominant working-class father and a possessive genteel mother.

Mann, Thomas

Death in Venice

In this novella, an author becomes aware of a darker side of himself when he visits Venice.

Pasternak, Boris

Doctor Zhivago

An epic novel of Russia before and after the Bolshevik revolution.

Paton, Alan

Cry, the Beloved Country

A country Zulu pastor searches for his sick sister in Johannesburg, and discovers that she has become a prostitute and his son a murderer.

Remarque, Erich Maria

All Quiet on the Western Front

A young German soldier in World War I experiences pounding shellfire, hunger, sickness, and death.

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Scott, Sir Walter

Ivanhoe

Tale of Ivanhoe, the disinherited knight, Lady Rowena, Richard the Lion-Hearted, and Robin Hood at the time of the Crusades.

Shelley, Mary W.

Frankenstein

A gothic tale of terror in which Franken-stein creates a monster from corpses.

Solzhenitsyn, Aleksander

One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich

Ivan Denisovich Shukhov endures one more day in a Siberian prison camp and finds joy in survival.

Swift, Jonathan

Gulliver's Travels

Gulliver encounters dwarfs and giants and has other strange adventures when his ship is wrecked in distant lands.

Tolstoy, Leo

Anna Karenina

Anna forsakes her husband for the dashing Count Vronsky and brief happiness.

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Wells, H.G.

The Time Machine

A scientist invents a machine that transports him into the future.

Biography/History

Angelou, Maya

I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings

An African-American writer traces her coming of age.

Ashe, Arthur and Arnold Rampersad.

Days of Grace

Biography of a highly respected tennis star and citizen of the world who dies of AIDS.

Baker, Russell

Growing Up

A columnist with a sense of humor takes a gentle look at his childhood in Baltimore during the Depression.

Berenbaum, Michael

The World Must Know: The History of the Holocaust as told in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Classic Literature for High School Students

Brown, Dee

Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee

A narrative of the white man's conquest of the American land as the Indian victims experienced it.

Cooke, Alistair

Alistair Cooke's America

A history of the continent, with anecdotes and insight into what makes America work.

Criddle, Jan. D. and Teeda Butt Mam

To Destroy You Is No Loss: The Odyssey of a Cambodian Family

After the 1975 Communist takeover of Cambodia, Teeda's upper-class life is reduced to surviving impossible conditions.

Crow Dog, Mary and Richard Erdoes

Lakota Woman

Mary Crow Dog stands with 2,000 other Native Americans at the site of the Wounded Knee massacre, demonstrating for Native American rights.

Curie, Eve

Madame Curie

In sharing personal papers and her own memories, a daughter pays tribute to her mother, a scientific genius.

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Delany, Sara and A. Elizabeth with Amy Hill Hearth

Having Our Say: The Delany Sisters' First 100 Years

Two daughters of former slaves tell their stories of fighting racial and gender prejudice during the 20th century.

Epstein, Norrie

Friendly Shakespeare: A Thoroughly Painless Guide to the Best of the Bard.

Gain a perspective on Shakespeare's works through these sidelights, interpretations, anecdotes, and historical insights.

Franklin, Benjamin

The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin

Considered one of the most interesting autobiographies in English.

Haley, Alex

Roots

Traces Haley's search for the history of his family, from Africa through the era of slavery to the 20th century.

Hamilton, Alexander; Madison, James; Jay, John

The Federalist Papers

The Federalist Papers are a series of 85 articles or essays promoting the ratification of the United States Constitution. They were published serially between October 1787 and August 1788. The authors of The Federalist (as they were originally called) wanted both to influence the vote in favor of ratification and to shape future interpretations of the Constitution.

Classic Literature for High School Students

Hersey, John

Hiroshima

Six Hiroshima survivors reflect on the aftermath of the first atomic bomb.

Karlsen, Carol

The Devil in the Shape of a Woman: Witchcraft in Colonial New England

The status of women in colonial society affects the Salem witch accusations.

Keller, Helen

The Story of My Life

The story of Helen Keller, who was both blind and deaf, and her relationship with her devoted teacher Anne Sullivan.

Kennedy, John F.

Profiles in Courage

A series of profiles of Americans who took courageous stands in public life.

King, Martin Luther, Jr.

A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings of Martin Luther King, Jr.

King's most important writings are gathered together in one source.

Classic Literature for High School Students

Kovic, Ron

Born on the Fourth of July

Paralyzed in the Vietnam War, 21-year-old Ron Kovic received little support from his country and its government.

Machiavelli, Niccolo

The Prince

A treatise giving the absolute ruler practical advice on ways to maintain a strong central government.

Malcom X, with Alex Haley

The Autobiography of Malcom X

Traces the transformation of a controversial Black Muslim figure from street hustler to religious and national leader.

Marx, Karl

The Communist Manifesto

Expresses Marx's belief in the inevitability of conflict between social classes and calls on the workers of the world to unite and revolt.

Mathabane, Mark

Kaffir Boy: The True Story of a Black Youth's Coming of Age in Apartheid South Africa

A tennis player breaks down racial barriers and escape to a better life in America.

Classic Literature for High School Students

Maybury-Lewis, David

Millenium: Tribal Wisdom and the Modern World

Profiles members of several tribal cultures.

McPherson, James

Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era

From the Mexican War to Appomattox, aspects of the Civil War are examined.

Mills, Kay

This Little Light of Mine: The Life of Fannie Lou Hamer

Fannie Lou Hamer, a sharecropper's daughter, uses her considerable courage and singing talent to become a leader in the civil rights movement.

Plato

The Republic

Plato creates an ideal society where

justice is equated with health and happiness in the state and the individual.

Rogosin, Donn

Invisible Men: Life in Baseball's Negro Leagues

Negro League players finally gain recognition for their contributions to baseball.

Classic Literature for High School Students

Thoreau, Henry David

Walden

In the mid-19th century, Thoreau spends 26 months alone in the woods to "front the essential facts of life."

Tocqueville, Alexis de

Democracy in America

This classic in political literature examines American society from the viewpoint of a leading French magistrate who visited the U.S. in 1831.

Tuchman, Barbara

A Distant Mirror: The Calamitous Fourteenth Century

Tuchman uses the example of a single feudal lord to trace the history of the 14th century.

Williams, Juan

Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Rights Years, 1954-65

From Brown vs. the Board of Education to the Voting Rights Act, Williams outlines the social and political gains of African-Americans

Yolen, Jane

Favorite Folktales From Around the World

Yolen frames these powerful tales with explanations of historical and literary significance.

Classic Literature for High School Students

Science

Attenborough, David

The Living Planet: A Portrait of the Earth

Various habitats expand the vision of Planet Earth.

Bronowski, Jacob

The Ascent of Man

A scientist's history of the human mind and the human condition.

Carson, Rachel

Silent Spring

Carson's original clarion call to environmental action sets the stage for saving our planet.

Darwin, Charles

The Origin of Species

The classic exposition of the theory of evolution by natural selection.

Classic Literature for High School Students

Hawking, Stephen

A Brief History of Time: From the Big Bang to Black Holes

Cosmology becomes understandable as the author discusses the origin, evolution, and fate of our universe.

Leopold, Aldo

A Sand County Almanac: And Sketches Here and There

Leopold shares his present and future visions of a natural world.

Social Science

Campbell, Joseph

The Power of Myth

Explores themes and symbols from world religions and their relevance to humankind's spiritual journey today.

Hamilton, Edith

Mythology

Gods and heroes, their clashes and adventures, come alive in this splendid retelling of the Greek, Roman and Norse myths.

Kotlowitz, Alex

There Are No Children Here: The Story of Two Boys Growing Up in Urban America

Lafayette and Pharoah Rivers and their family struggle to survive in one of Chicago's worst housing projects.

Classic Literature for High School Students

Kozol, Jonathan

Savage Inequalities: Children in America's Schools

Kozol's indictment of the public school system advocates equalizing per pupil public school expenditures.

Terkel, Studs

Race: How Blacks and Whites Think and Feel About the American Obsession

This kaleidoscope covers the full range of America's views on racial issues.

Drama

Beckett, Samuel

Waiting for Godot

Powerful, symbolic portrayal of the human condition.

Brecht, Bertolt

Mother Courage and Her Children

A product of the Nazi era, Mother Courage is a feminine "Everyman" in a play on the futility of war.

Chekhov, Anton

The Cherry Orchard

The orchard evokes different meanings for the impoverished aristocrat and the merchant who buys it.

Classic Literature for High School Students

Marlowe, Christopher

Doctor Faustus

First dramatization of the medieval legend of a man who sold his soul to the devil.

Miller, Arthur

Death of a Salesman

The tragedy of a typical American who, at age 63, is faced with what he cannot face: defeat and disillusionment.

O'Neill, Eugene

Long Day's Journey Into Night

A tragedy set in 1912 in the summer home of an isolated, theatrical family.

Sarte, Jean Paul

No Exit

A modern morality play in which three persons are condemned to hell because of crimes against humanity.

Shaw, Bernard

Man and Superman, Saint Joan, Pygmalion, others.

Sophocles

Oedipus Rex

Classical tragedy of Oedipus who unwittingly killed his father, married his mother and brought the plague to Thebes.

Classic Literature for High School Students

Wilde, Oscar

The Importance of Being Earnest

Comedy exposing quirks and foibles of Victorian society.

Wilder, Thornton

Our Town

The dead of a New Hampshire village of the early 1900s appreciate life more than the living.

Williams, Tennessee

A Streetcar Named Desire

Blanche Dubois' fantasies of refinement and grandeur are brutally destroyed by her brother-in-law.

Wilson, August

The Piano Lesson

Drama set in 1936 Pittsburgh chronicles black experience in America.

Poetry

Angelou, Maya

And Still I Rise

Poems reflecting themes from her autobiography.

Classic Literature for High School Students

Brooks, Gwendolyn

Selected Poems

Poetry focusing on the lives of African American residents of Northern urban ghettos, particularly women.

Cummings, E.E.

Complete Poems, 1904-1962

Prepared directly from the original manuscripts, preserving the original typography and format.

Dickinson, Emily

The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson

A chronological arrangement of all known Dickinson poems and fragments.

Donne, John

The Complete Poetry of John Donne

Poems distinguished by wit, profundity of thought, passion and subtlety.

Eliot, T.S.

The Waste Land

A poem of despair by one of the most important modern poets in English.

Frost, Robert

The Poetry of Robert Frost

Collected works reflecting both flashing insight and practical wisdom.

Classic Literature for High School Students

Ginsberg, Allen

Howl and Other Poems

Works from the leading poet of the so-called "beat generation."

Giovanni, Nikki

My House

The poems in this collection deal with love, family, nature, friends, music, aloneness, blackness, and Africa.

Hughes, Langston

Selected Poems

Poems selected by Hughes shortly before his death in 1967, representing work from his entire career.

Keats, John

Complete Poems

Among the greatest odes in English, written by a genius who died young.

Longfellow, Henry Wadsworth

The Poetical Works of Longfellow

Includes "The Song of Hiawatha" and "The Courtship of Miles Standish."

Classic Literature for High School Students

Sandburg, Carl

Complete Poems

Sandburg celebrates industrial and agricultural America and the common people.

Thomas, Dylan

Poems of Dylan Thomas

Poetry by a "word magician" with a powerful imagination.

Williams, William Carlos

Selected Poems

Williams' poetry is firmly rooted in the commonplace details of American life.

Wordsworth, William

Poems

Poetry revealing the extraordinary beauty and significance of simple things.

Yeats, William Butler

The Poems

Leading poet of the Irish Renaissance.