l'm not a robot



Erica Wagner, author and literary critic, has read 50. Mick Connell, director of the National Association for the Teaching of English has read 34. And TES editor Ann Mroz has read 34. And TES editor Ann Mroz has read 34. And TES editor Ann Mroz has read 34. new initiative has been launched jointly by schools minister Nick Gibb and publishers Penguin Classics, following Mr Gibb's call for more classic literature to be taught in schools. The 100 titles include for free on TES Resources. The books include fiction, non-fiction, poetry and prose, all chosen from the Penguin Black Classic series. This means that their authors died before 1946, and the works are therefore out of copyright. Mr Gibb has said that he in pupils in secondary school are taught to read and enjoy challenging books from among the world's greatest literature," he said. But many well-read adults question the choice of books. "I read Great Expectations at 12," said Ms Wagner. "Mistake! "The 1,001 Nights - excellent. Unabridged? My 15-year-old son just got hold of that and it gave him quite a shock." And Mr Connell - who points out that his total of 34 books would have been higher had he been allowed to include other titles by the same authors - highlights some of the authors who have been excluded. "Where are the brilliant, contemporary writers for young and adolescent readers?" he said. "Where are the very best in modern and contemporary literature? Where is Golding, Plath, Atwood, Hughes, Heaney, Pinter, Becket, Angelou, Morrison and Mantel? "Although I realise that they had to choose exclusively from Penguin Classics series. That's like choosing clothes for teenage children from Marks and Spencer: a worthy intention without the slightest chance of success." TES editor Ms Mroz, who was formerly books editor of THE, similarly questions some of the choices. "Where's Sylvia Plath?" she said. "If you're trying to get young girls reading, I'd have a bit of Plath. And I'm outraged that you can miss out F. Scott Fitzgerald or Graham Greene." She also points out that some of author's more-accessible books - Dickens' Oliver Twist or Austen's Emma - have been overlooked in favour of more-complicated ones: Great Expectations or Persuasion. "Uncle Tom's Cabin is missing too," said Ms Wagner. "If you wanted to choose a single novel that actually changed something in the world, I reckon it would be that one. But then, no list will make everyone happy." Some lists, however, come closer than others. "TES did a rather good job of publishing 100 titles for primary and secondary pupils back in the summer of 2015," said Mr Connell. "I'd suggest you send copies to the Department." How many of the DfE's 100 books have you read? Vote for your favourites in our poll. Want to keep up with the latest education news and opinion? Follow TES on Twitter and like TES on Facebook A huge number of books exist out there, ready and waiting for you to read them. Whether you prefer manga or ancient, epic poems, reading is great for all sorts of reasons. What follows is a list of highly beneficial books to read in high school (or after!). These are remarkable books books that made history, books that challenge societal perceptions of the world, and books that are quite simply interesting and moving. The books are presented in alphabetical order, and a short description is given for each book, as well an explanation of why it is worth reading. Why Is Reading Important? Why should you read these books? Why should you read at all for that matter? Reading is essential to communication, especially in an era of emails and texting. Beyond even that, though, reading has an array of crucial purposes. It will help improve your grades and test scores. You'll encounter issues you can relate to—issues that speak to you and challenge you to think and feel in new ways. You will grow, empathetically and intellectually. Plus, you'll understand more of the references that crop up all the time in pop culture. Below are 31 books to read in high school that will help you prepare for college and beyond. 1984 (George Orwell) This dystopian novel by George Orwell was written 35 years before the date referenced by the title. In this book, Orwell tells a story that warns readers about the possible consequences of complacency in the face of rising dictators (think Hitler and Stalin) and burgeoning technology ripe for misuse. He describes a world where everything is monitored, right down to citizens' thoughts, and where any opposition to the ruling class is punishable by extreme measures. The oft-encountered quote, "Big Brother is watching," finds its origin in this novel. The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (Mark Twain) This sequel to Mark Twain's The Adventures of Tom Sawyer is much graver in nature than its predecessor. There are still plenty of good antics worthy of a laugh, but it concerns itself largely with a young boy's attempt to escape severe family dysfunction and the moral implications of his taking an escaped slave as a companion on his adventure down the Mississippi River. Readers should be warned that the "n-word" is used liberally throughout the novel, which tends to be jarring to many a modern ear. Mark Twain wants you to read his novel(s). The Awakening (Kate Chopin) Set in the Creole culture of the late 1800s, this novel by Kate Chopin details one woman's process of becoming aware of herself. At the time, women were essentially property, and they were expected to act in demure and socially acceptable ways. As the protagonist "awakens" to her emotional and sexual needs, as well as the ultimate truth of her own independence, all sorts of problems ensue. The Bell Jar (Sylvia Plath) This autobiographical novel by poet Sylvia Plath explores the deep, dark reality of mental illness. The protagonist, Esther, a stand-in for Plath herself, is a college student exploring her talents, interests, and sexuality as she descends into an unsettling spiral of mental illness as it is so earnestly portrayed in this book. Black Rain (Masuji Ibuse) Black Rain, by Masuji Ibuse, is about the very immediate, human consequences of the atom bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It follows a small family of survivors, detailing what the effects are some years later. The book adopts a gentle, subtle tone, and yet it is not afraid to delve into very explicit and challenging topics related to the bombings. Bless Me, Ultima (Rudolfo Anaya) This semi-autobiographical novel by Rudolfo Anaya contains a healthy dose of magical realism and is considered a staple of Chicano literature. It combines Spanish, Mexican, and Native American influences, showing openly the ways in which these forces within the protagonist's life come into conflict. Young Antonio is growing up in a world that leaves him with more questions than answers: major questions about life and death, good and evil, and so on. These issues seem too big for his six-year-old mind, and yet he grapples with them valiantly through the end of the novel. Antonio has lots of questions surrounding his faith traditions. Brave New World (Aldous Huxley) In Brave New World, Aldous Huxley explores themes similar to those found in Orwell's 1984. Huxley balances utopian and dystopian interpretations of a world that is highly controlled, easily manipulated, and extremely dysfunctional, ready to fall apart at any provocation. There are insiders to this world, and each character views and interacts with the society in a different light. Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee (Dee Brown) Dee Brown covers a lot of historical ground in this book. In it, Brown describes the history of European Americans as they interact with (and slaughter) the Native Americans who already inhabit what they claim as their country. It's an infuriating and accurate tale of mistreatments and abuses, as well as the unfortunate decline of a noble people trying to defend their established way of life. It's essential for students to understand this part of United States history. The Catcher in the Rye (J. D. Salinger) This bold and controversial novel by J. D. Salinger's frank discussions of sexual matters and his generally very casual style. This book is an important read in part because of its direct relevance to struggling adolescents and the issues they face. The Crucible (Arthur Miller) Arthur Miller wrote this tragic play in the early 1950s. While it is somewhat loosely based on the Salem witch trials of 1692, and while it is likely intended as an allegory to McCarthy's rooting out of suspected Communists at the time of the play's writing, the issues it touches on are much more broadly applicable. This is an important dramatic work on how hysteria, cruelty, and ignorant gullibility destroy communists at the time of the play's writing. ourThe Crucible study guides here! There are lots of accusations of creepy stuff in The Crucible. The Diary of a Young Girl (Anne Frank) Anne Frank wrote some passages with publication in mind, others she did not. When the book was first published, many passages that her father, Otto Frank, found too long, unflattering, or inappropriate were excluded. Gaining some understanding of this horrific genocide is crucial to students. Fahrenheit 451 (Ray Bradbury) Books are on trial in this astounding work by Ray Bradbury. Set in yet another dystopian future where firemen are employed to burn books and the houses that contain them, Fahrenheit 451 tells the story of a fireman who begins to wonder what books have to offer. This novel is an ode to literacy, and, while it has its tragic moments, it ultimately leaves readers with a message of hope. Flowers for Algernon (Daniel Keyes) Daniel Keyes writes a very warm and human form of science fiction in Flowers for Algernon. The book follows the effects, both positive and negative, that come from the sudden change in his I.O. This is a moving read for students who wish to understand how intelligence plays into our humanity. For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enuf (Ntozake Shange) In For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enuf (Ntozake Shange) In For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enuf (Ntozake Shange) In For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enuf (Ntozake Shange) In For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enuf (Ntozake Shange) In For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enuf (Ntozake Shange) In For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enuf (Ntozake Shange) In For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enuf (Ntozake Shange) In For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enuf (Ntozake Shange) In For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enuf (Ntozake Shange) In For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enuf (Ntozake Shange) In For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enuf (Ntozake Shange) In For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enuf (Ntozake Shange) In For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enuf (Ntozake Shange) In For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enuf (Ntozake Shange) In For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enuf (Ntozake Shange) In For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enuf (Ntozake Shange) In For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enuf (Ntozake Shange) In For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enuf (Ntozake Shange) In For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enuf (Ntozake Shange) In For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enuf (Ntozake Shange) In For Colored Girl important themes of race, gender, abuse, and perseverance. It's largely a deep and dark poem, but it contains a message of hope. This is an awesome opportunity for readers to get exposure to poetry in a very relevant and theatrical form. The rainbow contains all sorts of symbolism. Frankenstein (Mary Shelley) First off, let's all be clear: as some will already know, Frankenstein is not a monster. Rather, the very human Victor Frankenstein is responsible for creating what we recognize as the monster from the story; the creature itself is nameless. Mary Shelley wrote this Gothic thriller in the early 1800s, and yet we remain fascinated by this tale of playing God and facing the consequences. It's an eerie tale with themes that run deep. The Grapes of Wrath (John Steinbeck's masterful The Grapes of Wrath centers around the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl in American history. It's a story of hope and despair, moving from one to the other and back again seamlessly throughout the novel. While loaded with biblical allusions, it is not heavy-handed with them, and the writing is often praised as realistic and beautiful. Great Expectations, by Charles Dickens, is a staple of English literature. It's one of his most autobiographical works; it tells the story of a young boy, orphaned and poor, who ultimately experiences a drastic change in his fortunes. In addition, he learns much about love, trust, and relationships in this coming-of-age novel. As the title suggests, the novel also contains discussions of hope, disappointment, and expectations. The Great Gatby (F. Scott Fitzgerald) F. Scott Fitzgerald) F. Scott Fitzgerald wrote in The Great Gatby a novel that in many ways closely reflected his own experience. The decadence of the Jazz Age was, as is revealed in the novel, both enticing for many and revolting for some. The Great Gatsby follows the quest of a wealthy young man to win back the love of his life by extravagant displays of riches and social connections. As the plot builds to its climax, readers, along with Gatsby's simpler, humbler friend and neighbor, are left to ponder the passing of an era in American history. BONUS: Reading The Great Gatsby for school but finding it hard to keep track of all the characters? We have several study guides that might be able to help, including our guide to all the characters? We have several study guides that might be able to help, including our guide to all the characters? We have several study guides that might be able to help, including our guide to all the characters? Club, deals with intergenerational and intercultural questions. Tan seeks to represent the Chinese-American experience while also representing issues of time. The book focuses on four mother and four daughters across four sections of the novel for a total of sixteen stories that come together to complete this total work. Lord of the Flies (William Golding) William Golding's Lord of the Flies speaks to the evil and degenerate potential that lurks within each human. It can be interpreted religiously, politically, or any number of other ways, but the basic premise is that a group of schoolboys stranded on an island descend into grotesque savagery. It's a disturbing story, to be sure, but one that is important to be familiar with in a world where savage instinct too often presents itself today. The Lord of the Rings and The Hobbit (J. R. R. Tolkien) As with any work, The Lord of the Rings and The Hobbit are not everyone's cup of tea, but they're hugely rewarding pleasure reading for too many fans to count. Tolkien's masterpieces are more than just pleasure reading, though; the trilogy covers major themes of the epic struggle between good and evil, the necessity of persevering through immensely difficult ordeals, and how to apply mercy. misguided and what we should do when our paths intertwine with any such individuals. The Hobbit is lighter and more kid-focused, but still addresses important themes. The Odyssey (Homer) The Odyssey is an epic poem nearly three thousand years old that's attributed to the blind poet Homer. It tells the story of a war hero's ten-year quest to return to his home, wife, and son. He encounters a number of varied setbacks along the way, and the trouble isn't over when he gets home. The Odyssey deals with human interactions with the gods, bringing up questions of righteousness, wrongdoing, and pride as well as ideas of faithfulness and patience. Odysseus was a fan of the ladies. Oedipus Rex (Sophocles) This play by Greek dramatist Sophocles is about a man who inadvertently kills his father and marries his mother. It's dark subject matter, and nothing good comes of it, as you may well suspect. This another example, as in The Odyssey, of the divine tinkering with human lives and the great sin of pride. One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest (Ken Kesey) Ken Kesey documents in this work the darkest side of mental health care as it existed in the 1960s. While certainly not all mental health care was like what's described in the book, nor is it all like that today, audiences of the novel are aghast that any care might even vaguely resemble the horrors discussed. Despite how disturbing the storyline is, it's important for readers to recognize the vulnerability of this too often overlooked segment of society. Pride and Prejudice (Jane Austen) Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice follows a family with five daughters, all unwed, and all, due to English customs of the late 1700s and early 1800s, in need of wedding. Of the five daughters, Elizabeth is the focus of the novel, though the others are discussed aplenty. While marriage is one of the central ideas in the novel, there are plenty of other themes to be picked apart, including ones that touch on pride, prejudice, first impressions, love, misunderstanding, and manipulation. This is, all around, a classic piece of literature, and one with which to be familiar. Next up: one of my favorites, William Shakespeare. Romeo and Juliet or Hamlet (William Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet is familiar to most people on some level: two teenagers from feuding families fall in love and ultimately sacrifice their lives to their passion. Of all of Shakespeare's works, it's a particularly popular one to read in high school for a variety of reasons. For one thing, it deals explicitly with teenaged love, and, for another, it's a relatively simple plot that's nonetheless action-packed. It also opens with a shameless series of very witty dirty jokes, and such humor is scattered throughout the rest of the show. Then there's the thematic material, which includes obedience, fate, and rash decisions, among others. For those who don't wish to read about teenagers mooning for each other to the point of suicide, there's always Hamlet. This story follows a Danish prince whose father has died and whose mother has almost instantly married the father's brother. When Hamlet discovers, via an appearance of his father's ghost, that his uncle murdered his father, all sorts of interesting events ensue. There's madness (real and feigned), murder, suicide, treason, and a lot of waffling over the right course of action. As an added bonus, those who read Hamlet may wish to read Tom Stoppard's Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead. It follows the events of Hamlet from the perspective of two minor and typically much-maligned characters. It's also hilarious, if absolutely weird. Slaughterhouse-Five is a fictional account of events in some ways very similar to what the author himself experienced as a prisoner of war in WWII. He writes about the atrocities humans commit upon each other, and he also mixes in a number of other concerns, some heavy, some light, such as death, aliens, and the ability to see other points in time, past or future. Their Eyes Were Watching God (Zora Neale Hurston) The novel Their Eyes Were Watching God by Zora Neale Hurston has been much criticized over the course of its history, and yet it stands as one of the great classics of American literature. It tells the story of a black woman who is full of zest and passion and who is full of zest an happiness. The trials and tribulations she undergoes with all three make for an interesting examination of Janie. Same approach to life, though.) Things Fall Apart (Chinua Achebe) In Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart, readers encounter a complex and beautifully rendered examination of life with the Igbo tribe in Africa, both before and after the white man's interference. Okonkwo is the protagonist, and he goes through a number of difficulties that put him in the position of making distasteful decisions. Readers are left to wonder whether things are falling apart because that's simply the way of the world or whether different decisions could have kept them together. The inevitability of change is neatly demonstrated. To Kill A Mockingbird (Harper Lee) Harper raping a white woman. The daughter of the lawyer defending the accused is the main protagonist, and another aspect of the story is her journey from bemused mockery to gentle understanding with regard to an eccentric man in the town. To Kill a Mockingbird rose to prominence during the accused is the main protagonist, and another aspect of the story is her journey from bemused mockery to gentle understanding with regard to an eccentric man in the town. ever was. The Ugly American (Eugene Burdick and William Lederer) The Ugly American by Burdick and Lederer is a denouncement of the American practice of sending insensitive diplomatic figures into foreign countries. Through a series of vignettes, it demonstrates American inefficiency overseas. It so impressed John F. Kennedy while he was a Democratic senator that he sent a copy to each and every one of his Senate colleagues. It can be an uncomfortable read, but a worthwhile one. Conclusion If you can read through these 30-odd books before you graduate high school, you'll be in a good shape, from a literary perspective. Even if you can't read all of them, picking a few would not be a bad place to start. You might start with those that simply sound the most interesting to you, or you could look for themes in the books that relate to what you're studying McCarthyism, for instance, maybe try The Crucible; if you're studying the Holocaust, maybe try The Diary of a Young Girl. These stories are immensely powerful. Some are newer, having instantly won their place in the pantheon of classics, while others have proven themselves by withstanding the test of time. Readers will find that they resonate with some books more than others, and that's fine; the point is that all of these books have important messages to communicate, and I encourage readers to be open to finding out what those messages are. Open a book, and you'll find all sorts of messages! Usually not in bottles, though. What's Next? A lot of these books may be read or referenced in AP English Language or AP English Literature, allow us to provide you with some thoughts on the topic. While we're on the topic of literature, why don't you take a moment to read some recommendations on which English classes you should definitely take a look at our list of books to read as a pre-med student. And as a reminder, if you decide to read The Great Gatsby or The Crucible, you can check out our analyses of each to help you along the way! Are you looking for must-have books to read for high school students? Read on, teacher friend! If you are like me, you know the value of independent reading in your high school English classroom. But if you are also like me, you may struggle at times to match reluctant readers to books they will enjoy. I've spent a lot of time reading young adult books, talking to the LRC ladies at my school, and browsing the interwebs in search of books to add to my mental list of book recommendations for students. In this post, I'll share my favorite books to recommend to students in my own classroom or that I am eager to try next year. If it seems like a lot of YA books are sci fi and/or fantasy, you are right. There is a growing pool of great books that students love reading. And this is my personal favorite category, so it comes first!DeliriumDelirium is a part of a trilogy along with subsequent books Pandemonium and Requiem. Dystopia, forbidden love, resistance, rebellion, Teen readers who "unwind" you, a.k.a. human organ and tissue donation, without your consent? Follow the story of three teenagers who escape from their own unwinding and discover America's dirty little secret while making the reader think about what it means to be human and philosophical questions of morality, power, and control. Scythe SeriesFast forward into the future, where the world has managed to totally get rid of problems such as hunger and sickness. Sounds ideal, right? Well, not if scythes roam the world as a form of population control. Follow the story of two apprentice scythes who must be trained in the art of death. RecursionThis book is engrossing as it explores the spread of false memory syndrome and its impact on the main characters and, possibly, time itself. Nyxialf your high school students like this book, then there are two more to round out the triad. In this story, teens who come from different backgrounds are chosen to compete for the opportunity to travel through space to Nyxia. If chosen, they could make life better not only for themselves, but also for their loved ones back home, but will they have to sacrifice themselves in the process? DryWhat would you do for water? California's drought is out of control, and the main character, after losing her parents, must protect her brother and make tough choices. This is a book I've added to my personal reading list so that I can recommend to students. Graphic novels are quick and accessible for reluctant readers, so I had to include. a few of my favorites to this list of books to read for high school students. What all of these books have in common is that they are so much more than comic books. They tell true stories with meaningful artwork that help students grapple with serious topics such as racism and addiction. March tells the true story of John Lewis set against the backdrop of Jim Crow and the Civil War. A must-read for any student! They Called Us EnemyThis memoir takes us behind the barbed wire of the Japanese internment camp during WW2 where George Takei found spent years of his childhood. This book will make students think about racism and American identity.Hey, KiddoJarrett's mother is an addict, his father is gone, and he lives with his grandparents. He uses his art as a creative outlet and tries to be "normal," but will later find out the truth about his family. When Stars Are ScatteredSomali refugee brothers Omar and Hassan have spent most of their lives in a Kenyan refugee camp. One of the brothers gets the opportunity to pursue an education, but must leave the other brother behind. Well, every high school book list has to have at least a couple of romance titles, I suppose... Everything and lives in her house, closed off from the outside world. That is, until she meets the boy next door...The Beginning of EverythingEzra thought he had his life all figured out, until his girlfriend cheated on him, he broke his leg, and he fell in love with the new girl. The Sun is Also a StarThis is a sweet love story between an about-to-be-deported girl and a boy who is Yale-bound and does everything right. This book will make students fall in love with the characters and think about topics such as family, love, and immigrationIt would not be hyperbole to say that these books in verse, but these ones had me at hello and should definitely be a part of your list o' books to read for high school students. With the Fire on HighIf you ever read The Poet X (also a book my students love), this next work by the same author will have your students cheering on the main character, a teen mother, and her cooking dreams. House ArrestIt's easy to get inside the main character's head as he grapples with choices, both good and bad and somewhere in-between. Despite its serious subject matter, this book will have you laughing and entertained. A Long Way DownThis book explores teen gun violence and has collected a lot of accolades, but the best award it receives every year is the handful of my students who sit gued to its pages, not saying a word, because they couldn't wait to reac it during reading time. If a student tells me that he or she "hates to read," one of these titles usually does the trick. A lot of these titles usually does the trick. A lot of these titles usually does the trick. A lot of these titles usually does the trick. student, as he teams up with the school quarterback in his mission to make the school a better place. With lots of twists and turns, including a surprise at the end, students will think about identity and friendship. Add it to your list of books to read for high school teenage boys! SlayKiera is the smart girl in school who creates an online community of twists and turns, including a surprise at the end, students will think about identity and friendship. Black gamers in her role-playing game by the name of Slay. Unfortunately, her identity and online space come under attack, and she must try to protect her serving time and ending up in a group home, Mary inevitably has to confront her past, revealing who she really is in the process. Orbiting JupiterAfter getting everything taken from him, including his infant daughter, and serving time in juvenile detention, Joseph ends up at a foster home, meeting Jack who will do anything to help Toby see the good in himself despite his past. The Magic Strings of Frankie PrestoThis historical fiction story is set against a historical backdrop as musician, Frankie Presto, goes on a journey that will tug at your heartstrings and remind you a bit of the story of Forrest Gump. I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican DaughterJulia is not perfect, and she feels pressure to be something that she is not. This book explores what it is like to grow up in an immigrant family, stuck between two worlds. Sadie tries her whole life to protect her younger sister from harm, but is unsuccessful. After Mattie dies, Sadie is on a mission to find out why and how. This book is told in multiple perspectives and involves hard-hitting topics, but I've had students who couldn't put it down. Beartown love Fredrik Backman, the way he writes character-driven novels, the way he makes small town life come alive for the reader. Beartown has nothing going for it except hockey team dreams, but this story is less about sports and more about the stories of the people in this town.WingerThis book is laugh out loud funny, a bit off-color and irreverent, and one that never fails to engage teen boys. If I am out of luck and a student just can't find any book to like, this is my go-to.Last but not least, nonfiction memoir had to make the book list. The first title below transformed my most reluctant reader last year into a boy who carried this title around in his backpack because he found it so engaging Laughing at My NightmareShane Burkaw deals it straight in this honest (and funny) memoir, helping readers to see the realities of living with a disability and that he's just another guy like everyone else. The book starts out with a forest of pube-y leg hair which usually gets students' attention. Every Falling StarSungju pulls back the curtain on street life in North Korea, including his fight to survive and later escape. Students will no doubt think about the freedoms they may take for granted. The Running DreamWhen the main character, a runner, loses her leg in a car accident, she thinks she'll never run again... she is wrong! This title makes it onto the list of books to read for high school because it is an inspirational story that also highlights the importance of friendship. All These WondersThis little collection of Moth stories focus on taking risks, acting with courage, and facing the unknown. I'm purchasing this book for students who may have trouble sustaining momentum through a longer text. What Made Maddy RunThis was an option for literature circles in my classes, and the interest was so high that I chose to form two groups in one of my classes. This book explores the incredible pressure put upon college athletes that, combined with depression, led to Maddy's suicide. Middle School BooksHigh School Novel StudyThough many of these texts could fit in multiple categories, I put each of them in ONE category to simplify things. If you're looking Up & Finding One's SelfDiverse FictionNonfiction / MemoirClassicsDystopian / Sci Fi Fiction / Fantasy / Magical RealismDrama / EpicHistorical Fiction / PhilosophyShort Stories / Essays Paola Paulino // Shutterstock Research shows that reading fiction encourages empathy. While more high school curriculums should include modern, diverse writers like Amy Tan and Malala Yousafzai, certain classics—like John Steinbeck's "The Grapes of Wrath" and Sandra Cisneros' "The House on Mango Street"—endure. Some even make a comeback. George Orwell's "1984," a novel published in 1949 about a dystopian future where the government controls the truth, saw sales jump by 63% after President Donald Trump's re-election in November 2024. Around the same time, Margaret Atwood's 1985 feminist thriller "The Handmaid's Tale" also surged up the bestseller list. While books are ostensibly for anyone with a yearning to learn, sometimes parents, teachers, and pull between these groups then shapes the reading lists of millions across the country. According to an April 2024 report from Pen America, 4,349 different books were banned in schools across the United States between July 2021 and June 2022. These bans affected 52 public school districts in 23 states. The top three most frequently banned books were Maia Kobabe's "Gender Queer: A Memoir," George M. Johnson's "All Boys Aren't Blue," and June Dawson's "This Book Is Gay." Banned or not, certain books deserve a first, second, and maybe even a third reading required for students. The final ranking is based on Goodreads' score, which considers multiple factors, including total votes each book received and how highly voters ranked each book. Read on to see which classics made the list. - Author: Zora Neale Hurston - Score: 4,143 - Average rating: 3.97 (based on 316,337 ratings) A coming-of-age story set in early 1900s Florida, "Their Eyes Were Watching God" tackles a multitude of issues: racism, segregation, poverty, and gender roles, among others. Initially overlooked upon its release, Zora Neale Hurston's best-known work is now considered a modern American masterpiece thanks to work done in Black studies programs in the 1970s. - Author Edith Hamilton - Score: 4,148 - Average rating: 4.02 (based on 52,213 ratings) Edith Hamilton's "Mythology" has been a standard of both reference and pleasure reading since its publication in 1942. The book was commissioned by an editor at the publisher Little, Brown and Company in 1939 to replace the outdated 1855 collection on the subject, "Bulfinch's Mythology," and it remains a popular choice for educating students on the subject today. At nearly 500 pages, this hefty tome covers all the Classic Greek, Roman, and Norse myths in one place, from the journeys of Odysseus and the Trojan War to Cupid and Psyche. - Author: Maya Angelou - Score: 4,153 - Average rating: 4.28 (based on 492,982 ratings) In the first of her seven memoirs, "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings," Maya Angelou speaks of her early life growing up in the South, including the abuse and racism she faced. Before this, Angelou was known as a poet but was encouraged to try her hand at long-form writing following a party she attended with the legendary James Baldwin. This book sold 1 million copies, was nominated for a National Book Award, and spent more than two years on the New York Times bestseller list. - Author: Sophocles - Score: 4,211 - Average rating: 3.72 (based on 200,721 ratings) The tragic Greek play "Oedipus Rex" tells the shocking tale of King Oedipus, who unknowingly kills his father and marries his mother. The work of Sophocles has inspired many others across disciplines, including Igor Stravinsky's 1920s opera of the same name. Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic concept of the Oedipus complex, a theory that children are sexually attracted to their opposite-sex parent, also derived from this work. - Author: Herman Melville Score: 4,240 - Average rating: 3.53 (based on 528,908 ratings) Herman Melville's "Moby-Dick or, the Whale"—the lengthy tale of a sea captain on the hunt for this great beast—was inspired by a real-life sperm whale attack that sank the Essex in 1820. Although the book sold less than 3,000 copies during Melville's lifetime, it is now considered an American classic. In September 2022, one collector paid a whopping \$327,600 to obtain an 1853 edition of the novel. - Author: John Steinbeck's "The Pearl" tells the story of Kino, a poor diver trying to support his family by gathering pearls from gulf beds. He is only barely scraping by until he happens upon a giant pearl. Kino thinks this discovery will finally provide him with the financial comfort and security he has been seeking, but it ultimately brings disaster. The story addresses the reader's relationship to nature, the human need for connection, and the consequences of resisting injustice. - Author: Oscar Wilde Score: 4,540 - Average rating: 4.18 (based on 345,903 ratings) This comedic play by Oscar Wilde takes a satiric look at Victorian social values while following two men—Jack Worthing and Algernon Moncrieff—as they tell lies to bring some excitement to their lives. "The Importance of Being Earnest" was Wilde's final play, and some consider it his masterpiece. - Author: Stephen Crane - Score: 4,752 - Average rating: 3.28 (based on 99,854 ratings) In "The Red Badge of Courage," Henry Fleming retreats in fear. In the end, he faces his cowardice and rises to leadership. This American war novel was published in 1895 and is so authentic that it's easy to believe the author—born after the Civil War ended—was himself a veteran. - Author: William Shakespeare - Score: 4,822 - Average rating: 3.77 (based on 164,742 ratings) This five-act comedy tells the story of the courtship of the headstrong Katherine and the money-grubbing Petruchio who is determined to subdue Katherine and make her his wife. After the wedding, Petruchio drags his new wife through the mud to their new home in the country. He proceeds to starve and deprive her of sleep to make his new bride submissive. The play, one of Shakespeare's most popular, has been both criticized for its abusive and misogynistic attitude toward women and praised as a challenging view of how women are supposed to behave. - Author: Kurt Vonnegut Jr. - Score: 4,858 - Average rating: 4.09 (based on 1,284,145 ratings) In "Slaughterhouse-Five," Kurt Vonnegut tells the story of Billy Pilgrim—based on a real American soldier—who is "unstuck in time." He travels throughout the timeline of his life in a nonlinear fashion, forced to relive certain moments. He is first pulled out after he is drafted and captured in Classrooms throughout the United States. It even landed in the Supreme Court in 1982 in Board of Education v. Pico, and the court held that banning the book violated the First Amendment. - Author: Mark Twain - Score: 5,170 - Average rating: 3.92 (based on 879,567 ratings) "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer" takes place in the fictional town of St. Petersburg, Missouri, during the 1840s. Tom Sawyer and his friend Huck Finn witness a murder by Joe. After the boys stay silent, the wrong man is accused of the crime. When they flee, the whole town presumes them dead, and the boys end up attending their own funerals. Mark Twain's portrayal of Sawyer and Finn challenges the idyllic American view of childhood, instead showing children as fallible human beings with imperfections like anyone else. - Author: Fyodor Dostoevsky - Score: 5,537 - Average rating: 4.25 (based on 798,073 ratings) This Russian classic, published in 1886, tells the story of a former student named Rodion Raskolnikov, who is now impoverished and on the verge of mental instability. To get money—and to demonstrate his exceptionalness—he comes up with a murderous plan to kill a pawnbroker. Considered one of the first psychological novels, "Crime and Punishment" is also quite political as it explores the character's pull toward liberal views and his rebellion against them. - Author: John Knowles explores the friendship of two young men—the quiet, intellectual Gene Forrester and his extroverted, athletic friend Finny, but his jealousy ultimately ends in tragedy after he commits a subtle act of violence. The book examines themes of envy and the need to achieve. - Author: Arthur Miller - Score: 6,178 Average rating: 3.56 (based on 217,183 ratings) Arthur Miller introduces readers to an aging Willy Loman, a traveling salesman nearing the end of his career. Loman decides he's tired of driving for work and asks for an office job in New York City, believing he is vital to the company. His boss ends up firing him. Loman is also faced with the fact that his son, Biff, is not as successful in life as he had hoped. Ultimately, Loman takes his own life so his son can have the insurance money to jump-start a better life. After his death, only Loman's family attends his funeral. "Death of a Salesman" won the 1949 Pulitzer Prize for drama. - Author: Antoine de Saint-Exupéry - Score: 6,838 - Average rating: 4.328 (based on 1,871,036 ratings) In "The Little Prince," a pilot whose plane has crashed in the Sahara desert meets a young boy from outer space. The boy is traveling from planet to planet in search of friendship. On the boy's home—an asteroid—he lived alone, accompanied only by a solitary rose. Once on Earth, the boy is traveling from planet to planet in search of friendship. can only see clearly with his heart. The book's somber themes of imagination and adulthood have resonated with children and adults alike since it was published—it is now one of the most translated books of all time. - Author: Ernest Hemingway - Score: 6,848 - Average rating: 3.80 (based on 1,036,482 ratings) "The Old Man and the Sea" was Ernest Hemingway - Score: 6,848 - Average rating: 3.80 (based on 1,036,482 ratings) "The Old Man and the Sea" was Ernest Hemingway - Score: 6,848 - Average rating: 3.80 (based on 1,036,482 ratings) "The Old Man and the Sea" was Ernest Hemingway - Score: 6,848 - Average rating: 3.80 (based on 1,036,482 ratings) "The Old Man and the Sea" was Ernest Hemingway - Score: 6,848 - Average rating: 3.80 (based on 1,036,482 ratings) "The Old Man and the Sea" was Ernest Hemingway - Score: 6,848 - Average rating: 3.80 (based on 1,036,482 ratings) "The Old Man and the Sea" was Ernest Hemingway - Score: 6,848 - Average rating: 3.80 (based on 1,036,482 ratings) "The Old Man and the Sea" was Ernest Hemingway - Score: 6,848 - Average rating: 3.80 (based on 1,036,482 ratings) "The Old Man and the Sea" was Ernest Hemingway - Score: 6,848 - Average rating: 3.80 (based on 1,036,482 ratings) "The Old Man and the Sea" was Ernest Hemingway - Score: 6,848 - Average rating: 3.80 (based on 1,036,482 ratings) "The Old Man and the Sea" was Ernest Hemingway - Score: 6,848 - Average rating: 3.80 (based on 1,036,482 ratings) "The Old Man and the Sea" was Ernest Hemingway - Score: 6,848 - Average rating: 3.80 (based on 1,036,482 ratings) "The Old Man and the Sea" was Ernest Hemingway - Score: 6,848 - Average rating: 3.80 (based on 1,036,482 ratings) "The Old Man and the Sea" was Ernest Hemingway - Score: 6,848 - Average rating: 3.80 (based on 1,036,482 ratings) "The Old Man and the Sea" was Ernest Hemingway - Score: 6,848 - Average rating: 3.80 (based on 1,036,482 ratings) "The Old Man and the Sea" was Ernest Hemingway - Score: 6,848 - Average rating: 3.80 (based on 1,036,482 ratings) "The Old Man and the Sea" Hemingway's final major work. The story follows an old man who catches a large fish, only to have it eaten by sharks before he can get it back to shore. Although many may see symbolism about life and aging in the prose. - Author: Geoffrey Chaucer - Score: 6,904 - Average rating: 3.52 (based on 211,378 ratings) "The Canterbury Tales," written by Geoffrey Chaucer in the 14th century, was one of the first major works of English literature. The story follows a group of pilgrims who tell tales during their journey from London to Canterbury Cathedral. The cast of characters—including a carpenter, cook, and knight, among others paints a varied picture of 14th-century society. The stories inspired the modern film "A Knight's Tale," starring Heath Ledger as a poor knight and Paul Bettany as Chaucer. - Author: William Shakespeare - Score: 6,966 - Average rating: 3.89 (based on 363,620 ratings) Shakespeare wrote "Othello" in the early 17th century. The play tells the tragic story of Othello—a Moor and general in the Venetian army, and Iago—a traitorous low-ranking officer. Shakespeare tackles themes of racism, betrayal, and jealousy. While he refers to Othello as "Black," Shakespeare most likely meant he was darker-skinned than most Englishmen at the time and not necessarily of African descent. - Author: Daniel Keyes - Score: 7,235 - Average rating: 4.18 (based on 597,740 ratings) The main character in "Flowers for Algernon" is Charlie Gordon, a man of low intelligence who becomes a genius after undergoing an experimental procedure. The experiment has already been performed on a lab mouse named Algernon. Gordon's intelligence opens his eyes to things he's never understood before, but he eventually loses his newly acquired knowledge. The mouse, who Gordon remembers fondly, dies. Daniel Keyes wrote the book after realizing his education was causing a rift between him and his loved ones, making him wonder what it would be like if someone's intelligence could be increased. - Author: Unknown - Score: 7,844 - Average rating: 3.47 (based on 283,839 ratings) "Beowulf" is an epic poem—an original manuscript copy is housed in the British Library—of 3,000 lines. It was written in Old English somewhere between A.D. 700 and tells the story of Beowulf, a nobleman and warrior in Sweden who is sent to Denmark to fight a swamp monster called Grendel. You may also like: 10 of the biggest Pride celebrations around the world - Author: Charles Dickens - Score: 8,085 - Average rating: 3.86 (based on 901,761 ratings) "A Tale of Two Cities" famously starts: "It was the best of times..." Set in the late 1700s, Charles Dickens vividly writes about the time leading up to and during the French Revolution. The historical novel describes death and despair but also touches on themes of redemption. - Author: Emily Brontë, who died a year later at 30. Brontë tells the tragic love story between Heathcliff, an orphan, and Catherine, his wealthy benefactor's daughter. Considered a classic in English literature, the novel shows readers how passionate and destructive love can be. - Author: J.R.R. Tolkien - Score: 8,552 - Average rating: 4.28 (based on 3,583,681 ratings) "The Hobbit" is the story of Bilbo Baggins, a hobbit who sets off on a journey through the fictional world of Middle-earth in search of adventure and treasure. J.R.R. Tolkien originally wrote this book for his own kids, and it was an instant success in the children's book market. It also grew a keen following with older readers alongside the release of the "Lord of the Rings" trilogy in the 1960s, when it offered a great reprieve from the tumult of the times, and the big screen adaptation in the early 2000s. - Author: William Shakespeare's plays, "A Midsummer Night's Dream" explores the theme of love. This comedy shows the events that surround the marriage of Theseus, the duke of Athens, to Hippolyta, a former Amazon queen. The play also shares the stories of several other lovers and audiences, even today. - Author: John Steinbeck - Score: 9,047 - Average rating: 3.99 (based on 852,960 ratings) "The Grapes of Wrath" is considered a great American novel partly because it brought to light the destruction and despair caused from prison to find his family's Oklahoma farmstead empty and destroyed. Joad and his family later set off for a new life in California, only to face struggles along the way. The book, which focuses on hard work, won a Pulitzer Prize in 1940. - Author: Charles Dickens - Score: 9,647 - Average rating: 3.79 (based on 751,833 ratings) This Charles Dickens - Score: 9,647 - Average rating: 3.79 (based on 751,833 ratings) This Charles Dickens - Score: 9,647 - Average rating: 3.79 (based on 751,833 ratings) This Charles Dickens - Score: 9,647 - Average rating: 3.79 (based on 751,833 ratings) This Charles Dickens - Score: 9,647 - Average rating: 3.79 (based on 751,833 ratings) This Charles Dickens - Score: 9,647 - Average rating: 3.79 (based on 751,833 ratings) This Charles Dickens - Score: 9,647 - Average rating: 3.79 (based on 751,833 ratings) This Charles Dickens - Score: 9,647 - Average rating: 3.79 (based on 751,833 ratings) This Charles Dickens - Score: 9,647 - Average rating: 3.79 (based on 751,833 ratings) This Charles Dickens - Score: 9,647 - Average rating: 3.79 (based on 751,833 ratings) This Charles Dickens - Score: 9,647 - Average rating: 3.79 (based on 751,833 ratings) This Charles Dickens - Score: 9,647 - Average rating: 3.79 (based on 751,833 ratings) This Charles Dickens - Score: 9,647 - Average rating: 3.79 (based on 751,833 ratings) This Charles Dickens - Score: 9,647 - Average rating: 3.79 (based on 751,833 ratings) This Charles Dickens - Score: 9,647 - Average rating: 3.79 (based on 751,833 ratings) This Charles Dickens - Score: 9,647 - Average rating: 3.79 (based on 751,833 ratings) This Charles Dickens - Score: 9,647 - Average rating: 3.79 (based on 751,833 ratings) This Charles Dickens - Score: 9,647 - Average rating: 3.79 (based on 751,833 ratings) This Charles Dickens - Score: 9,647 - Average rating: 3.79 (based on 751,833 ratings) This Charles Dickens - Score: 9,647 - Average rating: 3.79 (based on 751,833 ratings) This Charles Dickens - Score: 9,647 - Average rating: 3.79 (based on 751,833 ratings) This Charles Dickens - Score: 9,647 - Average rating: 3.79 (based on 751,837 ratings) This Charles Dicken The plot mostly centers around Pip's regular visits to Miss Havisham, a wealthy recluse, and his love for her adopted daughter Estella, who is cold toward Pip until years later. Many consider the novel a great masterpiece. - Author: Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley - Score: 10,277 - Average rating: 3.85 (based on 1,435,457 ratings) At just 20, Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley created what is often labeled as the first science fiction novel: "Frankenstein." While staying with a group of literary comrades, Lord Byron challenged his fellow writers to craft ghost stories. Shelley's story was sparked by a nightmare that ultimately became the classic novel about a mad scientist who created a monster from the body parts of corpses, then brought the creature to life. - Author: William Shakespeare - Score: 10,472 - Average rating: 3.70 (based on 191,622 ratings) Shakespeare takes on history with "Julius Caesar," a tragic story of power and betrayal. Brutus, who worked closely with Caesar, joined his fellow conspirators to assassinate Caesar to save the republic from a tyrannical leader. The events had the opposite effect when, only two years later, Caesar's grandnephew was crowned the first emperor of Rome. The play marked a political shift in Shakespeare's writing. - Author: S.E. Hinton - Score: 10,564 - Average rating: 4.12 (based on 1,193,939 ratings) S.E. Hinton introduced readers to 14-year old Ponyboy Curtis in "The Outsiders," a novel she started to write when she was 16. The plot centers around two rival gangs: the lower-class Greasers and the well-off Socials. It touches on teen angst, including the frustrations young people have when they can't rely on adults to change things while also not knowing how to fix things themselves. Hinton's publishers encouraged her to publish under her initials because they didn't think the public would respect a book about teenage boys by someone with the feminine name of Susan Eloise Hinton. - Author: Aldous Huxley - Score: 10,853 - Average rating: 3.99 (based on 1,711,789 ratings) In "Brave New World," published in 1932, Aldous Huxley - Score: 10,853 - Average rating: 3.99 (based on 1,711,789 ratings) In "Brave New World," published in 1932, Aldous Huxley - Score: 10,853 - Average rating: 3.99 (based on 1,711,789 ratings) In "Brave New World," published in 1932, Aldous Huxley - Score: 10,853 - Average rating: 3.99 (based on 1,711,789 ratings) In "Brave New World," published in 1932, Aldous Huxley - Score: 10,853 - Average rating: 3.99 (based on 1,711,789 ratings) In "Brave New World," published in 1932, Aldous Huxley - Score: 10,853 - Average rating: 3.99 (based on 1,711,789 ratings) In "Brave New World," published in 1932, Aldous Huxley - Score: 10,853 - Average rating: 3.99 (based on 1,711,789 ratings) In "Brave New World," published in 1932, Aldous Huxley - Score: 10,853 - Average rating: 3.99 (based on 1,711,789 ratings) In "Brave New World," published in 1932, Aldous Huxley - Score: 10,853 - Average rating: 3.99 (based on 1,711,789 ratings) In "Brave New World," published in 1932, Aldous Huxley - Score: 10,853 - Average rating: 3.99 (based on 1,711,789 ratings) In "Brave New World," published in 1932, Aldous Huxley - Score: 10,853 - Average rating: 3.99 (based on 1,711,789 ratings) In "Brave New World," published in 1932, Aldous Huxley - Score: 10,853 - Average rating: 3.99 (based on 1,711,789 ratings) In "Brave New World," published in 1932, Aldous Huxley - Score: 10,853 - Average rating: 3.99 (based on 1,711,789 ratings) In "Brave New World," published in 1932, Aldous - Average rating: 3.99 (based on 1,711,789 ratings) In "Brave New World," published in 1932, Aldous - Average rating: 3.99 (based on 1,711,789 ratings) In "Brave New World," published in 1932, Aldous - Average rating: 3.99 (based paints a picture of a dystopian future where people consume pills called soma to get a sense of instant bliss without side effects. Emotions, individuality, and lasting relationships aren't allowed. A preordained class system is decided at the embryonic stage, with certain people getting hormones for peak mental and athletic fitness. Some historians believe the book's plot could represent the future in the next 100 years. You may also like: How to match an engagement ring with daily fashion - Author: Elie Wiesel - Score: 11,080 - Average rating: 4.36 (based on 1,150,070 ratings) "Night," the first in a trilogy of books, is the most well-known of the more than 50 works Elie Wiesel produced in his lifetime. In just over 100 pages, Wiesel recounts his experiences at the Auschwitz and Buchenwald concentration camps during the Holocaust—a history he felt compelled to share, as he stated in his 1986 Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech, "Because, if we forget, we are guilty, we are accomplices." The impact of this book has only grown since its publication in 1956, with educators teaching the book in schools for decades and book sales soaring alongside current events, including Wiesel's death in July 2016. - Author: Arthur Miller - Score: 11,619 - Average rating: 3.60 (based on 380,466 ratings) This 1953 play is a dramatized version of the Salem witch trials of the late 1600s. In the novel, a group of young girls are dancing in the forest; when caught, they fake illness and shift blame to avoid punishment. Their lies set off witchcraft accusations throughout the town. Arthur Miller wrote "The Crucible" to protest the actions of Sen. Joseph McCarthy, who set up a committee in the early 1950s to investigate and prosecute the Communists he thought had infiltrated the government. It won the 1953 Tony Award for Best Play. - Author: Lois Lowry - Score: 11,635 - Average rating: 4.13 (based on 2,238,142 ratings) "The Giver" is the dystopian tale of a boy chosen to hold one of the most difficult and important professions in his community—the keeper of all memories from the time before, including the pain and difficulties that have been erased from the seemingly utopian world around them. In 1994, Lois Lowry was awarded the Newbery Medal—a prestigious award for children's literature in the United States—for the first installation of her book quartet. The book's complicated themes of racism, religion, and politics lend themselves more to older readers, creating rich discussion in high school classrooms. - Author: Charlotte Brontë - Score: 11,990 - Average rating: 4.14 (based on 1,941,542 ratings) Charlotte Brontë—sister to Emily—speaks directly to the reader in "Jane Eyre." The Victorian novel follows the headstrong Jane, an orphan who lives with her aunt and cousins, on her quest to find her identity and true love. The novel, marketed as an autobiography and published in 1847 under the pen name Currer Bell, is written in the first person and introduces "the concept of the self" in writing. - Author: Ray Bradbury - Score: 12,468 - Average rating: 3.97 (based on 2,162,063 ratings) Ray Bradbury describes a futuristic world where books are banned and burned. Guy Montag, one firefighter tasked with extinguishing the books, questions the practice. When Bradbury wrote the classic in the 1950s, television sets were becoming ubiquitous in American households. The theme of the book was a warning about how mass media could interfere with people's ability or desire to think critically, a theme that many think resonates with the social media-obsessed world of today. - Author: Jane Austen - Score: 13,486 - Average rating: 4.28 (based on 3,854,915 ratings) Published in 1813, "Pride and Prejudice" was Jane Austen's second novel. The story follows the will-they-won't-they relationship between the wealthy Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth Bennet, who comes from meager means. Throughout the chapters, both change for the better as they fall in love. The book has inspired more than a dozen movie and television adaptations. - Author: Homer - Score: 15,087 - Average rating: 3.79 (based on 1,001,633 ratings) "The Odyssey," a Greek epic poem, follows Odysseus as he travels back to the island of Ithaca after fighting in the war at Troy—something addressed in Homer's poem "The Iliad." When he returns home, he and his son, Telemachus, kill all the men trying to marry Odysseus's wife, Penelope. In the end, Athena, the goddess of wisdom, victory, and war, intervenes. Like many Greek myths, it focuses on themes of love, courage, and revenge. - Author: Anne Frank - Score: 15,739 - Average rating: 4.18 (based on 3,425,782 ratings) In 1944, a young Anne Frank recorded her thoughts and feelings as she and other Jewish citizens hid from the German Nazis during World War II. The coming-of-age diary, which chronicles Frank's time hiding in the Secret Annex while she became a young woman, has been translated into 70 languages. While she and most of her family were killed, her father survived and helped publish her work, making it possible for millions to learn her story. - Author: Mark Twain - Score: 16,638 - Average rating: 3.83 (based on 1,228,955 ratings) Huckleberry Finn is the main character in this followup novel to "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer." The book explores themes of racism as Huck Finn floats down the Mississippi River with a man escaping slavery. Like Huck at the end of his tale, Twain changed his views on slavery and rejected it as an institution. - Author: George Orwell - Score: 17,337 - Average rating: 4.19 (based on 4,095,733 ratings) George Orwell describes a dystopian future rife with war and one where the government—led by Big Brother—controls the truth and snuffs out individual thought. The protagonist, Winston Smith, becomes disillusioned with the Party, and he rebels against it. Although it was published in 1949, the novel had a resurgence in 2017. You may also like: 10 of the most anticipated video games of 2024 - Author: Nathaniel Hawthorne - Score: 17,684 - Average rating: 3.43 (based on historical events, readers follow the story of Hester Prynne, a woman who is forced to wear a red "A" on her clothes after she conceives a child out of wedlock. She bears the punishment alone when she refuses to name the baby's father. Her character marked one of the first where a strong woman was the protagonist. Hawthorne's novel also touches on themes of hypocrisy, shame, guilt, and love. - Author: William Shakespeare - Score: 19,419 - Average rating: 4.03 (based on 875,058 ratings) Hamlet, the prince of Denmark, becomes vengeful after attending his father's funeral, only to find his mother has remarried Claudius, his uncle. The prince finds out his father was murdered, after which he kills the new king. Ambiguity runs through the play and the character of Hamlet, whose visions of ghosts are up for interpretation—are they real or a figment of the troubled man's imagination? The tragedy, which launched the famous line "To be, or not to be..." shines a light on some of the worst traits of humanity. Some consider the play Shakespeare's greatest work. - Author: J.D. Salinger - Score: 19,450 - Average rating: 3.81 (based on 3,262,066 ratings) J.D. Salinger aptly captures teen angst in "The Catcher in the Rye" when the reader gets a look at three days in the life of its narrator, the 16-year-old Holden Caulfield. The book was an instant success, but some schools have banned it from their libraries and reading lists, citing vulgarity and sexual content. - Author: John Steinbeck - Score: 19,958 - Average rating: 3.88 (based on 2,350,603 ratings) "Of Mice and Men" tells the story of George and his simple-minded friend Lennie. The two have to get new jobs on a ranch because of some trouble in Lennie's past. The novel, set during the Great Depression, tackles topics of poverty, sexism, and racism. - Author: William Shakespeare - Score: 21,256 - Average rating: 3.90 (based on 822,057 ratings) Another Shakespeare classic, "Macbeth receives a prophecy that he will one day become king of Scotland. His unchecked ambition ends in murder; Macbeth kills King Duncan to steal the throne for himself. It shows the destructive influence of political ambition and pursuing power for its own sake. - Author: George Orwell - Score: 22,478 - Average rating: 3.98 (based on 3,491,043 ratings) A group of farm animals organizes a revolt after they realize their master, Mr. Jones, is mistreating them nothing in return for their work. When they challenge the leadership, they are disciplined for speaking out. This classic isn't about animal rights. It is a larger critique of Soviet Communism. Orwell wrote it as an attack against Stalinism in Russia. - Author: William Golding - Score: 24,079 - Average rating: 3.69 (based on 2,692,219 ratings) "Lord of the Flies" tells the alarming story of a group of young boys who survive a plane crash, only to descend into tribalism on the island where they landed. Two of the boys—Ralph and Jack—clash in their pursuit of leadership. The novel, which has been challenged in schools, shows how struggles for power based on fear and division can result in a collapse of social order, themes that might seem relevant in the current fraught political climate. - Author: F. Scott Fitzgerald - Score: 29,912 - Average rating: 3.93 (based on 4,737,607 ratings) Nick Carraway, a Midwest transplant and Yale graduate, moves to West Egg, Long Island, and enters a world of extravagance when he becomes entangled with millionaire Jay Gatsby and socialite Daisy Buchanan. The novel is viewed as a cautionary tale about achieving the American dream of wealth and excess. - Author: William Shakespeare - Score: 34,901 - Average rating: 3.74 (based on 2,430,511 ratings) Two star-crossed lovers meet and perish in this tragedy. Juliet, a Capulet, falls in love with Romeo, a Montague. Because their families are rivals, they are forbidden to marry. They secretly wed before misfortune leads to their children inspires peace among the families. Some critics claim the play's childish view of love hasn't stood the test of time, but others think the story is multilayered and deserves its classic status. - Author: Harper Lee - Score: 44,390 - Average rating: 4.27 (based on 5,584,470 ratings) Harper Lee's first novel, published in 1960, tackles issues of racial and social injustice in the South. Set in Alabama, it introduces readers to Atticus' daughter, Scout, while Boo Radley, their reclusive neighbor, adds another dimension to this classic story of racism and childhood. Lee's work won her a Pulitzer Prize and the Presidential Medal of Freedom. Because of some racial language, the book has been challenged in many schools throughout America. You may also like: April Fools' Day: The roots of our silliest holiday In today's post, I am sharing this curated reading list for high school students that traverses genres, eras, and cultures. This diverse collection of the American Great Depression in "The Grapes of Wrath" to Orwell's dystopian future in "1984," each selection challenges, inspires, and provokes deep thought. These novels—from Salinger's honest narrative in "The Catcher in the Rye" to Shakespeare's classic exploration of power in "Macbeth"—provide profound insights into the human experience. Here is the list of the must-read books for high schoolers: Nathaniel Hawthorne's "The Scarlet Letter" is a profound exploration of sin, guilt, and legalism, set in the Puritan Massachusetts Bay Colony between 1642 and 1649. It intricately narrates Hester Prynne's journey towards repentance and redemption, delving into themes that are as relevant today as they were in the 17th century. The novel's rich characters, vividly painted setting, and the powerful narrative make it a captivating and thought-provoking read, immersing readers in a world where personal and societal conflicts intertwine. "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland" by Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, better known as Lewis Carroll, is a journey filled with whimsy, humor, and boundless imagination. This classic tale follows Alice as she tumbles down the rabbit hole into a fantastical underground world. Here, she encounters a memorable cast of characters including the White Rabbit, Mad Hatter, and the Queen of Hearts. Carroll's vivid storytelling and creative genius make this book a timeless adventure that continues to enchant readers of all ages. Ray Bradbury's "Fahrenheit 451" is a powerful and iconic dystopian novel that delves into a world where books are outlawed and "firemen" like Montag are tasked with burning them. This thought-provoking narrative challenges readers to contemplate the value of literature and the dangerous implications of censorship. As Montag awakens to the beauty and power of words, he begins to question his role in society, leading readers on a gripping journey that examines the essence of human existence and the transformative power of books. Betty Smith's "A Tree Grows in Brooklyn" offers a vivid portrayal of life in early 20th-century Williamsburg, Brooklyn. Through her enchanting narrative, Smith brings to life the unique vibrancy and cultural nuances of the community. From the simple pleasures of trading junk for pennies to the festive anticipation of holidays, the novel captures the essence of a bygone era. Its universal themes of resilience, hope, and the human experience resonate deeply, making it a timeless piece of literature that echoes the heartbeats of its characters. Homer's "The Odyssey" stands as a monumental work in literature, chronicling the epic journey of Odysseus as he returns home from the Trojan War. This narrative is a masterful blend of adventure, mythology, and the human struggle, showcasing Odysseus' reliance on his wit and resilience against divine and natural forces. It's not just a story of a man's journey home, but a profound exploration of moral endurance and the human spirit, making it a cornerstone of classical literature. Arthur Miller's "Death of a Salesman" presents a poignant and critical look at the American Dream through the eyes of Willy Loman, a man who embodies the relentless pursuit of success. Loman's life, defined by his belief in the power of salesmanship and personal reinvention, unfolds as a tragic tale of unfulfilled dreams and disillusionment. Miller's exploration of Loman's life, marked by a blend of past and present, delves deep into themes of betrayal, personal failure, and the crushing weight of societal expectations, making it a compelling and critically acclaimed work. Anne Frank's "The Diary of a Young Girl" is a powerful, first-hand account of a Jewish girl and her family lived in the Secret Annexe of an Amsterdam office building, facing the harsh realities of confinement, hunger, and the constant threat of discovery. Anne's diary offers a deeply personal and vivid window into this period, capturing her thoughts, fears, and hopes, making it an essential and heart-wrenching narrative of human resilience and historical significance. Joseph Conrad's "Heart of Darkness" is a profound and unsettling narrative about colonialism and human nature. The story follows Charles Marlow's journey as a ferry-boat captain in Africa for a Belgian trading company. Marlow encounters three kinds of darkness: the impenetrable Congo wilderness, the cruelty Europeans inflicted on the natives, and the terrifying darkness within humans capable of evil deeds. This book is a critical exploration of the myths of colonization and a deep dive into the complexities of the human psyche. Charlotte Bronte's "Jane Eyre" is a tale of passion, independence, and morality. The novel follows Jane Eyre "is a tale of passion, independence, and morality." moral convictions are put to the test when she uncovers his dark secret. Bronte's work is a powerful and emotional journey of a woman's struggle for freedom and identity in a society bound by conventions, making it a timeless piece of literature." A Tree Grows in Brooklyn" by Betty Smith is a poignant and beautifully written novel that captures the essence of life in the Williamsburg slums during the early 20th century. Following the story of Francie Nolan, the book illustrates the resilience of a young girl facing the adversities of poverty and prejudice. Smith's narrative is rich with details of everyday life, painting a vivid picture of the struggles and hopes of a family trying to make ends meet, and highlighting the enduring spirit of youth in the face of hardship. John Steinbeck's "Of Mice and Men" is a compelling tale of friendship and dreams amid the harsh realities, who share a dream of owning their own land. Their journey takes a tragic turn on a ranch in the Salinas Valley, where they face challenges that test their bond and dream. Steinbeck's narrative is a profound psychological exploration of morality and redemption. The novel follows Raskolnikov, a destitute student in St. Petersburg who commits a brutal murder, believing he is above moral law. His subsequent journey through guilt, terror, and suffering is a gripping examination of the human condition, confronting themes of justice, conscience, and the potential for redemption through suffering. Dostoyevsky masterfully delves into the depths of the human psyche, making this book a cornerstone of existential literature. Ernest Hemingway's "The Old Man and the Sea" is a timeless story of endurance and resilience. It narrates the tale of an old Cuban fisherman's grueling battle with a giant marlin in the Gulf Stream. Hemingway's minimalist style and powerful language beautifully capture the themes of courage, personal triumph, and the struggle against defeat. This novel is not just a story about a fisherman, but a profound reflection on the human spirit and its capacity to persevere in the face of overwhelming odds. Charles Dickens' "Great Expectations" is a classic Victorian bildungsroman that narrates the personal development of an orphan named Pip. Published in serial form from 1860 to 1861, the novel is renowned for its vivid imagery, depicting the stark realities of poverty, prison ships, and life-and-death struggles. The story takes readers through Pip's life as he encounters various characters and experiences that shape his growth and understanding of the world. This novel is a profound exploration of social class, personal ambition, and the complexities of human nature." A Tale of Two Cities" by Charles Dickens is a historical novel set against the backdrop of the French Revolution. It follows Dr. Alexandre Manette, who is released after 18 years of unjust imprisonment in the Bastille and reunited with his daughter, Lucie. The narrative becomes entangled with the story of Charles Darnay, a young Frenchman falsely accused of treason, and Sydney Carton, a dissolute lawyer whose fate becomes intertwined with Darnay's. Dickens masterfully weaves a story of love, sacrifice, and

revolution, capturing the turmoil and spirit of a pivotal era in history. Chinua Achebe's "Things Fall Apart" is a powerful narrative set in late 19th century Africa, at the cusp of European colonial expansion. It tells the story of Okonkwo, a respected Igbo warrior from Umuofia, and his struggle to maintain his cultural identity in the face of British political and religious influence. Achebe's novel is a critical examination of the clash between traditional African societies. Mark Twain's "Adventures of Huckleberry Finn" is a seminal work in American literature, celebrated for its vivid portrayal of a boy's adventures along the Mississippi River. The novel intertwines themes of freedom, morality, and societal norms through the eyes of its young protagonist, Huck Finn. Twain's exceptional skill in dialogue and characterization makes this a story of deep human significance, exploring the inherent conflicts between natural instincts and the constraints of society, and the evils of slavery. Emily Bronte's "Wuthering Heights" is a tale of passion and revenge set in the Yorkshire moors. It centers on the intense and tumultuous relationship between Catherine Earnshaw and Heathcliff, an orphan taken in by Catherine's father. Following Mr. Earnshaw's death, Heathcliff faces mistreatment and leaves, only to return years later as a wealthy man intent on revenge. Bronte's novel is a deep exploration of love, jealousy, and social standing, painting a vivid picture of the destructive power of obsession and the complexities of human emotions. Mark Twain's "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer" is a charming and mischievous narrative about a young boy's escapades along the Mississippi River. Set in the fictional town of St. Petersburg, inspired by Twain's own childhood in Hannibal, Missouri, the novel follows Tom Sawyer's adventures, from fighting in the streets to his infamous whitewashing of a fence. Twain captures the essence of boyhood and adventure in this classic, which continues to delight readers with its humor, vitality, and timeless exploration of youth. George Orwell's "1984" is a powerful and haunting portrayal of a dystopian future where independent thought is suppressed under an omnipresent, totalitarian regime. The novel follows Winston Smith, an employee at the Ministry of Truth, who becomes disillusioned with his life under the oppressive rule of Big Brother. Orwell's vision of a world where individual freedom is obliterated and surveillance is omnipresent has remained profoundly influential, serving as a stark warning about the dangers of unchecked governmental power and the erosion of fundamental human rights. George Orwell's "Animal Farm" is a satirical fable that tells the story of overworked and mistreated animals who revolt against their human farmer, seeking to create an ideal society based on equality, justice, and progress. However, their revolution soon gives way to a new tyranny as oppressive as the one they overthrew. This allegorical novel brilliantly critiques the corrupting influence of power and the cyclical nature of oppression, encapsulating the rise and fall of revolutionary ideals into totalitarianism through its memorable animal characters. "The Great Gatsby" by F. Scott Fitzgerald is an iconic novel set in the roaring twenties, epitomizing the glamour and decadence of the Jazz Age. The story revolves around the enigmatic millionaire Jay Gatsby and his lavish parties in West Egg, New York. Gatsby's mysterious past, rumored involvement in bootlegging, and his unyielding love for Daisy Buchanan form the core of this tragic narrative. Fitzgerald masterfully paints a picture of the era's excesses and the hollowness of the American Dream, making this a timeless exploration of desire, disillusionment, and the pursuit of unattainable ideals. William Golding's "Lord of the Flies" is a disturbing tale of civilization versus savagery. It narrates the story of schoolboys stranded on a deserted island, initially a paradise, becomes a sinister backdrop for power struggles, fear, and violence. Golding's novel is a powerful commentary on the inherent evil in human nature and the thin veneer of societal norms that keep it in check, making it a profound and moving tale of racial injustice, morality, and empathy set in the American South during the 1930s. The story, seen through the eyes of a young girl named Scout, revolves around her father, Atticus Finch, a lawyer who defends a black man unjustly accused of a terrible crime. This novel beautifully blends the innocence of childhood with the grim realities of racial prejudice, creating a powerful narrative that highlights the importance of integrity, courage, and standing up for what is right. Aldous Huxley's "Brave New World" is a groundbreaking dystopian novel set in a future World State, where citizens are genetically engineered and conditioned for their roles in a strictly hierarchical society. The novel anticipates advancements in reproductive technology, psychological manipulation, and classical conditioning, painting a chilling picture of a seemingly perfect yet fundamentally flawed society. Huxley's exploration of themes such as individuality, freedom, and the cost of stability challenges readers to reflect on the nature of happiness and the dangers of sacrificing human values for technological progress. John Steinbeck's "The Grapes of Wrath" is a powerful narrative set during the Story of Tom Joad, the protagonist who, despite his violent actions, emerges as a morally just hero. The novel vividly portrays the plight of dispossessed families and their struggle to find dignity and justice in an era of immense hardship. Steinbeck's work is a poignant exploration of social injustice, human resilience, and the enduring spirit of those who strive against overwhelming odds, making it a cornerstone of American literature. Paulo Coelho's "The Alchemist" is a transcendent tale of magic, mysticism, and self-discovery. It tells the story of Santiago, an Andalusian shepherd boy, who embarks on a journey to find worldly treasure but discovery a far more valuable form of riches. The novel is a profound meditation on following one's dreams, understanding one's destiny, and the importance of listening to the heart. Coelho's masterful storytelling blends philosophy and adventure, offering readers a guide to recognizing opportunities and learning to decipher the omens along life's path. William Shakespeare's "Macbeth" is a tragic exploration of ambition, guilt, and moral corruption. The play revolves around the Scottish general Macbeth, whose desire for power leads him to commit regicide and seize the throne. Driven by prophecies and spurred by his wife. Macbeth spirals into a cycle of murder and paranoia. The play is a profound examination of the conseguences of unchecked ambition and the psychological turmoil that comes with guilt and fear, showcasing Shakespeare's unparalleled understanding of the human condition. J.D. Salinger's "The Catcher in the Rye" is a seminal work in American literature, capturing the essence of teenage disillusionment and rebellion. The novel follows the story of Holden Caulfield, a sixteen-year-old, as he navigates the complexities of adolescence after leaving his prep school. Holden's journey through New York City and his candid reflections on the adult world reveal a deep sense of alienation and a quest for identity. Salinger's portrayal of teenage angst and the struggle for authenticity has made this book a defining work on the pains of growing up.Margaret Atwood's "The Handmaid's Tale" is a chilling portrayal of a dystopian future where the United States has become the repressive Republic of Gilead. In this society, plummeting birth rates and social unrest have led to the subjugation of women, whose rights are stripped away under a theocratic regime. The novel, through its vivid imagery and powerful narrative, explores themes of power, gender oppression, and resistance. Atwood's creation is not only a warning about the dangers of extremism and the erosion of women's rights but also a compelling story of survival and defiance in the face of tyranny. As educators and lifelong learners, we understand the immense value that reading holds for our students – it's not just about improving literacy skills, but about broadening horizons, fostering empathy, and sparking critical thinking. These books, ranging from the haunting foresight of "1984" to the poignant realism of "The Grapes of Wrath," are not only essential reads for high school students but are also timeless classics that speak to readers of all ages. They challenge us to consider different perspectives, confront our own biases, and understand the complexity of the human spirit. I encourage educators and parents alike to promote these works, not just as academic requirements, but as venues to deeper understanding and appreciation of our world. Let's use these stories to ignite conversations, to inspire change, and to continue nurturing a love for reading that will last a lifetime.