

AUTHOR	TITLE	GENRE	YEAR	SHORT DESCRIPTION	KEYWORDS	PAGES
Achebe, Chinua	Things Fall Apart	novel	1958	This novel first sets out to describe the life, beliefs and customs in Umuofia, a tribal area of Nigeria, before the arrival of the white colonialists. It is the story of Okonkwo, a powerful and respected man, and his family, who live life according to the traditions of their tribe and religion, in happiness and tragedy alike. But while Okonkwo is banished for seven years to a different village, Christian missionaries and white colonial rulers start changing his native village, and when Okonkwo returns, it is too late for the old ways to survive: things begin to fall apart...	black voices, cultures, Africa	209
Adams, Douglas	Dirk Gently's Holistic Detective Agency	novel	1988	A mixture of comedy, fantasy, detective novel, literary mystery and philosophical treatise. Dirk Gently is a self-styled private investigator who sets out to prove the interconnectedness of all things in the world and in history. A lot of pizza, a murder, an Electric Monk, the great romantic poet S.T. Coleridge, and a sofa permanently stuck on a staircase are the ingredients of this crazy mixture. Great fun, but also a big challenge!	crime, supernatural, humour, challenge	
Adams, Douglas	The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy	novel	1979	Science fiction full of British humour. It all begins when Arthur Dent wakes up one morning to find the bulldozers ready to destroy his home, to make way for a new bypass. But before they can complete their destruction, the Earth itself is destroyed by a fleet of Vogon construction ships, to make way for a new hyperspace bypass. Arthur and his friend Ford Prefect, who turns out to be an alien, are saved and start their odyssey in space.	humour, supernatural, adventure	
Amis, Kingsley	Ending Up	novel	1974	A cynical description of some old people living together in a remote house, making each other's lives hell. Black humour but also a very hopeless picture of old age as full of frustration and the will to hurt others. All the old people die in horrible and grotesque ways at the end.	humour, humankind	
Anonymous	Primary Colors	novel	1996	This is the inside story of how an American president becomes president. Written by a person close to Bill Clinton, this fictional-factional novel caused enormous interest when it was first published, and led to a prolonged search for its author, who still has not been identified. A very precise, convincing account of American politics, the campaign for the presidency and the temptations of power.	power, America	
Asimov, Isaac	I, Robot	novel / short stories	1950	Asimov is one of the 'fathers' of science fiction. In this series of stories he describes the history of robots and their growing importance for the future of the world and mankind, to the point where robots become undistinguishable from humans and take control of the world. The question is: is this really such a bad thing for humanity?	scifi, future, humanity	
Atwood, Margaret	The Handmaid's Tale	novel	1985	Gilead is a religious dictatorship in what used to be the USA. The time is towards the end of the 20th century; there is a war on, nuclear bombs have been used, the environment is polluted, and most men and women have become sterile. In Gilead, the state controls everything; women are either Wives, Marthas (servants) or Handmaids ('machines' to produce children for the top officials of the state). The Handmaid's Tale is the story of such a woman, of her attempt to survive, to keep some self-respect under this regime, of her memories of the time before the dictatorship.	totalitarianism, future, women, female	
Auster, Paul	City of Glass	novel	1985	A metaphysical thriller. Quinn gets a phone call late one night. A voice asks him if he is Paul Auster (the author's own name...), the head of a detective agency, and tells him time is running out, that he needs help, that there is great danger... When the call comes the second time, Quinn says yes, he is Auster, and as a consequence is drawn into an investigation and a mystery into which he finally disappears...	crime, supernatural	
Auster, Paul	In the Country of Last Things	novel	1987	A strange novel about life (and death) in an unnamed city under a vague dictatorship, where everything is ending and nothing seems to be beginning: various crazy, suicidal sects gain power; people try to survive in poverty by any means, ordinary human values are increasingly lost, it is the end of civilization, set in an uncertain future but in many ways echoing conditions in our great cities or in war regions of the twentieth centuries.	totalitarianism, future, humanity	
Auster, Paul	The Music of Chance	novel	1990	A story which is at once realistic and metaphysical. Nashe has failed as a husband and father to his daughter, and when he inherits a lot of money he gives up his job and starts driving his Saab across the United States until his money runs out. By chance, he meets Pozzi, a young poker player who needs money for a poker game with two (he thinks) stupid millionaires who live in a lonely mansion somewhere in New England. Nashe and Pozzi lose the game and get into debt; to work this off before being allowed to leave the millionaires' house again, they have to build a wall of ten thousand stones imported from a ruined castle in Europe. But things go wrong again and again...	humanity, friendship, supernatural, God	

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Baldwin, James	Blues for Mister Charlie	play	1964	A play set in the deep south of the U.S.A. in the late 1950s / early 60s, when blacks were still treated at best as second-rate citizens and, at worst, as not fully human beings. At the beginning we learn that Richard Meridian, a young black who has returned after some years in the more liberal north, was murdered, probably by the white store-owner Lyle Britten. The rest of the play analyses the attitudes of whites and blacks which eventually led to the murder, and asks the question whether non-violence is the right way towards emancipation.	blacks, friendship	
Banks, Russell	The Sweet Hereafter	novel	1991	The lives of many people in the small town of Sam Dent in upstate New York change abruptly when the yellow International school bus driven by Dolores Driscoll veers off the road, killing 14 of the school children on board. In four voices, from four perspectives (that of the bus driver, of a father who has lost his two children, of a lawyer who comes to town to profit from the accident, and of a fourteen-year-old girl who is paralysed after the accident) we see how different people and the town as a whole try to readjust their lives to the terrible reality of what has happened to them.	America, choices, family	
Barnes, Julian	A History of the World in 101/2 Chapters	novel/ short stories	1989	A funny, subversive and thoughtful journey through the 'big' events in human history, seen from different perspectives. About the repeated errors of mankind since Noah's times and the ineffectualness of the lessons of history.	humanity, humour	
Behan, Brendan	The Hostage	play	1958	A farcical play set at the time of the Irish civil war in the nineteen-twenties. The play is uniquely Irish in its mixture of high ideals and high alcohol consumption, political speeches and drinking songs, patriotism and humanity. Although Behan was a militant Republican, there is no concrete political message, but instead a precise depiction of a complex atmosphere that outsiders to the Irish scene find difficult to rationalise.	Ireland	
Bolt, Robert	A Man for all Seasons	play	1960	A play about Thomas More, Lord Chancellor of England at the time of King Henry VIII, who was killed because he refused to accept publicly the separation from the Catholic Church which Henry carried out. At the same time, it is a timeless play about political intrigue, conscience, moral courage and the question whether it is worth to die for one's deepest convictions.	choices, power, totalitarianism, God	
Boyd, William	School Ties	screen-plays	1985	William Boyd remembers the claustrophobic atmosphere and the destructive forces of life at a Scottish public school – the places where the English elites used to be formed. The explosive combination of adolescent friendships, sadistic bullying of outsiders, sexual repression, subversive struggle against stuffy teachers forms the characters of these adolescents for life and is carried over into their adult careers. A tragic and a comic story illustrate the joys and perversions of public school life.	England, social criticism, individual	
Bradbury, Ray	Fahrenheit 451	novel	1953	451 Fahrenheit is the temperature at which paper starts to burn. The future state in which the fireman Montag lives feels threatened by books and their ideas. The firemen have the job of destroying all the books that people are still hiding, and of burning their houses if they are found out. A young girl convinces Montag that life is more than the continual soap operas and violent games that the state offers its people, and that literature is necessary to preserve the ideal of a fully individual life, and so Montag decides to rebel.	future, totalitarianism	
Brewer, Gene	K-PAX	novel	1995	A man (or extraterrestrial?) is brought to a psychiatric hospital, claiming to be from the planet K-PAX. Throughout the book, psychiatrist Gene Brewer tries to find out what happened to his patient in the past, and to help him become himself again. But is prot, as the patient calls himself, really a nutcase - or indeed from a different planet? The things he does and knows suggest the latter... And what does Brewer find out about himself while trying to cure prot? While reading this book you'll learn a lot about mental illnesses, and get to know an alternative world where everything is better than on earth...	scifi, humanity, social criticism, madness	
Brontë, Charlotte	Jane Eyre	novel	1847	One of the great romantic love stories in literature. Jane grows up without parents, has an unhappy childhood, and eventually gets a job as a governess at Thornfield Hall. A love grows between her and the rough, unfriendly owner Rochester. Shortly before the marriage she finds out that he keeps his crazy wife hidden in the house...	classics, love, women	
Brontë, Emily	Wuthering Heights	novel	1847	One of the great romantic love stories (by the sister of Charlotte!). There is a deep but unhappy love between Catherine and Heathcliff, whose effects eventually destroy two generations of the very different families living at Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange. The contrast of the wild, unconventional, passionate world personified by Heathcliff and the cultured social world at Thrushcross Grange is central. Love is seen as an eruptive force of nature which destroys all obstacles.	classics, love, supernatural	

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Burgess, Anthony	A Clockwork Orange	novel	1962	Written in an invented youth slang, this cult book shows the brutal world of teenage gangs in a near future. The moral and social question at the bottom of the novel is, what is more legitimate: to use one's free will to express oneself (even if this means deliberately choosing a life of crime) or the methods of reconditioning used on the teenage criminal Alex to make him into a conforming, useful member of society?	future, growing up, teenage, totalitarianism	
Capote, Truman	Breakfast at Tiffany's	novel	1956	A young writer tells his memories of Holly Golightly, a young, scandalous girl whose only interest, it seems, is to have a fun life in New York. As it turns out, her attitude of playing a game with life is also a way of coming to terms with fear and a sad past. Written in short, sometimes humorous episodes, this short novel offers a picture of an unconventional person for whom freedom, independence and openness to new experiences are crucial values.	social criticism, women, individual	
Capote, Truman	In Cold Blood	novel / fiction	1965	With this controversial book, Capote became the founder of a new genre, the non-fiction novel (sometimes called 'faction'). Capote recorded all the details about the lives and deaths of a family of four and their two murderers, who were caught, tried and executed in 1964. It is an attempt to recreate the background of all the people involved as precisely as possible, and to show what led to this multiple murder. Capote based his book on interviews with neighbours and the murderers, on FBI files etc., refusing to make a moral judgment.	crime, good & evil, America	
Cary, Joyce	Mr Johnson	novel	1939	Nigeria under Colonial rule. Johnson is a very young, naive clerk for the British administration; by his association with the English he feels himself to be special. While he is enthusiastic about anything English, he remains African in his emotions and thinking. He constantly gets into trouble with the English as well as his own people and is soon caught up in a net of debt, corruption, lies and finally serious crime. A book about the impossibility of the co-existence of English and African cultures in a colonial situation.	blacks, cultures, Africa, empire	
Chabosky, Stephen	The Perks of Being a Wallflower	novel	1999	Charlie, freshman at a US highschool is different. He's contemplative when it comes to the world around him. His favorite teacher makes him read loads of books. Attempting to find his way through life – the other sex, family, friends, drugs, suicide, ... - he writes his letters to an unknown friend. And slowly reveals a shocking past ...	teenage, outsider, coming-of-age	231
Chatwin, Bruce	On the Black Hill	novel	1982	This is the life story of two male twins born on a small farm in Wales, and of the life of the traditional community where they live from birth into old age and finally death. Chatwin was a great traveller who wrote books on many foreign cultures, and here he looks at life on a Welsh farm and in a small Welsh town as if it were an exotic setting – which in fact it is, for most of us.	cultures, family, England	
Chatwin, Bruce	The Songlines	non-fiction	1987	Chatwin was a great travel writer. In one of his last books, he describes his experience of the Australian Aborigines and the songlines, those mysterious and mythical tales written into the Australian landscape which, when re-told or followed by an Aborigine going 'walkabout', re-create the original culture and religion of this people.	cultures	
Chigozie Obioma	The Fishermen	novel	2016	The narrator is nine-year-old Benjamin, the youngest of four brothers who call themselves The Fishermen. This is the story of childhood in 1990s Nigeria. When their father has to travel to a distant city for work, the boys take advantage of his extended absence to skip school and go fishing. At the forbidden river they encounter a madman, who predicts that one of the brothers will kill another. What happens next is an almost mythic event whose impact - both tragic and redemptive - will transcend the lives of all the characters.	Childhood, family, parenting	400
Cleave, Chris	Little Bee	novel	2010	The novel chronicles the story of a sixteen-year old Nigerian girl, Little Bee, whose life is disrupted by the Nigerian oil wars. The narration flips back and forth between Little Bee and Sarah, a white magazine editor, who becomes an integral part of her life.	globalisation, asylum system, treatment of refugees	266
Coetzee, J.M.	Life & Times of Michael K.	novel	1983	Michael K, after losing his job as a gardener in Cape Town, decides to take his dying mother back to the farm of her childhood despite the civil war raging around them. His mother dies on the journey and he is thrown into prison but finally makes his way to the farm and back to Cape Town again, led first by his dreamlike instincts and later by a growing political consciousness.	blacks, South Africa, challenge	
Collins, Wilkie	The Moonstone	novel	1859	This is often called the first detective novel, because it is the first story in which a detective plays a central part. A famous diamond disappears under strange circumstances, exotic strangers appear ... Fascinating atmosphere and a lot of suspense, told by different narrators —> also an experiment with changing narrative perspectives.	classics, crime, supernatural	

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Conrad, Joseph	Heart of Darkness	novel	1902	Marlow, the narrator, travelling in dark Africa, hears of a charismatic, mysterious trader called Kurtz who rules over a tribe in the darkest Africa. On his journey there the atmosphere becomes more and more oppressive: Marlow finds that Kurtz rules by brutal power and cruelty. This short novel became the model for the famous Vietnam film Apocalypse Now.	humanity, good & evil, supernatural, Africa	
Crane, Stephen	The Red Badge of Courage	novel	1895	This short war novel recreates the feelings of an eighteen-year-old who becomes a soldier in the American Civil War. The author paints a picture of war through the youth's mind, his expectations of glory and adventure, his changing image of himself as a potential hero and an actual coward. In the end the young soldier does become a hero, but not in the way he imagined it.	war, America, choices, growing up	
Dahl, Roald	Kiss Kiss	short stories	1954	Roald Dahl is a master of cruel black humour - very funny, very British. Murder, betting, the exquisite cruelty of husbands and wives to each other, crazy inventions are only some of the subject matter out of which he creates horrible, surprising, cynical stories that comment on human nature as Dahl sees it - not a nice, but a very funny sight ...	humour	
Dear, Nick	Frankenstein	play	2011	Frankenstein is based on the romantic novel by Mary Shelley. It focuses on the philosophical and political aspects of the novel. De Lacey, a French philosopher of the Enlightenment, teaches the monster how to use language, and the monster tries to help wherever he can. But due to the fact that he is so ugly, nobody accepts him. In a way, the monster represents the dream of the 'new man' in a new society, the dream of the French revolution, which turns into a nightmare after the Vienna Congress (1815) Mary Shelley, a young, rebellious author, wrote her novel a few years after the Vienna Congress, a time in which all the ideals of progressive young people had come to an end. Dear's play also shows how modern Mary Shelley's Romantic characters still are.	Gothic novel, Romanticism, political issues	77

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Defoe, Daniel	Robinson Crusoe	novel	1720	Robinson Crusoe is shipwrecked on a remote island. He learns to survive, and finds a native, Friday, who becomes his servant.	adventure	
Dickens, Charles	A Christmas Carol	novel	1843	Dickens' famous Christmas story, in which the proverbial inhuman, greedy, stingy businessman Scrooge is visited by the ghost of his dead partner Marley, and then by Spirits of Christmas Past, Present and Future, and finally made to understand the terrible consequences for himself and others of his hardness and joylessness. Scrooge reforms just in time for Christmas and a typically sentimental Dickens happy end.	classics, England, social criticism	154
Dickens, Charles	Hard Times	novel	1854	One of Dickens' less famous and less popular (but shorter!) novels. Lacking the exuberant humour that is typical of many of his books, it concentrates on dark sarcasm in its sharp criticism of the 'system' by which the ruling classes of the time subjected the workers, their families and children to an oppressive regime of mind-numbing hard work and joyless lives in which hard facts were the only thing that was allowed to count (Utilitarianism). Dickens wouldn't be Dickens if he didn't include a (very) large dose of sentimentality and melodrama in his characterisation of the victims of this system; and a lot of savage bitterness in his condemnation of those responsible for it.	challenge, England, classics, social criticism	368
Dickens, Charles	Oliver Twist	novel	1839	Dickens is the most popular English author of the nineteenth century, and still very popular today. He mixes humour and grotesque characters with strong realism and social criticism. Oliver Twist tells the story of a boy without parents, his life in an orphanage, a workhouse, as the apprentice of thieves, until he is saved and finds his family again. Description of the underworld in London; critical of Dickens' society, dramatic and melodramatic story.	social criticism, classics, crime	
Dos Passos, John	Manhattan Transfer	novel	1925	One of the first and best attempts to find an adequate form of literature to describe the modern city with millions of inhabitants. In a montage technique, the lives and dreams of numerous people in New York of the nineteen-twenties are told in short flashes. Some of them succeed in realising their dreams, many more fail. The book gives a kaleidoscopic, colourful picture of the many sides of this great city; the reader is asked to do some detective work in putting the puzzle pieces together.	America, humanity, challenge	
Doyle, Roddy	Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha	novel	1993	The description of an ordinary childhood in the Republic of Ireland, told in the voice of a small boy. We read about typical boys' games (the Grand National involves jumping all the fences and hedges of the neighbours' gardens, trampling flower beds and avoiding angry owners), about the tricks they play, school life and the life of working class families in a small Irish town. A very authentic picture, often funny but also sad as the boy witnesses the breakup of his parents' marriage.	Ireland, Ireland, humour	
Doyle, Roddy	The Van	novel	1991	In this very funny but also touching book, we see how two middle-aged Irish working-class men who have been made unemployed build up a fish-and-chips and hamburger business in an old van – how they get successful and how success threatens to destroy their friendship.	friendship, Ireland, humour	
Elton, Ben	Popcorn	novel	1996	Very funny and very disturbing, shockingly violent at times - this is a satire on America today, the power of Hollywood and TV, the culture of violence, the madness of the legal system ... Bruce Delamitri gets a controversial Oscar for best film director for his movie 'Ordinary Americans', which shows a couple of mass murderers who kill without mercy or remorse, and makes them look attractive doing it ... Is his movie legitimate art, or an almost criminal incitement to violence? As this debate is going on on all the major TV stations, a couple of real mass murderers kill their way across America for a rendezvous with Bruce.	America, social criticism, good & evil, humour	
Emecheta, Buchi	Second-Class Citizen	novel	1974	Description of the struggles of a young Nigerian woman, Adah, who tries to emancipate herself from the traditions of her native culture. When Adah follows her lazy, unsympathetic husband Francis to London, the difficult living conditions and the threats and promises of an alien British environment bring the hidden tensions in their unhappy relationship to the surface and lead to Adah's eventual emancipation. Interesting as a social document, but irritating as a novel: characterisation, perspective, development of plot etc. are inconsistent and repeatedly faulty.	black voices, women, social criticism, empire, female, blacks	
Fitzgerald, F. Scott	The Great Gatsby	novel	1926	The great novel of the 'Golden Twenties' and one of the great love stories of the 20th century. What is behind the glittering façade of parties, yachts, seaside mansions and elegant wealthy people in a fashionable resort near New York? What is behind the man called Gatsby who spends a fortune to win the love of a woman? Did he really make his money in illegal ways – and will he be successful in his attempt to make Daisy Buchanan leave her husband for him?	America, love	

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Forster, E. M.	A Passage to India	novel	1924	This is India at the time of the British Rule. Dr Aziz, a young Indian doctor, seeks the friendship of the elderly Mrs Moore, whose young companion, Adela Quested, is interested in finding the real India. The clash between the different cultures and races leads to a scandal and proves to Aziz that an equal relationship between Indians and English, India and England, is not yet possible.	cultures, India, empire, friendship	
Forster, E.M.	A Room with a View	novel	1908	Set in Florence, Italy, and in rural England around 1900. Lucy Honeychurch, like many English middle class people of the time, travels in Italy to complete her education. When she meets the unconventional Mr Emerson and his son George, she starts getting aware of the tight corset of social conventions that rules her life and the lives of most people around her. Back in England, she gets engaged to Cyril Vane, who is just what everybody in her social circles think a young man and her fiancé should be. But then the Emersons move into a cottage in the same village, and Lucy is forced to confront new ideas and hidden feelings.	England, social criticism, love, individual	
Galgut, Damon	In a Strange Room	novel	2010	South African author Damon Galgut embarks on three journeys, to three different countries (Greece, East Africa, India). To those he meets on the way—including a handsome, enigmatic stranger, a group of careless backpackers and a woman on the verge of suicide—he is the Follower, the Lover and the Guardian. Each of these journeys has the potential to change his life. A beautiful evocation of one man's search for love and a place to call home, it is a novel full of longing, desire, rage and compassion.	travel, relationships, love, desire, friendship	180
Gay, John	The Beggar's Opera	play	1728	A parody on the (then in England very popular) Italian opera; banned from the stage but an immediate success in printed form. The choice of small criminals and whores as the heroes of an opera was provocative and revolutionary at the time. Strongly critical of English high society and the accepted morals of these circles, which are in no way better than those of the beggars that are hanged for their crimes.	social criticism, classics, crime	
Gee, Maggie	The Ice People	novel	1998	An old man, Saul, writes down the story of his life and at the same time the story of the breakdown of civilisation as a new Ice Age gradually makes large parts of the Earth uninhabitable. In the first part of the book he tells about his difficult relationship to Sarah, their attempt to be a family in a society where women and men do no longer live together, but form two increasingly hostile camps. The second part describes the kidnapping of his son, Luke, and their escape from England and the advancing ice towards Africa, where Saul hopes to find shelter for his son. On their journey through Europe they have to survive in the growing anarchy and violence of a destroyed civilisation...	family, women, future, humanity	
Golding, William	Lord of the Flies	novel	1954	During a war in Europe, an airplane full of English schoolboys who were evacuated from England crashes on a desert island in the South Seas. The boys begin to organise themselves and build up a new civilised society. Soon there are tensions between different leaders and different priorities: building huts and signal fires to get rescued, or having fun and adventure in pig hunting. The book asks the question whether it will be possible for the boys to create a better society than the one they have left, or whether they will fall back into a state of savagery.	good & evil, humanity	
Gordimer, Nadine	July's People	novel	1982	The novel is set during a fictional civil war in which black South Africans have violently overturned the system of apartheid. The story follows the Smales, a liberal White South African family with three children who were forced to flee Johannesburg to the native village of their black servant, July.	apartheid, man and woman, culture shock	142
Greene, Graham	The Tenth Man	novel	1944	France during and after the Second World War: The Germans have occupied France, but the Résistance is still active. After Germans are killed in a town, the Germans take French citizens hostage and draw lots to execute ten of them. Among them is a wealthy lawyer who convinces a poor man to take his place: he agrees to let himself be shot instead of the lawyer, if his family get all the lawyer's money and possession. When the war is over, the lawyer goes back to the house that used to be his. The family of the dead man now live in it. How will the lawyer be able to live on with his guilt?	war, choices	
Greene, Graham	Dr Fischer of Geneva or The Bomb Party	novel	1980	Dr Fischer is a very rich but lonely man whose wife committed suicide because of him. He organises famous parties for a group of rich 'friends', who must do everything Fischer tells them to do in order to get a valuable present at the end. Jones, a middle-aged man, falls in love with and marries Fischer's daughter who hates her father. He becomes a guest at the parties and Fischer's opponent. Fundamental questions of moral and belief are hidden behind a story of tragic relationships and coal-black humour.	love, good & evil, God	

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Greene, Graham	Our Man in Havana	novel	1948	Wormold is an English vacuum cleaner salesman in Cuba before the time of Castro. He is a single parent with a daughter with expensive tastes whom he loves very much. To earn money he accepts a job as secret agent for the British in Cuba. He builds up a totally invented net of informers and sub-agents. Gradually, what he has invented becomes true, because the other secret services believe him. This novel contains many comic scenes, but behind the farce there are questions of moral and guilt.	power, family, choices	
Greene, Graham	The Comedians	novel	1965	Set in Haiti 1957, after the beginning of the Duvalier ('Papa Doc') dictatorship. The English narrator, Brown, owns a hotel in Port au Prince. He tries not to get involved in the political struggle, although he sympathises with the victims of state torture. He feels superior to Jones, a shady character who pretends to have been a major in the Army and an expert in guerilla warfare. Jones tries to cheat the Haitian government in a business deal. But when Jones seems to win the love of Brown's mistress, Brown tricks him into offering to lead the rebels against the Duvalier government.	choices, power, cultures	
Grisham, John	A Time to Kill	novel	1989	Grisham's first novel, about self-justice, racism and the fascinating, sometimes crazy-seeming machinery of the American legal system. Two white men rape and almost kill the daughter of a poor black man. When they appear in court, her father shoots them both dead and is accused of their murder. An ambitious young lawyer takes over his defence and finds himself in an epic fight against the state prosecutor, the media and the Ku Klux Klan. Full of suspense and action as well precise detail about the mechanism of 'justice' in today's USA.	crime, America, social criticism	
Hardy, Thomas	Tess of the d'Urbervilles	novel	1891	The setting is rural England in the second half of the nineteenth century. Tess is the daughter of poor family, beautiful, with a strong personality. She is seduced by the rich Alec d'Urberville, and when she gets pregnant she becomes an outcast of society. Her second marriage with a religious man fails when she tells him of her tragic past. Out of desperation she becomes Alec's mistress again, but kills him eventually and is hanged. The tragedy of an innocent girl destroyed by the forces and representatives of 'high' society.	classics, love, social criticism, women	
Hatch, Ben	The Lawnmower Celebrity	novel	2000	Jay Golden is eighteen, has left school and is trying to find his place in life, taking on numerous jobs and getting sacked from them all because he just can't take them seriously. At home he is fighting a continuous battle with his father, who threatens to throw him out of the house almost daily and wants to send Jay's little brother Charlie away to a boarding school. The background to the family's problems is the painful and slow death of Jay's mother from cancer. With its mixture of very sad and very funny scenes, this novel is a sort of English remake of Catcher in the Rye combined with The Diary of Adrian Mole.	England, growing up, family, teenage, humour, individual	
Heller, Joseph	Catch-22	novel	1955	One of the greatest anti-war novels, which shows the absurdity and craziness of war via its style, its characters and its surreal episodes. The crew members of American bombers in the Italy of the Second World War try to come to terms with the constant danger to their lives, and trying to get moved away from the front; but the logic of war and of the military, symbolised by Catch-22, a rule which always lets the authorities win against the individuals, prevents it. Very funny and tragic at the same time.	war, humanity, humour, madness, challenge	
Hemingway, Ernest	A Farewell to Arms	novel	1929	A war novel set in Italy during the First World War. A young American volunteer fights as an ambulance driver with the Italians against the Germans and Austrians. He has a love affair with an English nurse, which shows the conflicts of war and love and the difficulty of personal relationships under such circumstances. Finally the couple try to flee from war into Switzerland, to find peace and happiness there.	war, love	
Hemingway, Ernest	For Whom the Bell Tolls	novel	1940	A war novel set in Spain during the Civil War, 1936. A young American volunteer fights for the coalition of Republicans (Anarchists, Communists and Socialists) against the fascists of Franco. He has the job to meet partisans behind the enemy lines and to blow up a bridge at the start of a big offensive. When he falls in love with a Spanish girl, he faces a dilemma: he must put the people he has learnt to love at risk in order to fulfil his mission.	war, love, friendship	
Hemingway, Ernest	Short Stories	short stories	-1927	Hemingway is a master of the short story, because he writes on the iceberg principle: seven eighths are below the surface, every word is important and carefully chosen to reveal things behind, beyond. His themes are hunting, fishing, war, the outdoors life, difficult relationships between men and women; in general, human behaviour in extreme and often tragic situations.	humanity, choices, adventure	

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Hemingway, Ernest	The Old Man and the Sea	novel	1952	A famous, very simple story on the surface: An old fisherman is losing his lucky touch; he finds it more and more difficult to make his life fishing. On a last trip he catches the biggest fish he has ever caught, but on the way back to shore begins his fight to defend his catch against the elements and the sharks. Mostly in the form of an interior monologue; a psychological study of the struggle and the harmony of man and nature.	friendship	
Hillerman, Tony	Skinwalkers	novel	1986	The setting of Hillerman's crime stories is the desert country of the Navajo reservations, and his detectives Jim Chee and Joe Leaphorn are Navajos. His stories combine detective fiction with the ethnic background of Navajo culture, religion and thinking. In Skinwalkers, both men have to come to terms with personal tragedies while trying to solve three mysterious killings that seem to have a connection to Navajo witchcraft: somebody kills people he suspects of being witches who want to harm their families or themselves ...	crime, cultures, God	
Hines, Barry	Kes (A Kestrel for a Knave)	novel	1968	The story of a young teenage boy growing up in a broken working class family in the north of England. Billy is an unloved, lonely outsider, he has problems at school and with the law. When he finds a young kestrel hawk and learns how to train it, he finds a sense in his life. The question is whether he has a chance to become stronger than the destructive environment in which he lives.	social criticism, family, England	
Hoban, Russell	Kleinzeit	novel	1974	This book creates a different world out of the one we know, because in it objects can talk just as well as human beings. For example, the mirror into which Kleinzeit looks says "I exist" but doesn't tell Kleinzeit what he wants to know about himself; or the hospital bed at the other end of the town lets him know that it is ready for him - and actually Kleinzeit will end up in this bed before long. Imaginative, funny.		
Hoban, Russell	Riddley Walker	novel	1980	An incredibly rich, fascinating but also demanding book. Written in a version of English as spoken in a far future, it describes a Mad-Max-like world fallen back into a new Iron Age where the memories of our atomic age have only survived as the religious myth of Eusa. Wild packs of dogs threaten the farmers; a rudimentary state tries to rediscover the secrets of technology and atomic power; travelling puppet-players act as the state's ideologists. Riddley Walker, the narrator, becomes a man at the beginning of this story and goes on journey full of dangers and hopes towards the source of the myth of Eusa and towards knowledge of what it is to be a Man.	humanity, future, growing up, challenge, adventure	
Hoban, Russell	Turtle Diary	novel	1975	Neaera is a middle-aged woman with a small aquarium – in it, she invests all the love that is otherwise missing in her life. William is a middle-aged man who visits the Zoo regularly to forget the emptiness in his life, and is fascinated by the large aquarium there. These two lonely people meet and decide to steal the giant turtles and take them to the sea, to set them free again. In the process of planning and on the journey to the sea, they discover their own lives anew.	friendship, choices	
Hosseini, Khaled	A Thousand Splendid Suns	novel	2007	Mariam is only fifteen when she is sent to Kabul in Afghanistan to marry Rasheed against her will. Nearly tow decades later a friendship grows between Mariam and a local teenager, Laila. When the Taliban take over power, life becomes a desperate struggle against starvation, brutality and fear.	women's lives, forced marriage, friendship, Afghanistan, Taliban	412
Hornby, Nick	About a Boy	novel	1998	Will is thirty-six, single and wealthy enough (though from an embarrassing source) not to have to work. His life is comfortable, carefree and pretty pointless. As a way to meet beautiful young mothers to have some fun and sex with, he invents a two-year-old son and joins a Single Parents group - which proves disastrous because he meets Marcus, a freakish 12-year-old without any friends, victimised at school and with a mother who tries to kill herself. Despite his efforts not to care, Will somehow gets involved, and at the end of a sometimes sad but often very funny series of events his and Marcus' lives change radically.	England, family, growing up	
Hornby, Nick	A Long Way Down	novel	2005	Alternately told from the different perspectives of four people who happen to meet while attempting to commit suicide, this story unfolds in a nevertheless humorous way and opens up new perspectives on life and reasons to live.	suicide, relationship, hope	256
Hornby, Nick	Slam	novel	2007	Sam, a 15-years old skater, bright and cool, often talks to a poster of his skating idol. His world gets turned upside down, when his gorgeous girlfriend becomes pregnant. Torn between attempts to escape reality, different family values, school, visions of the future and crumbling love he finds his way.	teenage pregnancy, adolescence, family, responsibility	293
Huxley, Aldous	Brave New World	novel	1932	We are in the seventh century after Ford. The world is totally controlled by an elite; a rigid class system exists, people are artificially produced and programmed to be perfect elements of a specific class. To keep them happy there is a big leisure industry, free sex, etc. There are no illnesses, no suffering. Only some outsiders question the perfection of this world.	future, totalitarianism, scifi	237

AUTHOR	TITLE	GENRE	YEAR	SHORT DESCRIPTION	KEYWORDS	PAGES
Ishiguro, Kazuo	A Pale View of Hills	novel	1982	Etsuko, a Japanese woman now living alone in England and trying to cope with the recent suicide of her daughter Keiko, remembers one summer in Nagasaki after the end of the Second World War, when people were trying to rebuild their lives after the dropping of the atom bomb. She remembers her tentative friendship with Sachiko and her small daughter Mariko, who have both been deeply affected by the destruction of the war; her quietly unhappy marriage to Jiro, the relationship to Jiro's father Ogata, the gradual decay of traditional Japanese society under the influence of the defeat and Western influence. Atmospheric, impressive, with an intriguing riddle at the end...	cultures, women, female	
Ishiguro, Kazuo	Never Let Me Go	novel	2005	Kathy tells the story of how she grew up in the boarding school at Hailsham, and of her life after that. It is also the story of her two friends' Ruth and Tommy, and of the love triangle that develops between them. However, always lurking in the background there is a secret about their future that they will inevitably be confronted with.	love, growing up, hope, friendship, truth, cloning	
Ishiguro, Kazuo	The Remains of the Day	novel	1989	Stevens is one of the last great butlers. He spent his career - his life - in the mansion of a Lord and now looks back over his life as a perfect servant. On a car journey in the Rolls Royce of his new employer, an American businessman, he has to come to the decision whether he will finally break out of, or on the contrary definitively accept, a lifetime of self-denial. A magnificent re-creation of the grandeur of England at the height of its power and class consciousness - was it all worth it?	England, love	
Jhabvala, R. Praver	Heat and Dust	novel	1975	East meets West: two English women, in two different generations, go to India and both fall in love with Indian men. The protagonist of this book follows in the footsteps of another woman earlier in the century, at the time of the British rule over India, to find out more about her. The attraction and the destructive power of India for Western people, the role of women in a traditional and a more emancipated society are the central topics.	India, women, love, cultures, empire, female	181
Adam Johnson	The Orphan Master's Son		2012	Pak Jun Do grows up in a work camp for orphans, where he comes to the attention of his superiors and becomes a professional kidnapper who must navigate the shifting rules, arbitrary violence, and baffling demands of his Korean overlords in order to stay alive. Driven to the absolute limit of endurance, he attempts to save the woman he loves, the legendary actress Sun Moon. A thrilling, remarkable novel, a novel that not only opens a frightening window on the mysterious kingdom of North Korea, but one that also excavates the meaning of love and sacrifice.	North Korea, totalitarianism, love, adventure,	443

AUTHOR	TITLE	GENRE	YEAR	SHORT DESCRIPTION	KEYWORDS	PAGES
Joyce, James	Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man	novel	1916	James Joyce is one of the big names in 20th century literature. In this early novel he describes a (his) childhood and adolescence in Catholic Ireland: the way Stephen Daedalus is persecuted at school, his crisis of faith, the dilemma of awakening sexuality and the Catholic teachings of sin, and his fight to choose his own way and become an artist	growing up, social criticism, Ireland	
Kesey, Ken	One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest	novel	1962	A masterpiece of the so-called beat generation. Murphy is a man who refuses to conform to the standards of modern America with its obsession with money, business, efficiency, norms and normality. He becomes a criminal, and to avoid prison he agrees to go to a lunatic asylum where he carries on his fight against authority, in the symbolic figure of Big Nurse. He organises the (crazy?) inmates and tries to give them new values like individuality, freedom, laughter — in short, a new life.	madness, social criticism, friendship, America	
Koestler, Arthur	Darkness at Noon	novel	1940	This is the famous psychological study of an arrest, imprisonment, torture, trial, and finally execution in an unnamed dictatorship under 'No 1'. It is about totalitarian power (Stalin's Russia) and what happens to individual, idealistic people who support the ideas behind the power system, but who get caught in its contradictory reality and have to choose between ideal and reality, personal morality or the 'greater good', and eventually life or death.	power, totalitarianism	
Kozinsky, Jerzy	Being There	novel	1970	Chance is a gardener for a rich old man. He is very simple-minded and not able to live on his own, he has been taken care of the old man all his life. Then his employer dies and Chance has to go out into the big world which he only knows from the TV. Surprisingly, he is a big success out there, because the people he meets are only too willing to read great wisdom into the naive comments he makes about everything he meets. At the end of the book, there is a real chance that Chance might be the next president of the United States...	power, America, social criticism, humour	
Kwei Armah, Ayi	The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born	novel	1968	Corruption and decay rules the modern Nigeria which Ayi Kwei Armah describes. The colonial rulers have gone, but the black government and bureaucracy continue the mindless and callous exploitation of the country and its people. At the centre of this novel is a common family man who refuses to join in the corruption, yet has to see how this moral attitude threatens to destroy his family and ensures their continuing hopelessness and poverty. A fine but depressing picture of a rotten society.	Africa, choices, social criticism, black voices	
John Lanchester	Capital	novel	2012	A social novel set in London during the 2008 financial crash. The residents of Pepys Road, London—a banker and his shopaholic wife, an old woman dying of a brain tumor and her graffiti-artist grandson, Pakistani shop owners and a shadowy refugee who works as the meter maid, the young soccer star from Senegal and his minder—are receiving anonymous postcards reading “We Want What You Have.” As the mystery of the postcards deepens, the world around Pepys Road is turned upside down by the financial crash and all of its residents' lives change greatly over the course of the next year.	London, globalisation, metropolitan lifestyles, love, modern art, terrorism, immigrants, suspense	577
Lawrence, Jerome & Lee, Robert E.	Inherit the Wind	play	1955	Based on a famous court case in Dayton, Tennessee, where in 1925 a schoolteacher committed the crime of teaching his pupils about evolution, and was arrested for his sin. The book shows the clash of the two most famous lawyers of that time over the fundamental question whether the sanctity of faith or that of free thought should be the guiding principles of America in the twentieth century.	America, social criticism, God, choices	
Lee, Harper	To Kill A Mockingbird	novel	1960	Set in a small town in Alabama where blacks are still second class people. A black worker is accused of raping a white girl. A prominent white lawyer defends him, which gets him and his son and daughter in trouble with the white population. Told through the voice of the small daughter, who learns a lot about life, about right and wrong, about her father and her home town, this book evokes the atmosphere and of life in the American South about 60 years ago.	America, growing up, children	
Lessing, Doris	The Fifth Child	novel	1988	Harriet and David have all they wanted: they are the perfect family, four children in a big old house, great family parties at Christmas and Easter where they make everyone happy – until their fifth child is born. Even during her pregnancy Harriet feels that this one is different, and when he is born he turns out to be hardly human: full of aggression, demanding Harriet's total attention, and destroying everything that David and she had built up.	family, humanity, supernatural	
Lessing, Doris	The Grass is Singing	novel	1950	The wife of a poor white farmer in South Africa or South Rhodesia is murdered by her black servant. How did this happen, and how can the strange reactions of the murderer, of her husband, of their neighbour be explained? The book explores the history and characters of Dick and Mary Turner and their complex and warped relationship before the background of British colonial rule in Southern Africa around the middle of the twentieth century.	crime, South Africa, empire	

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Letts, Tracy	August: Osage County	play	2008	When the large Weston family reunite in Oklahoma after their father disappears, old family tensions resurface and repressed truths and unsettling secrets are revealed. This Pulitzer Prize winning play stands in the tradition of Tennessee Williams and Arthur Miller, inexorably laying bare the dark side of American family life. Despite the sombre and tragic undercurrent there is an element of dark comedy but also glimpses of moving tenderness.	(American) family, appearances, prejudice, drugs	138
Levy, Andrea	Never Far From Nowhere	novel	1996	Olive and Vivien are the daughters of a Jamaican couple in London. The daughters grow up in the England of the nineteen eighties - Vivien, the younger, has fair skin and integrates easily into school life, her circle of white friends etc, while Olive is dark-skinned and meets with open or hidden racism everywhere. The book, told through the voices of the two girls, follows their different roads through youth and early adulthood and describes Olive's struggle to find her identity – will it be as a black woman and outsider in London, or will she accept herself, and be accepted by the others, as being part of this English society?	England, family, social criticism, black voices, women, female, blacks	
Levy, Deborah	Swimming Home	novel	2011	Two English couples with a teenage daughter are spending the summer in the South of France when Kitty Finch, a beautiful young woman, turns up swimming naked through their swimming pool. From this moment on nothing is what it was before and the safety and sanity of family lives is threatened. A disturbing, exciting and thrilling novel about hidden secrets and secret desires.	Family life, safety, danger, madness, death, relations.	160
Malouf, David	The Conversations at Curlow Creek	novel	1996	It is 1827. In the Australian outback, two strangers spend the night in talk. One, an illiterate Irishman, and ex-convict and bushranger, is to be hanged at dawn. The other is the police officer who has been sent to supervise the hanging. As the night wears on, the two men share memories and uncover unlikely connections between their lives.	Australia, Ireland, moral order, justice, friendship	240
McCarthy, Cormac	No Country for Old Men		2005	Llewelyn Moss, hunting antelope near the Rio Grande, stumbles upon a transaction gone horribly wrong. Finding bullet-ridden bodies, several kilos of heroin, and a caseload of cash, he faces a choice—leave the scene as he found it, or take the money and run. Choosing the latter, he knows, will change everything. And so begins a terrifying chain of events, in which each participant seems determined to answer the question that one asks another: how does a man decide in what order to abandon his life? Featuring Anton Chigurh, one of the most chilling villains in all of literature.	crime, good and evil, survival, greed	320
McCarthy, Cormac	The Road	novel	2006	The Road is the profoundly moving story of a journey. It boldly imagines a future in which no hope remains, but in which the father and his son, “each the other’s world entire,” are sustained by love. Awesome in the totality of its vision, it is an unflinching meditation on the worst and the best that we are capable of: ultimate destructiveness, desperate tenacity, and the tenderness that keeps two people alive in the face of total devastation. Told with the poetic intensity of McCarthy's language, it is a story that will not leave you cold.	survival, hope, family, love, human nature,	287
McCormick, Patricia	Cut	novel	2000	15-year-old Callie torments herself feeling responsible for her brother's illness. At a residential treatment facility, she gets acquainted with other young people struggling with and for life. First very closed, she slowly opens up An unusual response to adolescent trouble.	addiction, psychiatry, adolescence	151
McDonell, Nick	Twelve	novel	2002	This novel was written by McDonell when he was 17. It describes the empty lives of rich, neglected kids in New York who have nothing to lose and try to make their lives interesting with drugs (Twelve is the name of a fictional new designer drug), parties and arms, leading up to catastrophe.	New York, loneliness, youth culture, drugs, arms	220
MacLaverty, Bernard	Cal	novel	1983	Set in Northern Ireland; a novel about the conflict, about love, about growing up. Cal is a Catholic teenager living in a Protestant neighbourhood; through a friend from school he got involved with the IRA and took part (though only as a driver) in the killing of a Protestant policeman. Against his will and better judgment, he falls in love with the victim's young wife and tries to leave the IRA. Can their love succeed on such a background, and will Cal succeed in leaving the past behind?	Ireland, love, growing up, choices	

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MacLavery, Bernard	Lamb	novel	1980	In a Home for delinquent children managed by a Catholic religious Brotherhood, Brother Sebastian (Michael Lamb), one of the Brothers and teachers, realises that their methods do not help the children, but destroy them. At the same time he goes through a private and religious crisis and decides to take one of the boys, Owen, away from the Home and try to be a father to him. They run away to London and slowly learn to trust each other; but money runs out and the police catch up with them, so Michael has to find a drastic solution to an unsolvable problem.	friendship, Ireland, choices	
MacLeod, Alistair	No Great Mischief	novel	1999	Many members of the clan MacDonald, who played a crucial part in some of the most cruel and defining events in Scottish history, emigrated to Nova Scotia in Canada in the 19th century. The narrator of this novel looks back over his life and that of his family and his clan on Cape Breton – the loss of his parents and brother on the ice between the mainland and the lighthouse which his kept; growing up close to nature and to the many members of the clan all over North America; the work in the mines with his older brothers, the rivalry with equally close-knit groups of French Canadians; and now his visits to his oldest brother who has become an alcoholic and lives the life of a tramp after a long time in prison. Family life and historical events become united in this marvellously written, beautiful book.	family, culture, friendship	
Malamud, Bernard	God's Grace	novel	1982	Malamud writes in the long tradition of Jewish-American writers. After the nuclear holocaust and a second Great Flood, Calvin Cohn, son of a rabbi and natural scientist, survives because God made a mistake. So he gets a second chance. He becomes the 'father' of a group of apes whom he tries to educate into a kind of new human race. Funny and sad at the same time. The theme of the innate goodness or badness of man in yet another version.	Good & evil, future, God, humanity	
Mansfield, Katherine	The Garden Party	short stories	1920 -	Mansfield writes 'quiet', very English short stories, unspectacular but minutely observed studies of people and social situations. Psychological portraits that reveal hidden depths below innocent surfaces.	England, family	
Martel, Yann	The Life of Pi	novel	2002	Yann Martel's imaginative and unforgettable Life of Pi is a magical reading experience. The precocious son of a zookeeper, 16-year-old Pi Patel is raised in Pondicherry, India, where he tries on various faiths, attracting "religions the way a dog attracts fleas." Planning a move to Canada, his father packs up the family and their menagerie and they hitch a ride on an enormous freighter. After a harrowing shipwreck, Pi finds himself adrift in the Pacific Ocean, trapped on a 26-foot lifeboat with a wounded zebra, a spotted hyena, a seasick orangutan, and a 450-pound Bengal tiger named Richard Parker. After much gore and infighting, Pi and Richard Parker remain the boat's sole passengers, drifting for 227 days through shark-infested waters while fighting hunger, the elements, and an overactive imagination. In rich, hallucinatory passages, Pi recounts the harrowing journey as the days blur together, elegantly cataloging the endless passage of time and his struggles to survive. The ending, surprising, opens up new perspectives on the story.	adventure, nature, survival, human nature, faith	
McCabe, Patrick	The Butcher Boy	novel	1992	Francie is a teenager. He lives in a small Irish town, his father is a drinker, and his mother overworked and on the verge of a mental breakdown. Francie's friendship to Joe, his parents' stories of the days when they met and fell in love, and the annual visits from Uncle Alo who made it big in London are the only sources of joy and comfort in his world. Then the Nugents arrive in town with their son Philip and, as Francie sees it, through their influence his world begins to fall apart ... A very black book (though at times blackly funny, too), told in Francie's authentic voice and style, which tries to give an inside view of one of those people we sometimes read about in the papers: teenage delinquents who threaten, vandalize, steal and finally kill. Quite a challenge in style and content!	Challenge, Ireland, growing up, good & evil, social criticism, friendship, madness, teenage, family, individual	
McCann, Colum	This Side of Brightness	novel	1998	In 1916 Walker is one of the working class heroes digging the subway line under the Hudson River, so contributing to the creation of modern New York. The novel traces Walker's life as a black man married to a white woman in Harlem through three generations, down to his grandson Clarence Nathan, who contributes his share to New York's greatness as a builder of skyscrapers. Alternating with this family and social history, the book describes the life of Treefrog, a half-crazy down-and-out who lives in a subway tunnel alongside some other of the people who were destroyed by the harshness and cruelty which is the downside of New York. Slowly but surely the two strands of the narrative grow together to produce an impressive and moving picture of modern life in the city.	Challenge, America, Blacks	

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McCourt, Frank	Angela's Ashes	novel	1996	A great novel about a shocking and moving Irish childhood (based on the author's own life). Frank is born in 1930 to Irish emigrants in New York. As they cannot find work they have to return to Ireland. At the mercy of relatives who aren't overjoyed to see them back and do not have money for them either, they move from bad to worse, ending up in Limerick. When the father can get work for a few days, he gets drunk on the money; several of the children die from poverty-related illnesses; the teachers and the priests are powerful and merciless tyrants ... you won't believe this happened only 60 years ago! Despite the sadness and desperation the novel is very funny in many places.	Social criticism, Ireland, children, growing up, challenge	
McCullers, Carson	The Ballad of the Sad Café	novel	1953	Small town America: a strange love develops between a woman: the resolute, mannish owner of a drugstore, and her crippled cousin. A poetic and grotesque love story which ends tragically when the drugstore owner's ex-husband comes back from prison and revenges himself on his former wife. What is love, how does it develop, how does it change people, what makes people 'tick' – these are some of the basic questions asked by McCullers in this short novel.	Love, America	
McCullers, Carson	The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter	novel	1943	The central person is a deaf mute man in a small town. Around him there are a number of other people, each one with his or her special problem (a teenage girl seeking the meaning of her life; a black doctor trying to educate his fellow blacks; a Communist worker who suffers under the exploitative society he lives in; a bar owner whose marriage has gone wrong). They all seek understanding from Singer, the deaf mute, who has the gift of listening and seems to understand them all, but isn't understood by those around him.	Humanity, friendship, America, growing up, black voices	
McEwan, Ian	Atonement	novel	2001	This haunting novel in effect two, or even three, books in one, all masterfully crafted. The first part ushers us into a domestic crisis that becomes a crime story centered around an event that changes the lives of half a dozen people in an upper-middle-class country home on a hot English summer's day in 1935. Young Briony Tallis, a hyperimaginative 13-year-old who sees her older sister, Cecilia, mysteriously involved with their neighbor Robbie Turner, a fellow Cambridge student subsidized by the Tallis family, points a finger at Robbie when her young cousin is assaulted in the grounds that night; on her testimony alone, Robbie is jailed. The second part of the book moves forward five years to focus on Robbie, now freed and part of the British Army that was cornered and eventually evacuated by a fleet of small boats at Dunkirk during the early days of WWII. In the third part, Briony becomes a nurse as the nation mobilizes. She begins to come to terms with what she has done and offers to make amends to him and Cecilia, now together as lovers. It is all rounded off with a very ironic and at the same time very moving epilogue.	LOVE, fate, writing, truth and imagination	351
McEwan, Ian	Black Dogs	novel	1992	Having lost his parents in an auto accident when he was eight years old, the narrator is fascinated with other people's parents—particularly his remarkable in-laws, indissolubly linked yet estranged and combative almost since their wedding. A man of reason who was once a Communist, Bernard Tremain cannot understand why his wife, June, rejected political activism for spiritual quest after "an encounter with evil" in the form of two fierce black dogs. McEwan does not so much tell their story as the story of the son-in-law's efforts to understand them better by writing about them. As the narrator returns to the French countryside where June fatefully encountered the dogs, the deceptively simple buildup makes her brush with violence all the more shocking. A novel of ideas with the hard edge of a thriller.	history, family, love, relationship, ideology	176
McEwan, Ian	The Cement Garden	novel	1978	There are dark, disturbing books, and then there are <i>very</i> dark and <i>very</i> disturbing books. The Cement Garden is definitely one of the latter. Set in the concrete soul-less urban desert of 1970s England, the book starts with the words " <i>I did not kill my father, but I sometimes felt I had helped him on his way.</i> "—and from there on it gets more twisted, but never unbelievable (and that's probably what makes it so disturbing). Set in the increasingly claustrophobic family house the presence of the decaying body increasingly dominates the premature attempts at adulthood by the three young characters.	childhood, love, growing up, family, friendship	144
McEwan, Ian	Solar	novel	2010	Solar is the story of Nobel Prize-winning physicist Professor Michael Beard, whose best work is long behind him and whose personal life is chaotic. Then a freak accident becomes a catalyst for change, providing Beard with an opportunity to revive his fading reputation and save the planet through an innovative scheme to exploit solar energy. Can a man who has made a mess of his life clean up the messes of humanity?	science, climate change, relationships, love, aging process	384
Miller, Arthur	Death of a Salesman	play	1949	Willy Loman believes in the American Dream. As a travelling salesman, he believes in being successful and being popular; he has brought his sons up to think they are something special. As he gets older, his dream collapses around him; he and his sons and wife are forced to realise that perhaps it was never true. Still the most produced play in the theatre today, about the dangers of living an illusion and not facing reality.	social criticism, family, America	

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Miller, Arthur	The Crucible	play	1953	Miller's play about the famous witch hunts in Salem, Massachusetts, in the eighteenth century. How is it possible that an entire community lets itself be drawn into a state where they are ready to believe that their neighbours or their own wives and daughters are possessed by the devil? What role do religion, personal interest, jealousy, pride and revenge play, and what motivates the teenagers who start the accusations?	social criticism, humanity, good & evil	
Mitchell, David	Black Swan Green	Novel	2006	Set in the 1980s, this coming-of-age novel describes the difficult life of 13-year-old Jason, who has to come to grips with parents on the brink of divorce, bullies at school, an older sister who is always lying to her parents and his own discovery of the other sex. Moving and funny and full of insights, this is a thrilling and thought-provoking read. The title is the name of the village he lives in.	Growing-up, family, school, bullies, love	370
Mo, Timothy	Sour Sweet	novel	1980	An average Chinese family who runs a takeaway in London; the Chinese Triads (criminal organisations) in London... These two aspects of Chinese culture in an alien environment are described by Mo; two value systems which we in the West can hardly understand, are shown in such precise detail that a new world is opened.	cultures, England, family	
Mo, Timothy	The Monkey King	novel	1978	The Chinese quarters of Hongkong are a closed world to the outsider - a totally different culture, with strange customs and rules. This book may make you feel that you have lived there. It recreates an exotic and perhaps finally incomprehensible culture in a lot of funny detail, through the story of Wallace Nolasco who marries into a Chinese businessman's family and has to learn the rules himself – and finds it very difficult to do so!	ecultures, family, humour	
Moore, Brian	Lies of Silence	novel	1990	A thriller, love story and political novel about Northern Ireland. Michael Dillon, manager of a hotel in Belfast, decides to leave his wife Moira and Northern Ireland and to go to England with his lover, Andrea, to start a new life. But in the night after his decision IRA men take him and his wife hostage and order him to drive to the hotel with a bomb in his car. If he warns the police, they will kill his wife. A book about missed chances, moral decisions and the lives of ordinary people in a Belfast ruled by sectarian violence.	Ireland, love, choices	
Moore, Brian	The Magician's Wife	novel	1997	In 1856, Henri Lambert is Europe's most famous magician – his tricks are simply the best. At this time the French have started to colonialise Algeria under Napoleon III, but there is a strong danger of an Arab uprising against them. Lambert is asked to go to Africa and prove by his 'magic' that the God of the French is more powerful than Allah, so that the Arabs won't dare to fight against them. Accompanying Lambert is his wife Emmeline, whose views of herself, her marriage, the French and the mysterious Arab culture are radically changed by these experiences.	Africa, power, choice, women	
More, Thomas	Utopia	novel	1516	Originally written in Latin, this is the foundation of many Utopian and anti-Utopian novels in English literature. Thomas More was a Member of Parliament when he wrote this vision of a perfect society with its hidden criticism of the England of his time. Later he became Henry VIII's Lord Chancellor, and was eventually executed for refusing to publicly support Henry's anti-Catholic politics. The book is intriguing because people still disagree whether the Utopian society is an ideal or a tyrannical state, whether More himself believed in its perfection or was being ironical, etc.	future, social criticism, classics	
Morrison, Toni	Jazz	novel	1992	Told from different perspectives in a sort of puzzle structure, this book by the Nobel Prize winner Toni Morrison tries to explain a crime of passion in black Harlem in the 1920s. Joe, a man in his fifties, married to Violet, kills his young mistress, Dorcas; and Violet appears at her funeral to slash the dead girl's face with a knife. Through memories and flashbacks we get to know the feelings of the people involved, their life stories, how they try to live on after the tragedy ... and at the same time the world of Harlem, its inhabitants, its passions, frustrations and the significance of its music to express Harlem's spirit.	black voices, social criticism, America, love, women, female, blacks	
Morrison, Toni	Sula	novel	1973	This is a powerful novel about the lives of black women in the U.S.A. during the first half of the 20th century. In her rather short but very dense book, Morrison explores the complex family and neighbour relationships in a small black community – love and hate, friendship, sexual relationships, roles of men and women, celebration of everyday life and the continuous presence of death and violence.	America, black voices, friendship, women, growing up, female, blacks	
Morrison, Toni	The Bluest Eye	novel	1970	The first novel by the Nobel Prize winner Toni Morrison. Pecola Breedlove, 12, is a black girl who wishes nothing more than to be different – to have blue eyes. From various viewpoints Morrison tries to analyse the reasons for this self-destructive desire and paints a picture of family relationships, the creation of false values, the destruction of dreams and the acceptance of unacceptable realities among African Americans in the first half of the 20th century. Impressive, at times shocking, sad and poetic.	growing up, black voices, women, social criticism, family, teenage, blacks	

AUTHOR	TITLE	GENRE	YEAR	SHORT DESCRIPTION	KEYWORDS	PAGES
Mosley, Walter	Always outnumbered, always outgunned	novel/short stories	1998	Socrates Fortlow spent 27 years in jail after murdering a man and a woman. Now he is 58, eight years out of jail and living in the inner city slum of Watts, LA. This episodic novel (or connected series of short stories) shows his life and reveals how he becomes able to accept his past and gain the sort of wisdom that comes from deep and terrible experience of humanity. Strong, direct, exciting gripping and touching.	blacks, social criticism, America, humanity, crime	
Naipaul, V.S.	A Bend in the River	novel	1979	Life and times of a shopkeeper in a rural outpost in tumultuous post-colonial central Africa. The spot at 'the bend in the river', is a microcosm of post-colonial Africa at the time of Independence: Naipaul provides insights and wisdom about the complexity of race, ethnicity and nationality in Africa.	post-colonial Africa, migration	278
Narayan, R.K.	The Painter of Signs	novel	1977	The beginning, maturing and final breakdown of the relationship between Raman, a signpainter, and Daisy, who works for the government's family planning agency, highlights the clashes between traditional and modern attitudes in post-independence India. Interesting insight in the functioning of a typically Indian mind (if one can accept it as typical), but rather narrow view of Indian society – failed to grip me as a story.	India, love, cultures	
Nolan, Christopher	Under the Eye of the Clock	novel	1987	Christopher Nolan was born a quadriplegic, unable to walk, talk, eat, control his muscles... This is his own tale of how he struggled to make people see that he was mentally normal and actually highly intelligent, the story of how his family, his friends and teachers helped him become a full person, a poet and writer. Because language developed inside Christopher without being constantly corrected by those around him, his style is all his own – very poetic, sometimes difficult to understand but again and again you will come across deep insights and sudden understanding of what life must be like to somebody like Christopher. A book that needs some courage to read, a challenge – but it is worth it.	humanity, challenge	
Nicholls, David	One Day	novel	2009	It's always July 15. The story stretches over the years 1988 up to 2007 and describes what happened in the lives of the two protagonists on the very same day, at different places and under changing circumstances, in different years. Expectations, wishes, hopes as well as mutual attraction and separation accompany Dexter and Emma on their way to find their lives.	friendship, love, plans for life, relationship, family	430
Oates, Joyce Carol	A Fair Maiden	novel	2010	15-year-old Katya befriends Mr. Kidder, an elderly and distinguished gentleman who lives alone in a grand house in the fashionable American seaside resort where she spends her summer holidays working as a nanny. Kidder and his refined and cultured world are both alluring and vaguely threatening to Katya. He starts painting her, which leads to her being revolted by him and temporarily withdrawing from his company. Their mutual but unbalanced attraction reveals the shadier and darker sides of their personalities. The novel with its 'Death and the Maiden' motif hovers between different genres leaving the reader to guess if its gothic, thriller, or fairy tale elements will ultimately prevail.	love, growing up, getting old, death	231
O'Brien, Edna	The Country Girls	novel	1960	The story covers the teenage years of an Irish country girl in the nineteen-fifties – a touching and sometimes funny story before a rather dark background of social problems and narrow religious beliefs. The first-person narrator, Caithleen Brady, grows up in a poor Irish family. Her father is an irresponsible, violent drinker who leaves the burden of work and education to her mother. When the mother dies, Caithleen's life takes a new direction - first to a Catholic convent school with its claustrophobic atmosphere, and then in the escape to Dublin and the prospects of a new, free life in the city.	Ireland, growing up, family, teenage	
Maggie O'Farrel	Instructions for a Heatwave	novel	2013	This novel about the originally Irish Riordan-family is set in London and Ireland during the 1976 heatwave. Robert Riordan tells his wife Gretta that he is going round the corner to buy a newspaper, but doesn't come back. The search for Robert brings Gretta's children – two estranged sisters and a brother on the brink of divorce - back home. None of them suspects that their mother might have an explanation for their father's disappearance that she is not prepared to share. They have to resolve their inner conflicts and those with the people they love to find out about the secrets their parents have never told them.	family, love, values, Ireland, IRA, suspense, hopes, ambitions, illiteracy	324
O'Nan Steward	Songs for the Missing	novel	2008	College-bound Kim Larsen disappears from her quiet Lake Erie town. Her family organise search parties that involve the whole community trying to maintain their hope to find her as time drags on. Starting out as a thriller the book shifts towards a type of family drama, relating the individuals' and the group's struggle to cope with the emotional strain and with their own lives. At the same time the novel focuses on the mechanics of American small town life.	loss, family, growing up, American society	287
Ondaatje, Michael	The English Patient	novel	1992	In the final days of the Second World War, a terribly burnt patient who has lost his memory of who he is, a young nurse suffering from the things she has experienced in the field hospitals, an Italian thief and spy for the Allies, and a Sikh sapper whose job it is to track and detonate bombs, meet in an empty monastery. Here their backgrounds are slowly revealed; the English patient was a famous desert explorer before the war, caught up in an impossible love affair and forced to betray his ideals and his friends by the circumstances of love and war.	love, war, friendship, humanity, Africa, cultures, adventure	

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Orwell, George	Animal Farm	novel	1945	Apart from 1984, this is Orwell's most famous book. On Manor Farm, the oppressed animals take command and found Animal Farm, a better, juster and more equal society with wealth and equal rights for all. Under the combined threat from outside (the neighbouring farmers) and inside (the pigs, who take control of Animal Farm), the experiment starts to go wrong step by step.	power, totalitarianism	
Orwell, George	Burmese Days	novel	1934	Orwell was briefly a police officer for the British colonial administration in Burma. He hated the attitude of the British rulers and the corruption of the Burmese society alike. In this book Flory, an outsider in the colonial society, tries to cross the culture gap and becomes the friend of Dr Veraswami, but at the same time falls in love with the snobbish Elizabeth. U Po Kyin, a powerful local magistrate, starts an intrigue against Veraswami, and Flory feels he should protect his friend. Now he is between all fronts ...	cultures, power, empire	
Orwell, George	Nineteen Eighty-Four	novel	1949	Orwell's famous utopia, or rather, dystopia: The world is separated into three superstates, each of which is controlled by a totalitarian regime. The regime has absolute control over politics, the media, the past, language and thought; telescreens observe and hear everything. Winston Smith begins a forbidden love affair with Julia, and they try to rebel against the regime and to fight Big Brother. But they are detected, and a process of re-education begins.	future, totalitarianism	
Palahniuk, Chuck	Fight Club	novel	1996	You need a stable psychological make-up and a strong stomach to read this book. It reads like the product of a sick mind describing a sick world – which is in fact our world today. The protagonist is a small wheel in the destructive American business machinery that ruins the environment and the human race. At first he survives in his senseless existence by joining, under false pretences, cancer support and similar groups where he receives love and sympathy – then he meets Tyler Durden and joins Fight Club, where men beat each other up brutally each weekend with the aim of reaching the deepest bottom, with nothing to lose and nothing to be afraid of. But it goes on from there, and the aim is the destruction of civilization, culture and everything to prepare the ground for a new start...	challenge, America, madness, humanity, social criticism, good & evil	
Parks, Tim	Tongues of Flame	novel	1985	This short novel is set in 1968. Richard Bowen is the younger son of a strictly Christian family. His elder Sister Anna is as religious as her parents, but his elder brother Adrian is a rebel who experiments with the 'sex, drugs and rock'n'roll life' of the Beatles' London. When the church of his parents turns more and more fanatic, Adrian is eventually seen as the symbol of all Evil. Richard remains helpless and passive in the middle as his family is torn apart by the destructive struggle between the forces of God and Satan...	family, choices, growing up, God, good & evil	
Penney, Stef	The Tenderness of Wolves	novel	2006	As winter tightens its grip on the isolated settlement of Canada's Dove River in 1867, a man is brutally murdered and a 17-year-old boy disappears. Tracks leaving the dead man's cabin head north toward the forest and the tundra beyond. In the wake of such violence, people are drawn to the township—journalists, Hudson Bay Company men, trappers, traders—but do they want to solve the crime or exploit it? One-by-one the assembled searchers set out from Dove River, pursuing the tracks across a desolate landscape home only to wild animals, madmen, and fugitives, variously seeking a murderer, a son, two missing sisters, a forgotten Native culture, and a fortune in stolen furs.	adventure, crime, nature, human nature	
Pesci, David	Amistad	novel	1997	This novel tells the now famous story of a group of Africans who, in 1839, were captured to be sold as slaves in Cuba. They succeed in taking control of the ship Amistad, but are re-captured by Americans and taken to the United States. What follows is a long political and legal struggle between the opponents of slavery on the one side and its advocates and political opportunists on the other. Not a book with particular literary qualities, but providing a lot of insight into the history and the 'mechanics' of slavery and the difficult and slow progress towards its abolition.	America, blacks	
Poe, Edgar Allan	Tales of Mystery and Imagination	short stories	1840 -	Poe is seen as one of the fathers of the modern detective novel and its emphasis on logical deduction; at the same time, he is one of the fathers of the horror story. His world is full of violence, madness, death and extreme feelings. In the tradition of Romanticism, his stories ask the question what is real, what imagined, and which reality is the true one – the one of the physical world, or the one in our minds.	crime, supernatural, classics, madness	
Poolman, Jeremy	Interesting Facts About the State of Arizona	novel	1996	Ethan Brand is dead – he died of old age. But when lightning strikes his house, he comes alive again. This is one of the interesting facts about the state of Arizona that Jeremy Poolman tells – along with many other, less unbelievable ones. Life in small town America is pictured through the dreams and disillusionment of a number of characters whose paths cross in the course of this funny, atmospheric, crazy yet realistic story.	humanity, America, supernatural, God	

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Powers, Kevin	The Yellow Birds	novel	2012	Told by a young veteran of the Iraq war, this is the story of a man trying to understand and come to terms with what he is part of and what he has become. A poetic and devastating account of war's effect on the individual. A truly harrowing and intensely moving book.	friendship, loss, war, the human condition	226
Priestley, J.B.	An Inspector Calls	play	1945	A very popular socialist play. The time is before the First World War, the setting a wealthy industrialist's dinner party to celebrate his daughter's engagement to the son of a business rival. The factory owner Mr Birling expresses great optimism in the future and the stability of commercial success, and ridicules fears of the war, the ideas of socialists and the problems of the factory workers, when suddenly a police inspector visits them and starts interrogating them about the suicide of a former employee for which the members of the family seem to be responsible...	social criticism, England, family, supernatural, individual	
Proulx, Annie	The Shipping News	novel	1993	Quoyle is hopelessly in love with his reckless, cheating wife. After her death in a car crash his life is devastated. With his aunt and two small daughters he moves to Newfoundland, the land of his ancestors, and slowly rebuilds a life in this wonderful, remote corner of the world which is slowly but inexorably changing and adapting to the modern world, recession, depleted fishing grounds etc. Beautifully evocative of the magic of Newfoundland, funny and yet full of respect for the lifestyles, customs and characters it encounters there.	love, family, cultures, humankind	
Ravenhill, Mark	Shopping and F***ing	play	1996	Ravenhill's brutal play about sex, drugs, music and shopping in a totally meaningless consumer society (which, by the way, does not deserve this name any longer, as society seems to have ceased to exist and is replaced by isolated individuals) concentrates on the lives of five rather young people who have lost all illusions in the 1990s. Whatever people used to believe in in the history of mankind is no longer valid. One of the protagonists says the following sentences: "I think we all need stories... A long time ago there were big stories... The powerful Hands of God... The Journey to Enlightenment... The March of Socialism. But they all died... so now we're all making up our own stories. Little stories." Some scenes are probably shocking, but on the whole, it sheds some interesting light on life in England in the mid-nineties.	Consumer society, political issues, homosexuality	91

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Roy, Arundhati	The God of Small Things	novel	1997	A superb book that introduces the reader to a thousand fascinating facets of the unfamiliar world of modern India, its people, castes, customs, smells, colours, joys and sorrows - and at the same time tells a universal story of love and loss, of the disappearance of childhood innocence and the narrow and destructive rules of adult society. 23 years after being separated following the tragic death of their cousin Sophie Mol, Rahel and Estha meet again in the house where they spent the last days of a happy childhood. Alternatively set in the past and in the present, the chapters slowly explain the mystery that lies in the past. "Clever and complex, yet it makes one laugh, and finally, moves one to tears."	challenge, India, love, cultures, growing up, family	
Sachar, Louis	Holes	novel	1998	Stanley Yelnats was put at Camp Green Lake – for stealing a pair of sneakers. Out on the hot plains of dried-out salt lake, he and his fellow-inmates dig holes. What seems senseless and causes useless conflicts, drives him and his buddy Zero out. And there is an old secret to be revealed.	adolescence, authority, escape	233
Salinger, J.D.	The Catcher in the Rye	novel	1951	Holden Caulfield, a teenager, tells the story of his crisis at the threshold to adulthood. Thrown out of school, desperate to find somebody to talk to who he can trust and who does not only produce empty phrases, he goes on an odyssey to New York, observes what is going on around him and describes it in realistic (nineteen-fifties') teenage slang. The most influential novel about what it is like to grow up in US literature.	growing up, family, social criticism, teenage, individual	
Scott, Paul	Staying On	novel	1977	After India's independence, some of the former English rulers stayed on – because they loved India, because they did not have anything to go back to in England. This is the story of two of them and at the same time the story of two elderly people who seem to stay together only because they cannot think of anything else to do. A fascinating description of a complex relationship between two people and between two cultures.	India, love, empire	
Shaffer, Peter	Amadeus	play	1980	Salieri was the court composer in Vienna at the time of Mozart. Mozart is, in this play, a silly, obscene idiot who makes perfect music. Salieri feels threatened by this young man, recognizes his genius and tries to destroy Mozart. He is successful: Mozart becomes poorer and poorer, is not accepted by polite society, so Salieri wins ... but Salieri, as the only one, knows that Mozart's music is the music, and that his own is mediocre. So he decides to revenge himself.	good & evil, choices, God	
Shaffer, Peter	Equus	play	1973	Alan, a teenage boy, has committed a terrible act: he has blinded six horses. The psychiatrist Dysart tries to analyse why Alan did it, and when he analyses Alan's psychological problems, he uncovers central problems of modern society and also of himself: lack of belief in a religious force, search for ersatz beliefs, search for pure passion instead of banal rationality.	growing up, social criticism, madness, good & evil, God, individual	
Shakespeare, William	Hamlet	play	1604	Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, comes home to his father's castle to learn that his father has died; his uncle Claudius is now king and has married his mother. The ghost of his father appears to Hamlet and tells him he was murdered by Claudius. To be certain, Hamlet pretends madness and to prove his uncle's guilt. Claudius, meanwhile, decides to have Hamlet killed by his university friends Rosencrantz and Guildenstern ...	classics, power, humanity, challenge, choices	
Shakespeare, William	King Lear	play	1608	Corruption through power, old age, madness, irresponsibility, true love, cruel acts ... these are some of the ingredients of this play. King Lear feels he is too old to rule and decides to divide up his kingdom among his three daughters. To decide who will get most, the daughters must tell him how much they love him. Cordelia, whom he loves most, refuses to play this game, and he disinherits her. But as soon as his other daughters have power, they begin to mistreat Lear and to fight each other until Lear, driven to madness by this treatment, realises his mistake.	classics, power, humanity, madness, challenge	
Shakespeare, William	Macbeth	play	1606	Shakespeare's study of ambition and power. Macbeth, a war hero serving King Duncan of Scotland, is told by three witches that he will be king. He and his wife decide to murder Duncan and blame his guards. They do, but although Macbeth becomes king he cannot enjoy his power: people mistrust him, and his own bad conscience does not leave him any peace. He sees danger and treason everywhere and tries to kill all those who might endanger his power...	classics, power, totalitarianism	
Shakespeare, William	Romeo and Juliet	play	1595	One of the most famous tragic love stories in world literature, and the model for countless imitations and transformations. The Capulets and the Montagues have been enemies for a long time – so the two families will never accept the love that has grown between Romeo, son of the Montagues, and Juliet, daughter of the Capulets. After a secret marriage, Romeo kills an enemy in a duel and is banished from Verona, while her father insists on marrying Juliet to Count Paris. All the elements for a tragedy are now in place ...	classics, love	

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Shaw, George B.	Pygmalion	play	1914	How you speak shows which social class you come from; and your social class defines your position in life. Set at the beginning of the century in London, Shaw's popular play describes the transformation of a simple flower girl from the lowest classes into a lady who can be mistaken for a Duchess ... Professor Henry Higgins teaches Eliza Doolittle the proper pronunciation as an experiment and to win a bet. What he forgets is that he also changes the human being to whom the voice belongs.	social criticism, England	
Shelley, Mary	Frankenstein	novel	1818	Shelley wrote this book when she was nineteen! Far from being merely the horror story that most films show, this is a great work of Romantic fiction, and very topical today: genetic engineering, scientists' responsibility for their creation is one topic; the question whether man is the product of his genes or of his environment, another; the struggle between Enlightenment (Aufklärung) and Romanticism, which is a struggle that we also witness at the end of the 20th century, a third ...	scifi, humanity, God, classics, good & evil, adventure	
Sherwood, Ben	The Man Who Ate the 747	novel	2000	J.J. Smith is Keeper of Records for the Guinness Book of Records - he travels around the world to witness and authenticate world record attempts. But there hasn't been a great record for some time, and his career is in danger when he hears about a man in Nebraska who is eating a whole Jumbo Jet to prove his love for a woman. This is J.J.'s big chance - but is it also the big chance for Wally, the man who eats the 747, for his love Willa and for the small town of Superior, Nebraska? What could turn out to be a silly book develops into a great novel about love - funny, sentimental and deep all at the same time.	America, love, choices	
Shute, Nevil	On the Beach	novel	1957	Australia after a nuclear world war. The protagonist is a Navy officer who makes one last reconnaissance trip to the contaminated Northern hemisphere and returns without hope: it will only be some months before the deadly radiation reaches Australia and everybody will die. The book shows how people react to this situation and imagines the end of the civilised world after a nuclear holocaust.	future, war	
Sillitoe, Alan	The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner	novelette	1958	Smith is a teenager who has been sent to Borstal (the English name for prisons for young criminals). He is allowed to take up cross country running because his prison governor wants him to win an important race for his prison. But for Smith running is a symbol of inner freedom; to win for the Governor would mean to betray his ideals, his social class, and to lose to a society that does not give working class people like him a chance for a decent life.	social criticism, England, crime, teenage, individual	
Smith, Zadie	On Beauty	novel	2005	Howard Belsey, a prominent art critic and professor at Wellington College, is the catalyst for most of the drama that engulfs the Belsey family. As the novel opens, it has recently been discovered that Howard partook in a short-lived relationship with a fellow professor and family friend. While the Belsey's marriage is about to disintegrate, their three teenage children are seeking the passions, ideals and commitments that will guide them through their own lives.	family life, marriage, people's self-deception, race, politics	442
Spark, Muriel	Memento Mori	novel	1959	The old people in this story do not want to admit to themselves that they are nearing the end of their lives – but an anonymous telephone caller reminds one of them again and again that she will die. In her attempts to find out who the anonymous caller is, the net of lies and cheating that formed the lives of these old people is gradually discovered.	humanity	
Spark, Muriel	The Driver's Seat	novel	1970	A feminist novel about a woman deciding to become powerful in a society where, she believes, only men are powerful. The way in which she does this is by an act in which she herself is killed. A symbolic and radical treatment of women's situation in male society.	women, female	
Steinbeck, John	Of Mice and Men	novel	1937	A short novel set in California in the 1930s, among wandering farm workers. George and Lennie always work together; Lennie is mentally handicapped but very strong, George is clever and looks after Lennie. They share a dream of buying their own piece of land with a small farm and being independent. On the farm where they go to work they meet other social outsiders and Lennie, who is unable to control his strength, gets into deep trouble.	America, social criticism, friendship, madness	111
Steinbeck, John	The Moon is Down	novel	1942	Written as a piece of propaganda against Nazi Germany during the Second World War, The Moon is Down proved to be extremely successful and, what is even more surprising, survived its propaganda purpose and is still read today. Steinbeck describes, in an unspectacular but precise way, the invasion of a small town by enemy troops; the reactions of the local people, the feelings of the occupied and also of the victors, and the way in which resistance in the minds of the defeated people grows too strong for the enemy soldiers to control. A quiet and thoughtful book.	WAR, choices, power	

AUTHOR	TITLE	GENRE	YEAR	SHORT DESCRIPTION	KEYWORDS	PAGES
Stevenson, Robert L.	The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde	novel	1886	This is the famous story about the double nature of man, his good and his evil side. Kind Dr Jekyll turns into the monstrous Mr Hyde after taking a drug in an experiment. Hyde commits crimes and lives an evil life, and Jekyll finds it more and more difficult to keep his own personality. In its form the book is a detective story, told by various narrators with limited knowledge of the facts. Not as easy to interpret as its popularity suggests!	classics, good & evil, supernatural	
Stoker, Bram	Dracula	novel	1897	Everybody knows this story, nobody has read it, or read it attentively. Behind the horror and action surface there are questions of sexual repression, psychological studies of the position of men and women in Victorian society, and lots of other aspects worth thinking about and discussing.	humanity, challenge, classics, adventure	
Swift, Graham	Last Orders	novel	1996	Four men who were once Jack Dodd's closest friends meet to carry out this London butcher's last wish: to have his ashes scattered into the sea. During one day's strange car trip to the coast, we learn about the various characters' lives, their feelings and, despite everything, the dignity of everyday people's ordinary lives. Very English!	England, friendship, humanity	
Swift, Jonathan	Gulliver's Travels	novel	1726	Most people do not realise that this is not a children's story, but a biting satire in the form of a fantastic travel book. At his time Swift could not have criticized England in a more direct way. As so often in satire, the different viewpoints (dimensions) of Lilliput and Brobdingnag allow a fresh view of things at home: English politics, social class, moral values. The voyage to Laputa is a satire on inventors, scientists and speculators, and the story of the Houyhnhnms and Yahoos is often seen as a misanthropic view of human society compared to an ideal society of horses.	social criticism, classics, adventure	
Tóibín, Colm	The Blackwater Lightship	novel	1999	In the Ireland of the 1990s, three generations of women meet in a lonely house by the sea: Helen, her mother Lily and grandmother Dora. Helen's only brother Declan is dying of AIDS, and the three women and two of Declan's homosexual friends are spending his last days with him. The closeness and emotional nature of the situation forces the three women to face personal and family problems which they have suppressed for too long. A beautifully written book that captures you the longer you read.	Ireland, family, LOVE	
Unsworth, Barry	Morality Play	novel	1995	Set in 14th-century England, Unsworth's novel revolves around a theater troupe whose decision to enact a recent murder leads them to uncover a conspiracy. Its narrator is Nicholas Barber, a young monk who has forsaken his calling and joined an itinerant troupe of players that gets caught up in the real-life drama of a small-town murder. Rich in historical detail, Unsworth's well-told tale explores some timeless moral dilemmas and reads like a modern page-turner.	crime, good & evil, choices, theatre	206
Verghese, Abraham	Cutting for Stone	novel	2010	This novel takes you from India to Ethiopia to an inner-city hospital in New York City. Sister Mary Joseph Praise, a devout young nun, leaves the south Indian state of Kerala in 1947 for a missionary post in Yemen. During the arduous sea voyage, she saves the life of an English doctor bound for Ethiopia, Thomas Stone, who becomes a key player in her destiny when they meet up again at Missing Hospital in Addis Ababa. Seven years later, Sister Praise dies birthing twin boys: Shiva and Marion, the latter narrating his own and his brothers long, dramatic, biblical story set against the backdrop of political turmoil in Ethiopia, the life of the hospital compound in which they grow up and the love story of their adopted parents, both doctors at Missing (Amazon).	Family saga, medical field	660

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Vonnegut, Kurt	Slaughterhouse-Five	novel	1969	Vonnegut's seemingly simple books combine sci-fi elements with criticism of modern life. Billy Pilgrim, who was in Dresden as a war prisoner when the Americans bombed the city and destroyed tens of thousands of lives, tries to escape from these memories or to make sense of them. Because this is not possible in our modern world, he becomes a time traveller and discovers the world of Tralfamadore, which offers an outside view of the earth and humans.	war, humanity	
Walker, Alice	The Color Purple	novel	1982	Set in the South of the USA, this is a novel about life in a black society, about women's fight to win acceptance and dignity in a traditionally male-dominated society. Racism is a topic, but less white against black than male against female. Celie is abused as a child by her father, married against her will to an uncaring man, mistreated. The book shows her fight for self-confidence and independence.	black voices, women, female	
Watson, Larry	Montana 1948	novel	1993	The narrator of this beautiful short novel remembers how he witnessed, as a 12-year-old in a small American town, the end of his secure childhood when it becomes clear that his uncle, a respected doctor and war hero, has sexually abused his Indian patients – and his father, the town sheriff, has to decide whether to investigate his own brother's crimes or to protect the family's reputation.	America, family, choices, children, individual	164
Wells, H.G.	The Time Machine	novel	1895	This has been called the first science fiction novel. A story of time travel, with suspense and adventures, but the main interest is its background of social Darwinism, social criticism, and criticism of the belief in constant, unstoppable progress that was typical of the nineteenth century.	classics, future, scifi, social criticism	88
Whitmore, Hugh	Pack of Lies	play	1983	Based on an authentic spy case in England, this play shows the conflict between responsibility to the state and responsibility to our friends. An English family (Barbara, Bob and Julie, their teenage daughter) become very friendly with their new neighbours, a Canadian couple who are open, warm-hearted and affectionate. But then people from the British secret service appear and tell Bob and Barbara that their neighbours are probably spies for the Soviet Union. Barbara's world falls apart as she has to decide between her country and her friendship to Helen, her neighbour.	social criticism, England, power, friendship, individual	
Wilde, Oscar	The Picture of Dorian Grey	novel	1891	A beautiful young man who is interested only in the bright side of life, has a painting made of himself. He wishes that his portrait would grow old and change, while he remains the same. The wish is fulfilled, and although Dorian Grey leads a sinful, excessive life, all the effects on his face, body, soul are transferred to the picture. Is this the secret of happiness?	classics, social criticism, good & evil, supernatural	
Wilder, Thornton	Our Town	play	1938	A seemingly simple play covering three days in the lives of people in a typical small town in America: Growing love between the teenagers Emily and George; their wedding day; a day after Emily's early death. Behind the surface is the question of the meaning of life, the 'why' of our existence in this world. The play is written in a Brechtian tradition; it refuses to create a theatrical illusion.	humanity, family	
Wilder, Thornton	The Skin of Our Teeth	play	1938	A typically American family consisting of father, mother, son, daughter, maid and lover – but then a dinosaur appears to complain about the cold... The play starts in the Ice Age, covers the invention of the wheel, experiences the Great Flood and ends during the Second World War... Wilder creates a model for the history of mankind, the endless repetition of the same pattern throughout the ages. Funny, absurd, crazy, and serious all at once.	humanity, humour	
Williams, Tennessee	A Streetcar Named Desire	play	1947	Williams' plays reveal the feelings and desires of sensitive people who try to escape from reality and remain ultimately lonely. His setting is the American South (New Orleans). The brutally (or honestly?) direct world of the Polish immigrant Stanley Kowalski clashes with the nostalgic, refined world of Blanche DuBois, daughter of a Plantation owner. In contact with the modern reality of Kowalski's world Blanche flees deeper and deeper into a network of life lies and is finally destroyed.	love, madness, social criticism. America	
Williams, Tennessee	The Glass Menagerie	play	1945	Williams' plays reveal the feelings and desires of sensitive people trying to escape from reality and remaining ultimately lonely. His setting is the American South (St. Louis). Tom Wingfield remembers his life with his mother and his slightly crippled sister, Laura. The mother lives in nostalgia for her lost beauty and creates an atmosphere of escapism that suffocates Laura, who resembles in her fragility the glass animals she collects. Eventually Tom escapes from his family to pursue his own dreams, but at the price of leaving Laura behind.	family, choices	

AUTHOR	TITLE	GENRE	YEAR	SHORT DESCRIPTION	KEYWORDS	PAGES
Winton, Tim	The Riders	novel	1994	Love, betrayal, obsession with something lost are some of the main elements of this story. Scully has left Australia and is waiting for his wife and daughter Billie to join him in the cottage in Wales where they want to start a new life. But when he goes to meet them at the airport, only Billie arrives, shocked and unable to speak. This is the starting point for a mad journey through Europe, an attempt to find out what happened to Scully's wife and to regain what he has lost. Fascinating, intensive, haunting ... but do not expect a simple solution.	love, family, humanity, supernatural, adventure	
Wolfe, Tom	The Bonfire of the Vanities	novel	1987	A huge but very readable book about the world of immensely successful bond traders (Börsenhändler) in the New York of the 1980s. The novel was celebrated as the book of the eighties. Sherman McCoy is a 'master of the universe', living in his own world of luxury; but one wrong turn off the highway takes him into a New York he does not know and where he loses his self-control. As a result, he is accused of killing a black teenager and becomes a toy in the power games of NY politics and justice.	America, power, social criticism, challenge	
Woodrell, Daniel	Winter's Bone	novel	2007	Set in the poverty-stricken hills of the Ozarks, Rees Dolly, 17, struggles to take care for her two brothers and an ill mother. When she learns that her absent father, a meth addict, has put up the family home as bond, she embarks on a dangerous search to find him and bring him home for an upcoming court date. Her relatives, many of whom are in the business of cooking crank, thwart her at every turn, but her fight to save the family finally succeeds. Woodrell depicts a harsh world in which the responsibilities for survival ultimately give Rees meaning and direction (Amazon).	Addiction, responsibility, survival	225
Wright, Richard	Black Boy	non-fiction	1945	Richard Wright is one of the first famous Black American writers. In this autobiography he describes his hard youth in the South – poverty, dysfunctional family, religion, school, crime, hunger, prejudice ... and his fight against his family and the whites for a life of his own, with his eventual escape to the North where he hoped to begin a different life.	black voices, social criticism, growing up, family, America, blacks	
Wright, Richard	Uncle Tom's Children	short stories	1940	Uncle Tom's Cabin (by Harriet Beecher Stowe) is a book hated among many blacks, because it shows the negro as the happy, faithful servant whom decent whites should treat well – not as an equal partner of the whites. This book of five stories shows the situation of a new generation of blacks, Uncle Tom's symbolic children; an emancipatory, accusing, cruel book, very forceful and thought-provoking.	black voices, social criticism, America, humanity, blacks	
Zusak, Markus	The Book Thief	novel	2006	Set in Nazi Germany, the novel, narrated by Death, describes a young girl's relationship with the foster parents she is sent to live with by her mother, who is a Communist persecuted by the Nazis. She builds up relationships with the other residents of their neighborhood, and develops an intense friendship with a Jewish boxer who hides in their home as World War II begins—a time when the narrator of the story is extremely busy doing his rounds.	survival, nazism, life and death, friendship	550