Table of Contents (Even Years)

Much Ado About Nothing

William Shakespeare

Leonato, a kindly, respectable nobleman, lives in the idyllic Italian town of Messina. Leonato shares his house with his lovely young daughter, Hero, his playful, clever niece, Beatrice, and his elderly brother, Antonio. As the play begins, Leonato prepares to welcome some friends home from a war. The friends include Don Pedro, a prince who is a close friend of Leonato, and two fellow soldiers: Claudio, a well-respected young nobleman, and Benedick, a clever man who constantly makes witty jokes, often at the expense of his friends. Don John, Don Pedro's illegitimate brother, is part of the crowd as well. Don John is sullen and bitter, and makes trouble for the others.

When the soldiers arrive at Leonato's home, Claudio quickly falls in love with Hero. Meanwhile, Benedick and Beatrice resume the war of witty insults that they have carried on with each other in the past. Claudio and Hero pledge their love to one another and decide to be married. To pass the time in the week before the wedding, the lovers and their friends decide to play a game. They want to get Beatrice and Benedick, who are clearly meant for each other, to stop arguing and fall in love. Their tricks prove successful, and Beatrice and Benedick soon fall secretly in love with each other.

But Don John has decided to disrupt everyone's happiness. He has his companion Borachio make love to Margaret, Hero's serving woman, at Hero's window in the darkness of the night, and he brings Don Pedro and Claudio to watch. Believing that he has seen Hero being unfaithful to him, the enraged Claudio humiliates Hero by suddenly accusing her of lechery on the day of their wedding and abandoning her at the altar. Hero's stricken family members decide to pretend that she died suddenly of shock and grief and to hide her away while they wait for the truth about her innocence to come to light. In the aftermath of the rejection, Benedick and Beatrice finally confess their love to one another. Fortunately, the night watchmen overhear Borachio bragging about his crime. Dogberry and Verges, the heads of the local police, ultimately arrest both Borachio and Conrad, another of Don John's followers. Everyone learns that Hero is really innocent, and Claudio, who believes she is dead, grieves for her.

Leonato tells Claudio that, as punishment, he wants Claudio to tell everybody in the city how innocent Hero was. He also wants Claudio to marry Leonato's "niece"—a girl who, he says, looks much like the dead Hero. Claudio goes to church with the others, preparing to marry the mysterious, masked woman he thinks is Hero's cousin. When Hero reveals herself as the masked woman, Claudio is overwhelmed with joy. Benedick then asks Beatrice if she will marry him, and after some arguing they agree. The joyful lovers all have a merry dance before they celebrate their double wedding.

The Picture Of Dorian Gray

Oscar Wilde

In the stately London home of his aunt, Lady Brandon, the well-known artist Basil Hallward meets Dorian Gray. Dorian is a cultured, wealthy, and impossibly beautiful young man who immediately captures Basil's artistic imagination. Dorian sits for several portraits, and Basil often depicts him as an ancient Greek hero or a mythological figure. When the novel opens, the artist is completing his first portrait of Dorian as he truly is, but, as he admits to his friend Lord

Henry Wotton, the painting disappoints him because it reveals too much of his feeling for his subject. Lord Henry, a famous wit who enjoys scandalizing his friends by celebrating youth, beauty, and the selfish pursuit of pleasure, disagrees, claiming that the portrait is Basil's masterpiece. Dorian arrives at the studio, and Basil reluctantly introduces him to Lord Henry, who he fears will have a damaging influence on the impressionable, young Dorian.

Basil's fears are well founded; before the end of their first conversation, Lord Henry upsets Dorian with a speech about the transient nature of beauty and youth. Worried that these, his most impressive characteristics, are fading day by day, Dorian curses his portrait, which he believes will one day remind him of the beauty he will have lost. In a fit of distress, he pledges his soul if only the painting could bear the burden of age and infamy, allowing him to stay forever young. In an attempt to appease Dorian, Basil gives him the portrait.

Over the next few weeks, Lord Henry's influence over Dorian grows stronger. The youth becomes a disciple of the "new Hedonism" and proposes to live a life dedicated to the pursuit of pleasure. He falls in love with Sibyl Vane, a young actress who performs in a theater in London's slums. He adores her acting; she, in turn, refers to him as "Prince Charming" and refuses to heed the warnings of her brother, James Vane, that Dorian is no good for her. Overcome by her emotions for Dorian, Sibyl decides that she can no longer act, wondering how she can pretend to love on the stage now that she has experienced the real thing. Dorian, who loves Sibyl because of her ability to act, cruelly breaks his engagement with her. After doing so, he returns home to notice that his face in Basil's portrait of him has changed: it now sneers. Frightened that his wish for his likeness in the painting to bear the ill effects of his behavior has come true and that his sins will be recorded on the canvas, he resolves to make amends with Sibyl the next day. The following afternoon, however, Lord Henry brings news that Sibyl has killed herself. At Lord Henry's urging, Dorian decides to consider her death a sort of artistic triumph—she personified tragedy—and to put the matter behind him. Meanwhile, Dorian hides his portrait in a remote upper room of his house, where no one other than he can watch its transformation.

Lord Henry gives Dorian a book that describes the wicked exploits of a nineteenth-century Frenchman; it becomes Dorian's bible as he sinks ever deeper into a life of sin and corruption. He lives a life devoted to garnering new experiences and sensations with no regard for conventional standards of morality or the consequences of his actions. Eighteen years pass. Dorian's reputation suffers in circles of polite London society, where rumors spread regarding his scandalous exploits. His peers nevertheless continue to accept him because he remains young and beautiful. The figure in the painting, however, grows increasingly wizened and hideous. On a dark, foggy night, Basil Hallward arrives at Dorian's home to confront him about the rumors that plague his reputation. The two argue, and Dorian eventually offers Basil a look at his (Dorian's) soul. He shows Basil the now-hideous portrait, and Hallward, horrified, begs him to repent. Dorian claims it is too late for penance and kills Basil in a fit of rage.

In order to dispose of the body, Dorian employs the help of an estranged friend, a doctor, whom he blackmails. The night after the murder, Dorian makes his way to an opium den, where he encounters James Vane, who attempts to avenge Sibyl's death. Dorian escapes to his country estate. While entertaining guests, he notices James Vane peering in through a window, and he becomes wracked by fear and guilt. When a hunting party accidentally shoots and kills Vane, Dorian feels safe again. He resolves to amend his life but cannot muster the courage to confess his crimes, and the painting now reveals his supposed desire to repent for what it is—hypocrisy. In a fury, Dorian picks up the knife he used to stab Basil Hallward and attempts to destroy the painting. There is a crash, and his servants enter to find the portrait, unharmed, showing Dorian

Gray as a beautiful young man. On the floor lies the body of their master—an old man, horribly wrinkled and disfigured, with a knife plunged into his heart.

The Red Badge Of Courage

Stephan Crane

During the Civil War, a Union regiment rests along a riverbank, where it has been camped for weeks. A tall soldier named Jim Conklin spreads a rumor that the army will soon march. Henry Fleming, a recent recruit with this 304th Regiment, worries about his courage. He fears that if he were to see battle, he might run. The narrator reveals that Henry joined the army because he was drawn to the glory of military conflict. Since the time he joined, however, the army has merely been waiting for engagement.

At last the regiment is given orders to march, and the soldiers spend several weary days traveling on foot. Eventually they approach a battlefield and begin to hear the distant roar of conflict. After securing its position, the enemy charges. Henry, boxed in by his fellow soldiers, realizes that he could not run even if he wanted to. He fires mechanically, feeling like a cog in a machine.

The blue (Union) regiment defeats the gray (Confederate) soldiers, and the victors congratulate one another. Henry wakes from a brief nap to find that the enemy is again charging his regiment. Terror overtakes him this time and he leaps up and flees from the line. As he scampers across the landscape, he tells himself that he did the right thing, that his regiment could not have won, and that the men who remained to fight were fools. He passes a general on horseback and overhears the commander saying that the regiment has held back the enemy charge. Ashamed of his cowardice, Henry tries to convince himself that he was right to preserve his own life. He wanders through a forest glade in which he encounters the decaying corpse of a soldier. Shaken, he hurries away.

After a time, Henry joins a column of wounded soldiers winding down the road. He is deeply envious of these men, thinking that a wound is like "a red badge of courage"; visible proof of valorous behavior. He meets a tattered man who has been shot twice and who speaks proudly of the fact that his regiment did not flee. He repeatedly asks Henry where he is wounded, which makes Henry deeply uncomfortable and compels him to hurry away to a different part of the column. He meets a spectral soldier with a distant, numb look on his face. Henry eventually recognizes the man as a badly wounded Jim Conklin. Henry promises to take care of Jim, but Jim runs from the line into a small grove of bushes where Henry and the tattered man watch him die.

Henry and the tattered soldier wander through the woods. Henry hears the rumble of combat in the distance. The tattered soldier continues to ask Henry about his wound, even as his own health visibly worsens. At last, Henry is unable to bear the tattered man's questioning and abandons him to die in the forest.

Henry continues to wander until he finds himself close enough to the battlefield to be able to watch some of the fighting. He sees a blue regiment in retreat and attempts to stop the soldiers to find out what has happened. One of the fleeing men hits him on the head with a rifle, opening a bloody gash on Henry's head. Eventually, another soldier leads Henry to his regiment's camp, where Henry is reunited with his companions. His friend Wilson, believing that Henry has been shot, cares for him tenderly.

The next day, the regiment proceeds back to the battlefield. Henry fights like a lion. Thinking of Jim Conklin, he vents his rage against the enemy soldiers. His lieutenant says that with ten thousand Henrys, he could win the war in a week. Nevertheless, Henry and Wilson overhear an officer say that the soldiers of the 304th fight like "mule drivers." Insulted, they long to prove the

man wrong. In an ensuing charge, the regiment's color bearer falls. Henry takes the flag and carries it proudly before the regiment. After the charge fails, the derisive officer tells the regiment's colonel that his men fight like "mud diggers," further infuriating Henry. Another soldier tells Henry and Wilson, to their gratification, that the colonel and lieutenant consider them the best fighters in the regiment.

The group is sent into more fighting, and Henry continues to carry the flag. The regiment charges a group of enemy soldiers fortified behind a fence, and, after a pitched battle, wins the fence. Wilson seizes the enemy flag and the regiment takes four prisoners. As he and the others march back to their position, Henry reflects on his experiences in the war. Though he revels in his recent success in battle, he feels deeply ashamed of his behavior the previous day, especially his abandonment of the tattered man. But after a moment, he puts his guilt behind him and realizes that he has come through "the red sickness" of battle. He is now able to look forward to peace, feeling a quiet, steady manhood within himself.

The Sun Also Rises

Ernest Hemingway

The Sun Also Rises opens with the narrator, Jake -Barnes, delivering a brief biographical sketch of his friend, Robert Cohn. Jake is a veteran of World War I who now works as a journalist in Paris. Cohn is also an American expatriate, although not a war veteran. He is a rich Jewish writer who lives in Paris with his forceful and controlling girlfriend, Frances Clyne. Cohn has become restless of late, and he comes to Jake's office one afternoon to try to convince Jake to go with him to South America. Jake refuses, and he takes pains to get rid of Cohn. That night at a dance club, Jake runs into Lady Brett Ashley, a divorced socialite and the love of Jake's life. Brett is a free-spirited and independent woman, but she can be very selfish at times. She and Jake met in England during World War I, when Brett treated Jake for a war wound. During Jake and Brett's conversation, it is subtly implied that Jake's injury rendered him impotent. Although Brett loves Jake, she hints that she is unwilling to give up sex, and that for this reason she will not commit to a relationship with him.

The next morning, Jake and Cohn have lunch. Cohn is quite taken with Brett, and he gets angry when Jake tells him that Brett plans to marry Mike Campbell, a heavy-drinking Scottish war veteran. That afternoon, Brett stands Jake up. That night, however, she arrives unexpectedly at his apartment with Count Mippipopolous, a rich Greek expatriate. After sending the count out for champagne, Brett tells Jake that she is leaving for San Sebastian, in Spain, saying it will be easier on both of them to be apart.

Several weeks later, while Brett and Cohn are both traveling outside of Paris, one of Jake's friends, a fellow American war veteran named Bill Gorton, arrives in Paris. Bill and Jake make plans to leave for Spain to do some fishing and later attend the fiesta at Pamplona. Jake makes plans to meet Cohn on the way to Pamplona. Jake runs into Brett, who has returned from San Sebastian; with her is Mike, her fiancé. They ask if they may join Jake in Spain, and he politely responds that they may. When Mike leaves for a moment, Brett reveals to Jake that she and Cohn were in San Sebastian together.

Bill and Jake take a train from Paris to Bayonne, in the south of France, where they meet Cohn. The three men travel together into Spain, to Pamplona. They plan on meeting Brett and Mike that night, but the couple does not show up. Bill and Jake decide to leave for a small town called Burguete to fish, but Cohn chooses to stay and wait for Brett. Bill and Jake travel to the Spanish countryside and check into a small, rural inn. They spend five pleasant days fishing, drinking,

and playing cards. Eventually, Jake receives a letter from Mike. He writes that he and Brett will be arriving in Pamplona shortly. Jake and Bill leave on a bus that afternoon to meet the couple. After arriving in Pamplona, Jake and Bill check into a hotel owned by Montoya, a Spanish bullfighting expert who likes Jake for his earnest interest in the sport. Jake and Bill meet up with Brett, Mike, and Cohn, and the whole group goes to watch the bulls being unloaded in preparation for the bullfights during the fiesta. Mike mocks Cohn harshly for following Brett around when he is not wanted.

After a few more days of preparation, the fiesta begins. The city is consumed with dancing, drinking, and general debauchery. The highlight of the first day is the first bullfight, at which Pedro Romero, a nineteen-year-old prodigy, distinguishes himself above all the other bullfighters. Despite its violence, Brett cannot take her eyes off the bullfight, or Romero. A few days later, Jake and his friends are at the hotel dining room, and Brett notices Romero at a nearby table. She persuades Jake to introduce her to him. Mike again verbally abuses Cohn, and they almost come to blows before Jake defuses the situation. Later that night, Brett asks Jake to help her find Romero, with whom she says she has fallen in love. Jake agrees to help, and Brett and Romero spend the night together.

Jake then meets up with Mike and Bill, who are both extremely drunk. Cohn soon arrives, demanding to know where Brett is. After an exchange of insults, Cohn attacks Mike and Jake, knocking them both out. When Jake returns to the hotel, he finds Cohn lying face down on his bed and crying. Cohn begs Jake's forgiveness, and Jake reluctantly grants it. The next day, Jake learns from Bill and Mike that the night before Cohn also beat up Romero when he discovered the bullfighter with Brett; Cohn later begged Romero to shake hands with him, but Romero refused.

At the bullfight that afternoon, Romero fights brilliantly, dazzling the crowd by killing a bull that had gored a man to death in the streets. Afterward, he cuts the bull's ear off and gives it to Brett. After this final bullfight, Romero and Brett leave for Madrid together. Cohn has left that morning, so only Bill, Mike, and Jake remain as the fiesta draws to a close.

The next day, the three remaining men rent a car and drive out of Spain to Bayonne and then go their separate ways. Jake heads back into Spain to San Sebastian, where he plans to spend several quiet days relaxing. He receives a telegram from Brett, however, asking him to come meet her in Madrid. He complies, and boards an overnight train that same day. Jake finds Brett alone in a Madrid hotel room. She has broken with Romero, fearing that she would ruin him and his career. She announces that she now wants to return to Mike. Jake books tickets for them to leave Madrid. As they ride in a taxi through the Spanish capital, Brett laments that she and Jake could have had a wonderful time together. Jake responds, "Yes, isn't it pretty to think so?"

Uncle Tom's Cabin

Harriet Beecher Stowe

Having run up large debts, a Kentucky farmer named Arthur Shelby faces the prospect of losing everything he owns. Though he and his wife, Emily Shelby, have a kindhearted and affectionate relationship with their slaves, Shelby decides to raise money by selling two of his slaves to Mr. Haley, a coarse slave trader. The slaves in question are Uncle Tom, a middle-aged man with a wife and children on the farm, and Harry, the young son of Mrs. Shelby's maid Eliza. When Shelby tells his wife about his agreement with Haley, she is appalled because she has promised Eliza that Shelby would not sell her son.

However, Eliza overhears the conversation between Haley and his wife and, after warning Uncle Tom and his wife, Aunt Chloe, she takes Harry and flees to the North, hoping to find freedom

with her husband George in Canada. Haley pursues her, but two other Shelby slaves alert Eliza to the danger. She miraculously evades capture by crossing the half-frozen Ohio River, the boundary separating Kentucky from the North. Haley hires a slave hunter named Loker and his gang to bring Eliza and Harry back to Kentucky. Eliza and Harry make their way to a Quaker settlement, where the Quakers agree to help transport them to safety. They are joined at the settlement by George, who reunites joyously with his family for the trip to Canada.

Meanwhile, Uncle Tom sadly leaves his family and Mas'r George, Shelby's young son and Tom's friend, as Haley takes him to a boat on the Mississippi to be transported to a slave market. On the boat, Tom meets an angelic little white girl named Eva, who quickly befriends him. When Eva falls into the river, Tom dives in to save her, and her father, Augustine St. Clare, gratefully agrees to buy Tom from Haley. Tom travels with the St. Clares to their home in New Orleans, where he grows increasingly invaluable to the St. Clare household and increasingly close to Eva, with whom he shares a devout Christianity.

Up North, George and Eliza remain in flight from Loker and his men. When Loker attempts to capture them, George shoots him in the side, and the other slave hunters retreat. Eliza convinces George and the Quakers to bring Loker to the next settlement, where he can be healed.

Meanwhile, in New Orleans, St. Clare discusses slavery with his cousin Ophelia, who opposes slavery as an institution but harbors deep prejudices against blacks. St. Clare, by contrast, feels no hostility against blacks but tolerates slavery because he feels powerless to change it. To help Ophelia overcome her bigotry, he buys Topsy, a young black girl who was abused by her past master and arranges for Ophelia to begin educating her.

After Tom has lived with the St. Clares for two years, Eva grows very ill. She slowly weakens, then dies, with a vision of heaven before her. Her death has a profound effect on everyone who knew her: Ophelia resolves to love the slaves, Topsy learns to trust and feel attached to others, and St. Clare decides to set Tom free. However, before he can act on his decision, St. Clare is stabbed to death while trying to settle a brawl. As he dies, he at last finds God and goes to be reunited with his mother in heaven.

St. Clare's cruel wife, Marie, sells Tom to a vicious plantation owner named Simon Legree. Tom is taken to rural Louisiana with a group of new slaves, including Emmeline, whom the demonic Legree has purchased to use as a sex slave, replacing his previous sex slave Cassy. Legree takes a strong dislike to Tom when Tom refuses to whip a fellow slave as ordered. Tom receives a severe beating, and Legree resolves to crush his faith in God. Tom meets Cassy, and hears her story. Separated from her daughter by slavery, she became pregnant again but killed the child because she could not stand to have another child taken from her.

Around this time, with the help of Tom Loker—now a changed man after being healed by the Quakers—George, Eliza, and Harry at last cross over into Canada from Lake Erie and obtain their freedom. In Louisiana, Tom's faith is sorely tested by his hardships, and he nearly ceases to believe. He has two visions, however—one of Christ and one of Eva—which renew his spiritual strength and give him the courage to withstand Legree's torments. He encourages Cassy to escape. She does so, taking Emmeline with her, after she devises a ruse in which she and Emmeline pretend to be ghosts. When Tom refuses to tell Legree where Cassy and Emmeline have gone, Legree orders his overseers to beat him. When Tom is near death, he forgives Legree and the overseers. George Shelby arrives with money in hand to buy Tom's freedom, but he is too late. He can only watch as Tom dies a martyr's death.

Taking a boat toward freedom, Cassy and Emmeline meet George Harris's sister and travel with her to Canada, where Cassy realizes that Eliza is her long-lost daughter. The newly reunited

family travels to France and decides to move to Liberia, the African nation created for former American slaves. George Shelby returns to the Kentucky farm, where, after his father's death, he sets all the slaves free in honor of Tom's memory. He urges them to think on Tom's sacrifice every time they look at his cabin and to lead a pious Christian life, just as Tom did.

Walden

Henry David Thoreau

Walden opens with a simple announcement that Thoreau spent two years in Walden Pond, near Concord, Massachusetts, living a simple life supported by no one. He says that he now resides among the civilized again; the episode was clearly both experimental and temporary. The first chapter, "Economy," is a manifesto of social thought and meditations on domestic management, and in it Thoreau sketches out his ideals as he describes his pond project. He devotes attention to the skepticism and wonderment with which townspeople had greeted news of his project, and he defends himself from their views that society is the only place to live. He recounts the circumstances of his move to Walden Pond, along with a detailed account of the steps he took to construct his rustic habitation and the methods by which he supported himself in the course of his wilderness experiment. It is a chapter full of facts, figures, and practical advice, but also offers big ideas about the claims of individualism versus social existence, all interspersed with evidence of scholarship and a propensity for humor.

Thoreau tells us that he completed his cabin in the spring of 1845 and moved in on July 4 of that year. Most of the materials and tools he used to build his home he borrowed or scrounged from previous sites. The land he squats on belongs to his friend Ralph Waldo Emerson; he details a cost-analysis of the entire construction project. In order to make a little money, Thoreau cultivates a modest bean-field, a job that tends to occupy his mornings. He reserves his afternoons and evenings for contemplation, reading, and walking about the countryside. Endorsing the values of austerity, simplicity, and solitude, Thoreau consistently emphasizes the minimalism of his lifestyle and the contentment to be derived from it. He repeatedly contrasts his own freedom with the imprisonment of others who devote their lives to material prosperity. Despite his isolation, Thoreau feels the presence of society surrounding him. The Fitchburg Railroad rushes past Walden Pond, interrupting his reveries and forcing him to contemplate the power of technology. Thoreau also finds occasion to converse with a wide range of other people, such as the occasional peasant farmer, railroad worker, or the odd visitor to Walden. He describes in some detail his association with a Canadian-born woodcutter, Alex Therien, who is grand and sincere in his character, though modest in intellectual attainments. Thoreau makes frequent trips into Concord to seek the society of his longtime friends and to conduct what scattered business the season demands. On one such trip, Thoreau spends a night in jail for refusing to pay a poll tax because, he says, the government supports slavery. Released the next day, Thoreau returns to Walden.

Thoreau devotes great attention to nature, the passing of the seasons, and the creatures with which he shares the woods. He recounts the habits of a panoply of animals, from woodchucks to partridges. Some he endows with a larger meaning, often spiritual or psychological. The hooting loon that plays hide and seek with Thoreau, for instance, becomes a symbol of the playfulness of nature and its divine laughter at human endeavors. Another example of animal symbolism is the full-fledged ant war that Thoreau stumbles upon, prompting him to meditate on human warfare. Thoreau's interest in animals is not exactly like the naturalist's or zoologist's. He does not

observe and describe them neutrally and scientifically, but gives them a moral and philosophical significance, as if each has a distinctive lesson to teach him.
As autumn turns to winter, Thoreau begins preparations for the arrival of the cold. He listens to the squirrel, the rabbit, and the fox as they scuttle about gathering food. He watches the migrating birds, and welcomes the pests that infest his cabin as they escape the coming frosts. He prepares his walls with plaster to shut out the wind. By day he makes a study of the snow and ice, giving special attention to the mystic blue ice of Walden Pond, and by night he sits and listens to the wind as it whips and whistles outside his door. Thoreau occasionally sees ice-fishermen come to cut out huge blocks that are shipped off to cities, and contemplates how most of the ice will melt and flow back to Walden Pond. Occasionally Thoreau receives a visit from a friend like William Ellery Channing or Amos Bronson Alcott, but for the most part he is alone. In one chapter, he conjures up visions of earlier residents of Walden Pond long dead and largely forgotten, including poor tradesmen and former slaves. Thoreau prefers to see himself in their company, rather than amid the cultivated and wealthy classes.
As he becomes acquainted with Walden Pond and neighboring ponds, Thoreau wants to map their layout and measure their depths. Thoreau finds that Walden Pond is no more than a hundred feet deep, thereby refuting common folk wisdom that it is bottomless. He meditates on the pond as a symbol of infinity that people need in their lives. Eventually winter gives way to spring, and with a huge crash and roar the ice of Walden Pond begins to melt and hit the shore. In lyric imagery echoing the onset of Judgment Day, Thoreau describes the coming of spring as a vast transformation of the face of the world, a time when all sins are forgiven.
Thoreau announces that his project at the pond is over, and that he returned to civilized life on September 6, 1847. The revitalization of the landscape suggests the restoration of the full powers of the human soul, and Thoreau's narrative observations give way, in the last chapter of Walden, to a more direct sermonizing about the untapped potential within humanity. In visionary language, Thoreau exhorts us to "meet" our lives and live fully.

The Crucible

Arthur Miller

In the Puritan New England town of Salem, Massachusetts, a group of girls goes dancing in the forest with a black slave named Tituba. While dancing, they are caught by the local minister, Reverend Parris. One of the girls, Parris's daughter Betty, falls into a coma-like state. A crowd gathers in the Parris home while rumors of witchcraft fill the town. Having sent for Reverend Hale, an expert on witchcraft, Parris questions Abigail Williams, the girls' ringleader, about the events that took place in the forest. Abigail, who is Parris's niece and ward, admits to doing nothing beyond "dancing."
While Parris tries to calm the crowd that has gathered in his home, Abigail talks to some of the other girls, telling them not to admit to anything. John Proctor, a local farmer, then enters and talks to Abigail alone. Unbeknownst to anyone else in the town, while working in Proctor's home the previous year she engaged in an affair with him, which led to her being fired by his wife, Elizabeth. Abigail still desires Proctor, but he fends her off and tells her to end her foolishness with the girls.
Betty wakes up and begins screaming. Much of the crowd rushes upstairs and gathers in her bedroom, arguing over whether she is bewitched. A separate argument between Proctor, Parris, the argumentative Giles Corey, and the wealthy Thomas Putnam soon ensues. This dispute centers on money and land deeds, and it suggests that deep fault lines run through the Salem

community. As the men argue, Reverend Hale arrives and examines Betty, while Proctor departs. Hale quizzes Abigail about the girls' activities in the forest, grows suspicious of her behavior, and demands to speak to Tituba. After Parris and Hale interrogate her for a brief time, Tituba confesses to communing with the devil, and she hysterically accuses various townsfolk of consorting with the devil. Suddenly, Abigail joins her, confessing to having seen the devil conspiring and cavorting with other townspeople. Betty joins them in naming witches, and the crowd is thrown into an uproar.

A week later, alone in their farmhouse outside of town, John and Elizabeth Proctor discuss the ongoing trials and the escalating number of townsfolk who have been accused of being witches. Elizabeth urges her husband to denounce Abigail as a fraud; he refuses, and she becomes jealous, accusing him of still harboring feelings for her. Mary Warren, their servant and one of Abigail's circle, returns from Salem with news that Elizabeth has been accused of witchcraft but the court did not pursue the accusation. Mary is sent up to bed, and John and Elizabeth continue their argument, only to be interrupted by a visit from Reverend Hale. While they discuss matters, Giles Corey and Francis Nurse come to the Proctor home with news that their wives have been arrested. Officers of the court suddenly arrive and arrest Elizabeth. After they have taken her, Proctor browbeats Mary, insisting that she must go to Salem and expose Abigail and the other girls as frauds.

The next day, Proctor brings Mary to court and tells Judge Danforth that she will testify that the girls are lying. Danforth is suspicious of Proctor's motives and tells Proctor, truthfully, that Elizabeth is pregnant and will be spared for a time. Proctor persists in his charge, convincing Danforth to allow Mary to testify. Mary tells the court that the girls are lying. When the girls are brought in, they turn the tables by accusing Mary of bewitching them. Furious, Proctor confesses his affair with Abigail and accuses her of being motivated by jealousy of his wife. To test Proctor's claim, Danforth summons Elizabeth and asks her if Proctor has been unfaithful to her. Despite her natural honesty, she lies to protect Proctor's honor, and Danforth denounces Proctor as a liar. Meanwhile, Abigail and the girls again pretend that Mary is bewitching them, and Mary breaks down and accuses Proctor of being a witch. Proctor rages against her and against the court. He is arrested, and Hale quits the proceedings.

The summer passes and autumn arrives. The witch trials have caused unrest in neighboring towns, and Danforth grows nervous. Abigail has run away, taking all of Parris's money with her. Hale, who has lost faith in the court, begs the accused witches to confess falsely in order to save their lives, but they refuse. Danforth, however, has an idea: he asks Elizabeth to talk John into confessing, and she agrees. Conflicted, but desiring to live, John agrees to confess, and the officers of the court rejoice. But he refuses to incriminate anyone else, and when the court insists that the confession must be made public, Proctor grows angry, tears it up, and retracts his admission of guilt. Despite Hale's desperate pleas, Proctor goes to the gallows with the others, and the witch trials reach their awful conclusion.

Paradise Lost

John Milton

Milton's speaker begins Paradise Lost by stating that his subject will be Adam and Eve's disobedience and fall from grace. He invokes a heavenly muse and asks for help in relating his ambitious story and God's plan for humankind. The action begins with Satan and his fellow rebel angels who are found chained to a lake of fire in Hell. They quickly free themselves and fly to land, where they discover minerals and construct Pandemonium, which will be their meeting

place. Inside Pandemonium, the rebel angels, who are now devils, debate whether they should begin another war with God. Beezlebub suggests that they attempt to corrupt God's beloved new creation, humankind. Satan agrees, and volunteers to go himself. As he prepares to leave Hell, he is met at the gates by his children, Sin and Death, who follow him and build a bridge between Hell and Earth.

In Heaven, God orders the angels together for a council of their own. He tells them of Satan's intentions, and the Son volunteers himself to make the sacrifice for humankind. Meanwhile, Satan travels through Night and Chaos and finds Earth. He disguises himself as a cherub to get past the Archangel Uriel, who stands guard at the sun. He tells Uriel that he wishes to see and praise God's glorious creation, and Uriel assents. Satan then lands on Earth and takes a moment to reflect. Seeing the splendor of Paradise brings him pain rather than pleasure. He reaffirms his decision to make evil his good, and continue to commit crimes against God. Satan leaps over Paradise's wall, takes the form of a cormorant (a large bird), and perches himself atop the Tree of Life. Looking down at Satan from his post, Uriel notices the volatile emotions reflected in the face of this so-called cherub and warns the other angels that an impostor is in their midst. The other angels agree to search the Garden for intruders.

Meanwhile, Adam and Eve tend the Garden, carefully obeying God's supreme order not to eat from the Tree of Knowledge. After a long day of work, they return to their bower and rest. There, Satan takes the form of a toad and whispers into Eve's ear. Gabriel, the angel set to guard Paradise, finds Satan there and orders him to leave. Satan prepares to battle Gabriel, but God makes a sign appear in the sky—the golden scales of justice—and Satan scurries away. Eve awakes and tells Adam about a dream she had, in which an angel tempted her to eat from the forbidden tree. Worried about his creation, God sends Raphael down to Earth to teach Adam and Eve of the dangers they face with Satan.

Raphael arrives on Earth and eats a meal with Adam and Eve. After the meal, Eve retires, allowing Raphael and Adam to speak alone. Raphael relates the story of Satan's envy over the Son's appointment as God's second-in-command. Satan gathered other angels together who were also angry to hear this news, and together they plotted a war against God. Abdiel decides not to join Satan's army and returns to God. The angels then begin to fight, with Michael and Gabriel serving as co-leaders for Heaven's army. The battle lasts two days, when God sends the Son to end the war and deliver Satan and his rebel angels to Hell. Raphael tells Adam about Satan's evil motives to corrupt them, and warns Adam to watch out for Satan. Adam asks Raphael to tell him the story of creation. Raphael tells Adam that God sent the Son into Chaos to create the universe. He created the earth and stars and other planets. Curious, Adam asks Raphael about the movement of the stars and planets. Raphael promptly warns Adam about his seemingly unquenchable search for knowledge. Raphael tells Adam that he will learn all he needs to know, and that any other knowledge is not meant for humans to comprehend. Adam tells Raphael about his first memories, of waking up and wondering who he was, what he was, and where he was. Adam says that God spoke to him and told him many things, including his order not to eat from the Tree of Knowledge. After the story, Adam confesses to Raphael his intense physical attraction to Eve. Raphael reminds Adam that he must love Eve more purely and spiritually. With this final bit of advice, Raphael leaves Earth and returns to Heaven.

Eight days after his banishment, Satan returns to Paradise. After closely studying the animals of Paradise, he chooses to take the form of the serpent. Meanwhile, Eve suggests to Adam that they work separately for awhile, so they can get more work done. Adam is hesitant but then assents. Satan searches for Eve and is delighted to find her alone. In the form of a serpent, he talks to Eve

and compliments her on her beauty and godliness. She is amazed to find an animal that can speak. She asks how he learned to speak, and he tells her that it was by eating from the Tree of Knowledge. He tells Eve that God actually wants her and Adam to eat from the tree, and that his order is merely a test of their courage. She is hesitant at first but then reaches for a fruit from the Tree of Knowledge and eats. She becomes distraught and searches for Adam. Adam has been busy making a wreath of flowers for Eve. When Eve finds Adam, he drops the wreath and is horrified to find that Eve has eaten from the forbidden tree. Knowing that she has fallen, he decides that he would rather be fallen with her than remain pure and lose her. So he eats from the fruit as well. Adam looks at Eve in a new way, and together they turn to lust.

God immediately knows of their disobedience. He tells the angels in Heaven that Adam and Eve must be punished, but with a display of both justice and mercy. He sends the Son to give out the punishments. The Son first punishes the serpent whose body Satan took, and condemns it never to walk upright again. Then the Son tells Adam and Eve that they must now suffer pain and death. Eve and all women must suffer the pain of childbirth and must submit to their husbands, and Adam and all men must hunt and grow their own food on a depleted Earth. Meanwhile, Satan returns to Hell where he is greeted with cheers. He speaks to the devils in Pandemonium, and everyone believes that he has beaten God. Sin and Death travel the bridge they built on their way to Earth. Shortly thereafter, the devils unwillingly transform into snakes and try to reach fruit from imaginary trees that shrivel and turn to dust as they reach them.

God tells the angels to transform the Earth. After the fall, humankind must suffer hot and cold seasons instead of the consistent temperatures before the fall. On Earth, Adam and Eve fear their approaching doom. They blame each other for their disobedience and become increasingly angry at one another. In a fit of rage, Adam wonders why God ever created Eve. Eve begs Adam not to abandon her. She tells him that they can survive by loving each other. She accepts the blame because she has disobeyed both God and Adam. She ponders suicide. Adam, moved by her speech, forbids her from taking her own life. He remembers their punishment and believes that they can enact revenge on Satan by remaining obedient to God. Together they pray to God and repent.

God hears their prayers, and sends Michael down to Earth. Michael arrives on Earth, and tells them that they must leave Paradise. But before they leave, Michael puts Eve to sleep and takes Adam up onto the highest hill, where he shows him a vision of humankind's future. Adam sees the sins of his children, and his children's children, and his first vision of death. Horrified, he asks Michael if there is any alternative to death. Generations to follow continue to sin by lust, greed, envy, and pride. They kill each other selfishly and live only for pleasure. Then Michael shows him the vision of Enoch, who is saved by God as his warring peers attempt to kill him. Adam also sees the story of Noah and his family, whose virtue allows them to be chosen to survive the flood that kills all other humans. Adam feels remorse for death and happiness for humankind's redemption. Next is the vision of Nimrod and the Tower of Babel. This story explains the perversion of pure language into the many languages that are spoken on Earth today. Adam sees the triumph of Moses and the Israelites, and then glimpses the Son's sacrifice to save humankind. After this vision, it is time for Adam and Eve to leave Paradise. Eve awakes and tells Adam that she had a very interesting and educating dream. Led by Michael, Adam and Eve slowly and woefully leave Paradise hand in hand into a new world.

Pride and Prejudice

Jane Austen

The news that a wealthy young gentleman named Charles Bingley has rented the manor of Netherfield Park causes a great stir in the nearby village of Longbourn, especially in the Bennet household. The Bennets have five unmarried daughters—from oldest to youngest, Jane, Elizabeth, Mary, Kitty, and Lydia—and Mrs. Bennet is desperate to see them all married. After Mr. Bennet pays a social visit to Mr. Bingley, the Bennets attend a ball at which Mr. Bingley is present. He is taken with Jane and spends much of the evening dancing with her. His close friend, Mr. Darcy, is less pleased with the evening and haughtily refuses to dance with Elizabeth, which makes everyone view him as arrogant and obnoxious.

At social functions over subsequent weeks, however, Mr. Darcy finds himself increasingly attracted to Elizabeth's charm and intelligence. Jane's friendship with Mr. Bingley also continues to burgeon, and Jane pays a visit to the Bingley mansion. On her journey to the house she is caught in a downpour and catches ill, forcing her to stay at Netherfield for several days. In order to tend to Jane, Elizabeth hikes through muddy fields and arrives with a spattered dress, much to the disdain of the snobbish Miss Bingley, Charles Bingley's sister. Miss Bingley's spite only increases when she notices that Darcy, whom she is pursuing, pays quite a bit of attention to Elizabeth.

When Elizabeth and Jane return home, they find Mr. Collins visiting their household. Mr. Collins is a young clergyman who stands to inherit Mr. Bennet's property, which has been "entailed," meaning that it can only be passed down to male heirs. Mr. Collins is a pompous fool, though he is quite enthralled by the Bennet girls. Shortly after his arrival, he makes a proposal of marriage to Elizabeth. She turns him down, wounding his pride. Meanwhile, the Bennet girls have become friendly with militia officers stationed in a nearby town. Among them is Wickham, a handsome young soldier who is friendly toward Elizabeth and tells her how Darcy cruelly cheated him out of an inheritance.

At the beginning of winter, the Bingleys and Darcy leave Netherfield and return to London, much to Jane's dismay. A further shock arrives with the news that Mr. Collins has become engaged to Charlotte Lucas, Elizabeth's best friend and the poor daughter of a local knight. Charlotte explains to Elizabeth that she is getting older and needs the match for financial reasons. Charlotte and Mr. Collins get married and Elizabeth promises to visit them at their new home. As winter progresses, Jane visits the city to see friends (hoping also that she might see Mr. Bingley). However, Miss Bingley visits her and behaves rudely, while Mr. Bingley fails to visit her at all. The marriage prospects for the Bennet girls appear bleak.

That spring, Elizabeth visits Charlotte, who now lives near the home of Mr. Collins's patron, Lady Catherine de Bourgh, who is also Darcy's aunt. Darcy calls on Lady Catherine and encounters Elizabeth, whose presence leads him to make a number of visits to the Collins's home, where she is staying. One day, he makes a shocking proposal of marriage, which Elizabeth quickly refuses. She tells Darcy that she considers him arrogant and unpleasant, then scolds him for steering Bingley away from Jane and disinheriting Wickham. Darcy leaves her but shortly thereafter delivers a letter to her. In this letter, he admits that he urged Bingley to distance himself from Jane, but claims he did so only because he thought their romance was not serious. As for Wickham, he informs Elizabeth that the young officer is a liar and that the real cause of their disagreement was Wickham's attempt to elope with his young sister, Georgiana Darcy. This letter causes Elizabeth to reevaluate her feelings about Darcy. She returns home and acts coldly toward Wickham. The militia is leaving town, which makes the younger, rather man-crazy Bennet girls distraught. Lydia manages to obtain permission from her father to spend the summer with an old colonel in Brighton, where Wickham's regiment will be stationed. With the arrival of

June, Elizabeth goes on another journey, this time with the Gardiners, who are relatives of the Bennets. The trip takes her to the North and eventually to the neighborhood of Pemberley, Darcy's estate. She visits Pemberley, after making sure that Darcy is away, and delights in the building and grounds, while hearing from Darcy's servants that he is a wonderful, generous master. Suddenly, Darcy arrives and behaves cordially toward her. Making no mention of his proposal, he entertains the Gardiners and invites Elizabeth to meet his sister.

Shortly thereafter, however, a letter arrives from home, telling Elizabeth that Lydia has eloped with Wickham and that the couple is nowhere to be found, which suggests that they may be living together out of wedlock. Fearful of the disgrace such a situation would bring on her entire family, Elizabeth hastens home. Mr. Gardiner and Mr. Bennet go off to search for Lydia, but Mr. Bennet eventually returns home empty-handed. Just when all hope seems lost, a letter comes from Mr. Gardiner saying that the couple has been found and that Wickham has agreed to marry Lydia in exchange for an annual income. The Bennets are convinced that Mr. Gardiner has paid off Wickham, but Elizabeth learns that the source of the money, and of her family's salvation, was none other than Darcy.

Now married, Wickham and Lydia return to Longbourn briefly, where Mr. Bennet treats them coldly. They then depart for Wickham's new assignment in the North of England. Shortly thereafter, Bingley returns to Netherfield and resumes his courtship of Jane. Darcy goes to stay with him and pays visits to the Bennets but makes no mention of his desire to marry Elizabeth. Bingley, on the other hand, presses his suit and proposes to Jane, to the delight of everyone but Bingley's haughty sister. While the family celebrates, Lady Catherine de Bourgh pays a visit to Longbourn. She corners Elizabeth and says that she has heard that Darcy, her nephew, is planning to marry her. Since she considers a Bennet an unsuitable match for a Darcy, Lady Catherine demands that Elizabeth promise to refuse him. Elizabeth spiritedly refuses, saying she is not engaged to Darcy, but she will not promise anything against her own happiness. A little later, Elizabeth and Darcy go out walking together and he tells her that his feelings have not altered since the spring. She tenderly accepts his proposal, and both Jane and Elizabeth are married.

1984

George Orwell

Winston Smith is a low-ranking member of the ruling Party in London, in the nation of Oceania. Everywhere Winston goes, even his own home, the Party watches him through telescreens; everywhere he looks he sees the face of the Party's seemingly omniscient leader, a figure known only as Big Brother. The Party controls everything in Oceania, even the people's history and language. Currently, the Party is forcing the implementation of an invented language called Newspeak, which attempts to prevent political rebellion by eliminating all words related to it. Even thinking rebellious thoughts is illegal. Such thoughtcrime is, in fact, the worst of all crimes. As the novel opens, Winston feels frustrated by the oppression and rigid control of the Party, which prohibits free thought, sex, and any expression of individuality. Winston dislikes the party and has illegally purchased a diary in which to write his criminal thoughts. He has also become fixated on a powerful Party member named O'Brien, whom Winston believes is a secret member of the Brotherhood—the mysterious, legendary group that works to overthrow the Party.

Winston works in the Ministry of Truth, where he alters historical records to fit the needs of the Party. He notices a coworker, a beautiful dark-haired girl, staring at him, and worries that she is an informant who will turn him in for his thoughtcrime. He is troubled by the Party's control of

history: the Party claims that Oceania has always been allied with Eastasia in a war against Eurasia, but Winston seems to recall a time when this was not true. The Party also claims that Emmanuel Goldstein, the alleged leader of the Brotherhood, is the most dangerous man alive, but this does not seem plausible to Winston. Winston spends his evenings wandering through the poorest neighborhoods in London, where the proletarians, or proles, live squalid lives, relatively free of Party monitoring.

One day, Winston receives a note from the dark-haired girl that reads "I love you." She tells him her name, Julia, and they begin a covert affair, always on the lookout for signs of Party monitoring. Eventually they rent a room above the secondhand store in the prole district where Winston bought the diary. This relationship lasts for some time. Winston is sure that they will be caught and punished sooner or later (the fatalistic Winston knows that he has been doomed since he wrote his first diary entry), while Julia is more pragmatic and optimistic. As Winston's affair with Julia progresses, his hatred for the Party grows more and more intense. At last, he receives the message that he has been waiting for: O'Brien wants to see him.

Winston and Julia travel to O'Brien's luxurious apartment. As a member of the powerful Inner Party (Winston belongs to the Outer Party), O'Brien leads a life of luxury that Winston can only imagine. O'Brien confirms to Winston and Julia that, like them, he hates the Party, and says that he works against it as a member of the Brotherhood. He indoctrinates Winston and Julia into the Brotherhood, and gives Winston a copy of Emmanuel Goldstein's book, the manifesto of the Brotherhood. Winston reads the book—an amalgam of several forms of class-based twentieth-century social theory—to Julia in the room above the store. Suddenly, soldiers barge in and seize them. Mr. Charrington, the proprietor of the store, is revealed as having been a member of the Thought Police all along.

Torn away from Julia and taken to a place called the Ministry of Love, Winston finds that O'Brien, too, is a Party spy who simply pretended to be a member of the Brotherhood in order to trap Winston into committing an open act of rebellion against the Party. O'Brien spends months torturing and brainwashing Winston, who struggles to resist. At last, O'Brien sends him to the dreaded Room 101, the final destination for anyone who opposes the Party. Here, O'Brien tells Winston that he will be forced to confront his worst fear. Throughout the novel, Winston has had recurring nightmares about rats; O'Brien now straps a cage full of rats onto Winston's head and prepares to allow the rats to eat his face. Winston snaps, pleading with O'Brien to do it to Julia, not to him.

Giving up Julia is what O'Brien wanted from Winston all along. His spirit broken, Winston is released to the outside world. He meets Julia, but no longer feels anything for her. He has accepted the Party entirely and has learned to love Big Brother.

The Adventures of Tom Sawyer

Mark Twain

An imaginative and mischievous boy named Tom Sawyer lives with his Aunt Polly and his half-brother, Sid, in the Mississippi River town of St. Petersburg, Missouri. After playing hooky from school on Friday and dirtying his clothes in a fight, Tom is made to whitewash the fence as punishment on Saturday. At first, Tom is disappointed by having to forfeit his day off. However, he soon cleverly persuades his friends to trade him small treasures for the privilege of doing his work. He trades these treasures for tickets given out in Sunday school for memorizing Bible verses and uses the tickets to claim a Bible as a prize. He loses much of his glory, however,

when, in response to a question to show off his knowledge, he incorrectly answers that the first two disciples were David and Goliath.
Tom falls in love with Becky Thatcher, a new girl in town, and persuades her to get "engaged" to him. Their romance collapses when she learns that Tom has been engaged before—to a girl named Amy Lawrence. Shortly after being shunned by Becky, Tom accompanies Huckleberry Finn, the son of the town drunk, to the graveyard at night to try out a "cure" for warts. At the graveyard, they witness the murder of young Dr. Robinson by the Native American "half-breed" Injun Joe. Scared, Tom and Huck run away and swear a blood oath not to tell anyone what they have seen. Injun Joe blames his companion, Muff Potter, a hapless drunk, for the crime. Potter is wrongfully arrested, and Tom's anxiety and guilt begin to grow.
Tom, Huck, and Tom's friend Joe Harper run away to an island to become pirates. While frolicking around and enjoying their newfound freedom, the boys become aware that the community is sounding the river for their bodies. Tom sneaks back home one night to observe the commotion. After a brief moment of remorse at the suffering of his loved ones, Tom is struck by the idea of appearing at his funeral and surprising everyone. He persuades Joe and Huck to do the same. Their return is met with great rejoicing, and they become the envy and admiration of all their friends.
Back in school, Tom gets himself back in Becky's favor after he nobly accepts the blame for a book that she has ripped. Soon Muff Potter's trial begins, and Tom, overcome by guilt, testifies against Injun Joe. Potter is acquitted, but Injun Joe flees the courtroom through a window.
Summer arrives, and Tom and Huck go hunting for buried treasure in a haunted house. After venturing upstairs they hear a noise below. Peering through holes in the floor, they see Injun Joe enter the house disguised as a deaf and mute Spaniard. He and his companion, an unkempt man, plan to bury some stolen treasure of their own. From their hiding spot, Tom and Huck wriggle with delight at the prospect of digging it up. By an amazing coincidence, Injun Joe and his partner find a buried box of gold themselves. When they see Tom and Huck's tools, they become suspicious that someone is sharing their hiding place and carry the gold off instead of reburying it.
Huck begins to shadow Injun Joe every night, watching for an opportunity to nab the gold. Meanwhile, Tom goes on a picnic to McDougal's Cave with Becky and their classmates. That same night, Huck sees Injun Joe and his partner making off with a box. He follows and overhears their plans to attack the Widow Douglas, a kind resident of St. Petersburg. By running to fetch help, Huck forestalls the violence and becomes an anonymous hero.
Tom and Becky get lost in the cave, and their absence is not discovered until the following morning. The men of the town begin to search for them, but to no avail. Tom and Becky run out of food and candles and begin to weaken. The horror of the situation increases when Tom, looking for a way out of the cave, happens upon Injun Joe, who is using the cave as a hideout. Eventually, just as the searchers are giving up, Tom finds a way out. The town celebrates, and Becky's father, Judge Thatcher, locks up the cave. Injun Joe, trapped inside, starves to death.
A week later, Tom takes Huck to the cave and they find the box of gold, the proceeds of which are invested for them. The Widow Douglas adopts Huck, and, when Huck attempts to escape civilized life, Tom promises him that if he returns to the widow, he can join Tom's robber band. Reluctantly, Huck agrees.

Great Expectations

Charles Dickens

Pip, a young orphan living with his sister and her husband in the marshes of Kent, sits in a cemetery one evening looking at his parents' tombstones. Suddenly, an escaped convict springs up from behind a tombstone, grabs Pip, and orders him to bring him food and a file for his leg irons. Pip obeys, but the fearsome convict is soon captured anyway. The convict protects Pip by claiming to have stolen the items himself.

One day Pip is taken by his Uncle Pumblechook to play at Satis House, the home of the wealthy dowager Miss Havisham, who is extremely eccentric: she wears an old wedding dress everywhere she goes and keeps all the clocks in her house stopped at the same time. During his visit, he meets a beautiful young girl named Estella, who treats him coldly and contemptuously. Nevertheless, he falls in love with her and dreams of becoming a wealthy gentleman so that he might be worthy of her. He even hopes that Miss Havisham intends to make him a gentleman and marry him to Estella, but his hopes are dashed when, after months of regular visits to Satis House, Miss Havisham tells him that she will help him fill out the papers necessary for him to become a common laborer in his family's business.

With Miss Havisham's guidance, Pip is apprenticed to his brother-in-law, Joe, who is the village blacksmith. Pip works in the forge unhappily, struggling to better his education with the help of the plain, kind Biddy and encountering Joe's malicious day laborer, Orlick. One night, after an altercation with Orlick, Pip's sister, known as Mrs. Joe, is viciously attacked and becomes a mute invalid. From her signals, Pip suspects that Orlick was responsible for the attack.

One day a lawyer named Jaggers appears with strange news: a secret benefactor has given Pip a large fortune, and Pip must come to London immediately to begin his education as a gentleman. Pip happily assumes that his previous hopes have come true—that Miss Havisham is his secret benefactor and that the old woman intends for him to marry Estella.

In London, Pip befriends a young gentleman named Herbert Pocket and Jaggers's law clerk, Wemmick. He expresses disdain for his former friends and loved ones, especially Joe, but he continues to pine after Estella. He furthers his education by studying with the tutor Matthew Pocket, Herbert's father. Herbert himself helps Pip learn how to act like a gentleman. When Pip turns twenty-one and begins to receive an income from his fortune, he will secretly help Herbert buy his way into the business he has chosen for himself. But for now, Herbert and Pip lead a fairly undisciplined life in London, enjoying themselves and running up debts. Orlick reappears in Pip's life, employed as Miss Havisham's porter, but is promptly fired by Jaggers after Pip reveals Orlick's unsavory past. Mrs. Joe dies, and Pip goes home for the funeral, feeling tremendous grief and remorse. Several years go by, until one night a familiar figure barges into Pip's room—the convict, Magwitch, who stuns Pip by announcing that he, not Miss Havisham, is the source of Pip's fortune. He tells Pip that he was so moved by Pip's boyhood kindness that he dedicated his life to making Pip a gentleman, and he made a fortune in Australia for that very purpose.

Pip is appalled, but he feels morally bound to help Magwitch escape London, as the convict is pursued both by the police and by Compeyson, his former partner in crime. A complicated mystery begins to fall into place when Pip discovers that Compeyson was the man who abandoned Miss Havisham at the altar and that Estella is Magwitch's daughter. Miss Havisham has raised her to break men's hearts, as revenge for the pain her own broken heart caused her. Pip was merely a boy for the young Estella to practice on; Miss Havisham delighted in Estella's ability to toy with his affections.

As the weeks pass, Pip sees the good in Magwitch and begins to care for him deeply. Before Magwitch's escape attempt, Estella marries an upper-class lout named Bentley Drummle. Pip

makes a visit to Satis House, where Miss Havisham begs his forgiveness for the way she has treated him in the past, and he forgives her. Later that day, when she bends over the fireplace, her clothing catches fire and she goes up in flames. She survives but becomes an invalid. In her final days, she will continue to repent for her misdeeds and to plead for Pip's forgiveness.

The time comes for Pip and his friends to spirit Magwitch away from London. Just before the escape attempt, Pip is called to a shadowy meeting in the marshes, where he encounters the vengeful, evil Orlick. Orlick is on the verge of killing Pip when Herbert arrives with a group of friends and saves Pip's life. Pip and Herbert hurry back to effect Magwitch's escape. They try to sneak Magwitch down the river on a rowboat, but they are discovered by the police, who Compeyson tipped off. Magwitch and Compeyson fight in the river, and Compeyson is drowned. Magwitch is sentenced to death, and Pip loses his fortune. Magwitch feels that his sentence is God's forgiveness and dies at peace. Pip falls ill; Joe comes to London to care for him, and they are reconciled. Joe gives him the news from home: Orlick, after robbing Pumblechook, is now in jail; Miss Havisham has died and left most of her fortune to the Pockets; Biddy has taught Joe how to read and write. After Joe leaves, Pip decides to rush home after him and marry Biddy, but when he arrives there he discovers that she and Joe have already married.

Pip decides to go abroad with Herbert to work in the mercantile trade. Returning many years later, he encounters Estella in the ruined garden at Satis House. Drummle, her husband, treated her badly, but he is now dead. Pip finds that Estella's coldness and cruelty have been replaced by a sad kindness, and the two leave the garden hand in hand, Pip believing that they will never part again. (Note: Dickens's original ending to Great Expectations differed from the one described in this summary. The final Summary and Analysis section of this SparkNote provides a description of the first ending and explains why Dickens rewrote it.)

Gulliver's Travels

Jonathan Swift

Gulliver's Travels recounts the story of Lemuel Gulliver, a practical-minded Englishman trained as a surgeon who takes to the seas when his business fails. In a deadpan first-person narrative that rarely shows any signs of self-reflection or deep emotional response, Gulliver narrates the adventures that befall him on these travels.

Gulliver's adventure in Lilliput begins when he wakes after his shipwreck to find himself bound by innumerable tiny threads and addressed by tiny captors who are in awe of him but fiercely protective of their kingdom. They are not afraid to use violence against Gulliver, though their arrows are little more than pinpricks. But overall, they are hospitable, risking famine in their land by feeding Gulliver, who consumes more food than a thousand Lilliputians combined could. Gulliver is taken into the capital city by a vast wagon the Lilliputians have specially built. He is presented to the emperor, who is entertained by Gulliver, just as Gulliver is flattered by the attention of royalty. Eventually Gulliver becomes a national resource, used by the army in its war against the people of Blefuscu, whom the Lilliputians hate for doctrinal differences concerning the proper way to crack eggs. But things change when Gulliver is convicted of treason for putting out a fire in the royal palace with his urine and is condemned to be shot in the eyes with poisoned arrows. The emperor eventually pardons him and he goes to Blefuscu, where he is able to repair a boat he finds and set sail for England.

After staying in England with his wife and family for two months, Gulliver undertakes his next sea voyage, which takes him to a land of giants called Brobdingnag. Here, a farmer discovers him and initially treats him as little more than an animal, keeping him for amusement. The farmer eventually sells Gulliver to the queen, who makes him a courtly diversion and is entertained by his musical talents. Social life is easy for Gulliver after his discovery by the court, but not particularly enjoyable. Gulliver is often repulsed by the physicality of the Brobdingnagians, whose ordinary flaws are many times magnified by their huge size. Thus, when a couple of courtly ladies let him play on their naked bodies, he is not attracted to them but rather disgusted by their enormous skin pores and the sound of their torrential urination. He is generally startled by the ignorance of the people here—even the king knows nothing about politics. More unsettling findings in Brobdingnag come in the form of various animals of the realm that endanger his life. Even Brobdingnagian insects leave slimy trails on his food that make eating difficult. On a trip to the frontier, accompanying the royal couple, Gulliver leaves Brobdingnag when his cage is plucked up by an eagle and dropped into the sea.
Next, Gulliver sets sail again and, after an attack by pirates, ends up in Laputa, where a floating island inhabited by theoreticians and academics oppresses the land below, called Balnibarbi. The scientific research undertaken in Laputa and in Balnibarbi seems totally inane and impractical, and its residents too appear wholly out of touch with reality. Taking a short side trip to Glubbdubdrib, Gulliver is able to witness the conjuring up of figures from history, such as Julius Caesar and other military leaders, whom he finds much less impressive than in books. After visiting the Luggnaggians and the Struldbrugs, the latter of which are senile immortals who prove that age does not bring wisdom, he is able to sail to Japan and from there back to England. Finally, on his fourth journey, Gulliver sets out as captain of a ship, but after the mutiny of his crew and a long confinement in his cabin, he arrives in an unknown land. This land is populated by Houyhnhnms, rational-thinking horses who rule, and by Yahoos, brutish humanlike creatures who serve the Houyhnhnms. Gulliver sets about learning their language, and when he can speak he narrates his voyages to them and explains the constitution of England. He is treated with great courtesy and kindness by the horses and is enlightened by his many conversations with them and by his exposure to their noble culture. He wants to stay with the Houyhnhnms, but his bared body reveals to the horses that he is very much like a Yahoo, and he is banished. Gulliver is grief-stricken but agrees to leave. He fashions a canoe and makes his way to a nearby island, where he is picked up by a Portuguese ship captain who treats him well, though Gulliver cannot help now seeing the captain—and all humans—as shamefully Yahoolike. Gulliver then concludes his narrative with a claim that the lands he has visited belong by rights to England, as her colonies, even though he questions the whole idea of colonialism.

The Taming Of The Shrew

William Shakespeare

In the English countryside, a poor tinker named Christopher Sly becomes the target of a prank by a local lord. Finding Sly drunk out of his wits in front of an alehouse, the lord has his men take Sly to his manor, dress him in his finery, and treat him as a lord. When Sly recovers, the men tell him that he is a lord and that he only believes himself to be a tinker because he has been insane for the past several years. Waking in the lord's bed, Sly at first refuses to accept the men's story, but when he hears of his "wife," a pageboy dressed in women's clothing, he readily agrees that he is the lord they purport him to be. Sly wants to be left alone with his wife, but the servants tell

him that a troupe of actors has arrived to present a play for him. The play that Sly watches makes up the main story of The Taming of the Shrew.

In the Italian city of Padua, a rich young man named Lucentio arrives with his servants, Tranio and Biondello, to attend the local university. Lucentio is excited to begin his studies, but his priorities change when he sees Bianca, a beautiful, mild young woman with whom Lucentio instantly falls in love. There are two problems: first, Bianca already has two suitors, Gremio and Hortensio; second, Bianca's father, a wealthy old man named Baptista Minola, has declared that no one may court Bianca until first her older sister, the vicious, ill-tempered Katherine, is married. Lucentio decides to overcome this problem by disguising himself as Bianca's Latin tutor to gain an excuse to be in her company. Hortensio disguises himself as her music teacher for the same reason. While Lucentio pretends to be Bianca's tutor, Tranio dresses up as Lucentio and begins to confer with Baptista about the possibility of marrying his daughter.

The Katherine problem is solved for Bianca's suitors when Hortensio's friend Petruccio, a brash young man from Verona, arrives in Padua to find a wife. He intends to marry a rich woman, and does not care what she is like as long as she will bring him a fortune. He agrees to marry Katherine sight unseen. The next day, he goes to Baptista's house to meet her, and they have a tremendous duel of words. As Katherine insults Petruccio repeatedly, Petruccio tells her that he will marry her whether she agrees or not. He tells Baptista, falsely, that Katherine has consented to marry him on Sunday. Hearing this claim, Katherine is strangely silent, and the wedding is set.

On Sunday, Petruccio is late to his own wedding, leaving Katherine to fear she will become an old maid. When Petruccio arrives, he is dressed in a ridiculous outfit and rides on a -broken-down horse. After the wedding, Petruccio forces Katherine to leave for his country house before the feast, telling all in earshot that she is now his property and that he may do with her as he pleases. Once they reach his country house, Petruccio continues the process of "taming" Katherine by keeping her from eating or sleeping for several days—he pretends that he loves her so much he cannot allow her to eat his inferior food or to sleep in his poorly made bed.

In Padua, Lucentio wins Bianca's heart by wooing her with a Latin translation that declares his love. Hortensio makes the same attempt with a music lesson, but Bianca loves Lucentio, and Hortensio resolves to marry a wealthy widow. Tranio secures Baptista's approval for Lucentio to marry Bianca by proposing a huge sum of money to lavish on her. Baptista agrees but says that he must have this sum confirmed by Lucentio's father before the marriage can take place. Tranio and Lucentio, still in their respective disguises, feel there is nothing left to do but find an old man to play the role of Lucentio's father. Tranio enlists the help of an old pedant, or schoolmaster, but as the pedant speaks to Baptista, Lucentio and Bianca decide to circumvent the complex situation by eloping.

Katherine and Petruccio soon return to Padua to visit Baptista. On the way, Petruccio forces Katherine to say that the sun is the moon and that an old man is really a beautiful young maiden. Since Katherine's willfulness is dissipating, she agrees that all is as her -husband says. On the road, the couple meets Lucentio's father, Vincentio, who is on his way to Padua to see his son. In Padua, Vincentio is shocked to find Tranio masquerading as Lucentio. At last, Bianca and Lucentio arrive to spread the news of their marriage. Both Vincentio and Baptista finally agree to the marriage.

At the banquet following Hortensio's wedding to the widow, the other characters are shocked to see that Katherine seems to have been "tamed"—she obeys everything that Petruccio says and gives a long speech advocating the loyalty of wives to their husbands. When the three new husbands stage a contest to see which of their wives will obey first when summoned, everyone

expects Lucentio to win. Bianca, however, sends a message back refusing to obey, while Katherine comes immediately. The others acknowledge that Petruccio has won an astonishing victory, and the happy Katherine and Petruccio leave the banquet to go to bed.

Jane Eyre

Charlotte Brontë

Jane Eyre is a young orphan being raised by Mrs. Reed, her cruel, wealthy aunt. A servant named Bessie provides Jane with some of the few kindnesses she receives, telling her stories and singing songs to her. One day, as punishment for fighting with her bullying cousin John Reed, Jane's aunt imprisons Jane in the red-room, the room in which Jane's Uncle Reed died. While locked in, Jane, believing that she sees her uncle's ghost, screams and faints. She wakes to find herself in the care of Bessie and the kindly apothecary Mr. Lloyd, who suggests to Mrs. Reed that Jane be sent away to school. To Jane's delight, Mrs. Reed concurs.

Once at the Lowood School, Jane finds that her life is far from idyllic. The school's headmaster is Mr. Brocklehurst, a cruel, hypocritical, and abusive man. Brocklehurst preaches a doctrine of poverty and privation to his students while using the school's funds to provide a wealthy and opulent lifestyle for his own family. At Lowood, Jane befriends a young girl named Helen Burns, whose strong, martyrlike attitude toward the school's miseries is both helpful and displeasing to Jane. A massive typhus epidemic sweeps Lowood, and Helen dies of consumption. The epidemic also results in the departure of Mr. Brocklehurst by attracting attention to the insalubrious conditions at Lowood. After a group of more sympathetic gentlemen takes Brocklehurst's place, Jane's life improves dramatically. She spends eight more years at Lowood, six as a student and two as a teacher.

After teaching for two years, Jane yearns for new experiences. She accepts a governess position at a manor called Thornfield, where she teaches a lively French girl named Adèle. The distinguished housekeeper Mrs. Fairfax presides over the estate. Jane's employer at Thornfield is a dark, impassioned man named Rochester, with whom Jane finds herself falling secretly in love. She saves Rochester from a fire one night, which he claims was started by a drunken servant named Grace Poole. But because Grace Poole continues to work at Thornfield, Jane concludes that she has not been told the entire story. Jane sinks into despondency when Rochester brings home a beautiful but vicious woman named Blanche Ingram. Jane expects Rochester to propose to Blanche. But Rochester instead proposes to Jane, who accepts almost disbelievingly.

The wedding day arrives, and as Jane and Mr. Rochester prepare to exchange their vows, the voice of Mr. Mason cries out that Rochester already has a wife. Mason introduces himself as the brother of that wife—a woman named Bertha. Mr. Mason testifies that Bertha, whom Rochester married when he was a young man in Jamaica, is still alive. Rochester does not deny Mason's claims, but he explains that Bertha has gone mad. He takes the wedding party back to Thornfield, where they witness the insane Bertha Mason scurrying around on all fours and growling like an animal. Rochester keeps Bertha hidden on the third story of Thornfield and pays Grace Poole to keep his wife under control. Bertha was the real cause of the mysterious fire earlier in the story. Knowing that it is impossible for her to be with Rochester, Jane flees Thornfield.

Penniless and hungry, Jane is forced to sleep outdoors and beg for food. At last, three siblings who live in a manor alternatively called Marsh End and Moor House take her in. Their names are Mary, Diana, and St. John (pronounced "Sinjin") Rivers, and Jane quickly becomes friends with them. St. John is a clergyman, and he finds Jane a job teaching at a charity school in Morton. He

surprises her one day by declaring that her uncle, John Eyre, has died and left her a large fortune: 20,000 pounds. When Jane asks how he received this news, he shocks her further by declaring that her uncle was also his uncle: Jane and the Riverses are cousins. Jane immediately decides to share her inheritance equally with her three newfound relatives.

St. John decides to travel to India as a missionary, and he urges Jane to accompany him—as his wife. Jane agrees to go to India but refuses to marry her cousin because she does not love him. St. John pressures her to reconsider, and she nearly gives in. However, she realizes that she cannot abandon forever the man she truly loves when one night she hears Rochester's voice calling her name over the moors. Jane immediately hurries back to Thornfield and finds that it has been burned to the ground by Bertha Mason, who lost her life in the fire. Rochester saved the servants but lost his eyesight and one of his hands. Jane travels on to Rochester's new residence, Ferndean, where he lives with two servants named John and Mary.

At Ferndean, Rochester and Jane rebuild their relationship and soon marry. At the end of her story, Jane writes that she has been married for ten blissful years and that she and Rochester enjoy perfect equality in their life together. She says that after two years of blindness, Rochester regained sight in one eye and was able to behold their first son at his birth.

Wuthering Heights

Emily Brontë

In the late winter months of 1801, a man named Lockwood rents a manor house called Thrushcross Grange in the isolated moor country of England. Here, he meets his dour landlord, Heathcliff, a wealthy man who lives in the ancient manor of Wuthering Heights, four miles away from the Grange. In this wild, stormy countryside, Lockwood asks his housekeeper, Nelly Dean, to tell him the story of Heathcliff and the strange denizens of Wuthering Heights. Nelly consents, and Lockwood writes down his recollections of her tale in his diary; these written recollections form the main part of Wuthering Heights.

Nelly remembers her childhood. As a young girl, she works as a servant at Wuthering Heights for the owner of the manor, Mr. Earnshaw, and his family. One day, Mr. Earnshaw goes to Liverpool and returns home with an orphan boy whom he will raise with his own children. At first, the Earnshaw children—a boy named Hindley and his younger sister Catherine—detest the dark-skinned Heathcliff. But Catherine quickly comes to love him, and the two soon grow inseparable, spending their days playing on the moors. After his wife's death, Mr. Earnshaw grows to prefer Heathcliff to his own son, and when Hindley continues his cruelty to Heathcliff, Mr. Earnshaw sends Hindley away to college, keeping Heathcliff nearby.

Three years later, Mr. Earnshaw dies, and Hindley inherits Wuthering Heights. He returns with a wife, Frances, and immediately seeks revenge on Heathcliff. Once an orphan, later a pampered and favored son, Heathcliff now finds himself treated as a common laborer, forced to work in the fields. Heathcliff continues his close relationship with Catherine, however. One night they wander to Thrushcross Grange, hoping to tease Edgar and Isabella Linton, the cowardly, snobbish children who live there. Catherine is bitten by a dog and is forced to stay at the Grange to recuperate for five weeks, during which time Mrs. Linton works to make her a proper young lady. By the time Catherine returns, she has become infatuated with Edgar, and her relationship with Heathcliff grows more complicated.

When Frances dies after giving birth to a baby boy named Hareton, Hindley descends into the depths of alcoholism, and behaves even more cruelly and abusively toward Heathcliff. Eventually, Catherine's desire for social advancement prompts her to become engaged to Edgar

Linton, despite her overpowering love for Heathcliff. Heathcliff runs away from Wuthering Heights, staying away for three years, and returning shortly after Catherine and Edgar's marriage.

When Heathcliff returns, he immediately sets about seeking revenge on all who have wronged him. Having come into a vast and mysterious wealth, he deviously lends money to the drunken Hindley, knowing that Hindley will increase his debts and fall into deeper despondency. When Hindley dies, Heathcliff inherits the manor. He also places himself in line to inherit Thrushcross Grange by marrying Isabella Linton, whom he treats very cruelly. Catherine becomes ill, gives birth to a daughter, and dies. Heathcliff begs her spirit to remain on Earth—she may take whatever form she will, she may haunt him, drive him mad—just as long as she does not leave him alone. Shortly thereafter, Isabella flees to London and gives birth to Heathcliff's son, named Linton after her family. She keeps the boy with her there.

Thirteen years pass, during which Nelly Dean serves as Catherine's daughter's nursemaid at Thrushcross Grange. Young Catherine is beautiful and headstrong like her mother, but her temperament is modified by her father's gentler influence. Young Catherine grows up at the Grange with no knowledge of Wuthering Heights; one day, however, wandering through the moors, she discovers the manor, meets Hareton, and plays together with him. Soon afterwards, Isabella dies, and Linton comes to live with Heathcliff. Heathcliff treats his sickly, whining son even more cruelly than he treated the boy's mother.

Three years later, Catherine meets Heathcliff on the moors, and makes a visit to Wuthering Heights to meet Linton. She and Linton begin a secret romance conducted entirely through letters. When Nelly destroys Catherine's collection of letters, the girl begins sneaking out at night to spend time with her frail young lover, who asks her to come back and nurse him back to health. However, it quickly becomes apparent that Linton is pursuing Catherine only because Heathcliff is forcing him to; Heathcliff hopes that if Catherine marries Linton, his legal claim upon Thrushcross Grange—and his revenge upon Edgar Linton—will be complete. One day, as Edgar Linton grows ill and nears death, Heathcliff lures Nelly and Catherine back to Wuthering Heights, and holds them prisoner until Catherine marries Linton. Soon after the marriage, Edgar dies, and his death is quickly followed by the death of the sickly Linton. Heathcliff now controls both Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange. He forces Catherine to live at Wuthering Heights and act as a common servant, while he rents Thrushcross Grange to Lockwood.

Nelly's story ends as she reaches the present. Lockwood, appalled, ends his tenancy at Thrushcross Grange and returns to London. However, six months later, he pays a visit to Nelly, and learns of further developments in the story. Although Catherine originally mocked Hareton's ignorance and illiteracy (in an act of retribution, Heathcliff ended Hareton's education after Hindley died), Catherine grows to love Hareton as they live together at Wuthering Heights. Heathcliff becomes more and more obsessed with the memory of the elder Catherine, to the extent that he begins speaking to her ghost. Everything he sees reminds him of her. Shortly after a night spent walking on the moors, Heathcliff dies. Hareton and young Catherine inherit Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange, and they plan to be married on the next New Year's Day. After hearing the end of the story, Lockwood goes to visit the graves of Catherine and Heathcliff.

A Raisin In The Sun

Lorraine Hansberry

ARaisin in the Sun portrays a few weeks in the life of the Youngers, an African-American family living on the South Side of Chicago in the 1950s. When the play opens, the Youngers are about to receive an insurance check for $10,000. This money comes from the deceased Mr. Younger's life insurance policy. Each of the adult members of the family has an idea as to what he or she would like to do with this money. The matriarch of the family, Mama, wants to buy a house to fulfill a dream she shared with her husband. Mama's son, Walter Lee, would rather use the money to invest in a liquor store with his friends. He believes that the investment will solve the family's financial problems forever. Walter's wife, Ruth, agrees with Mama, however, and hopes that she and Walter can provide more space and opportunity for their son, Travis. Finally, Beneatha, Walter's sister and Mama's daughter, wants to use the money for her medical school tuition. She also wishes that her family members were not so interested in joining the white world. Beneatha instead tries to find her identity by looking back to the past and to Africa.

As the play progresses, the Youngers clash over their competing dreams. Ruth discovers that she is pregnant but fears that if she has the child, she will put more financial pressure on her family members. When Walter says nothing to Ruth's admission that she is considering abortion, Mama puts a down payment on a house for the whole family. She believes that a bigger, brighter dwelling will help them all. This house is in Clybourne Park, an entirely white neighborhood. When the Youngers' future neighbors find out that the Youngers are moving in, they send Mr. Lindner, from the Clybourne Park Improvement Association, to offer the Youngers money in return for staying away. The Youngers refuse the deal, even after Walter loses the rest of the money ($6,500) to his friend Willy Harris, who persuades Walter to invest in the liquor store and then runs off with his cash.

In the meantime, Beneatha rejects her suitor, George Murchison, whom she believes to be shallow and blind to the problems of race. Subsequently, she receives a marriage proposal from her Nigerian boyfriend, Joseph Asagai, who wants Beneatha to get a medical degree and move to Africa with him (Beneatha does not make her choice before the end of the play). The Youngers eventually move out of the apartment, fulfilling the family's long-held dream. Their future seems uncertain and slightly dangerous, but they are optimistic and determined to live a better life. They believe that they can succeed if they stick together as a family and resolve to defer their dreams no longer.

Robinson Crusoe

Daniel Defoe

Robinson Crusoe is an Englishman from the town of York in the seventeenth century, the youngest son of a merchant of German origin. Encouraged by his father to study law, Crusoe expresses his wish to go to sea instead. His family is against Crusoe going out to sea, and his father explains that it is better to seek a modest, secure life for oneself. Initially, Robinson is committed to obeying his father, but he eventually succumbs to temptation and embarks on a ship bound for London with a friend. When a storm causes the near deaths of Crusoe and his friend, the friend is dissuaded from sea travel, but Crusoe still goes on to set himself up as merchant on a ship leaving London. This trip is financially successful, and Crusoe plans another,

leaving his early profits in the care of a friendly widow. The second voyage does not prove as fortunate: the ship is seized by Moorish pirates, and Crusoe is enslaved to a potentate in the North African town of Sallee. While on a fishing expedition, he and a slave boy break free and sail down the African coast. A kindly Portuguese captain picks them up, buys the slave boy from Crusoe, and takes Crusoe to Brazil. In Brazil, Crusoe establishes himself as a plantation owner and soon becomes successful. Eager for slave labor and its economic advantages, he embarks on a slave-gathering expedition to West Africa but ends up shipwrecked off of the coast of Trinidad. Crusoe soon learns he is the sole survivor of the expedition and seeks shelter and food for himself. He returns to the wreck's remains twelve times to salvage guns, powder, food, and other items. Onshore, he finds goats he can graze for meat and builds himself a shelter. He erects a cross that he inscribes with the date of his arrival, September 1, 1659, and makes a notch every day in order never to lose track of time. He also keeps a journal of his household activities, noting his attempts to make candles, his lucky discovery of sprouting grain, and his construction of a cellar, among other events. In June 1660, he falls ill and hallucinates that an angel visits, warning him to repent. Drinking tobacco-steeped rum, Crusoe experiences a religious illumination and realizes that God has delivered him from his earlier sins. After recovering, Crusoe makes a survey of the area and discovers he is on an island. He finds a pleasant valley abounding in grapes, where he builds a shady retreat. Crusoe begins to feel more optimistic about being on the island, describing himself as its "king." He trains a pet parrot, takes a goat as a pet, and develops skills in basket weaving, bread making, and pottery. He cuts down an enormous cedar tree and builds a huge canoe from its trunk, but he discovers that he cannot move it to the sea. After building a smaller boat, he rows around the island but nearly perishes when swept away by a powerful current. Reaching shore, he hears his parrot calling his name and is thankful for being saved once again. He spends several years in peace.

One day Crusoe is shocked to discover a man's footprint on the beach. He first assumes the footprint is the devil's, then decides it must belong to one of the cannibals said to live in the region. Terrified, he arms himself and remains on the lookout for cannibals. He also builds an underground cellar in which to herd his goats at night and devises a way to cook underground. One evening he hears gunshots, and the next day he is able to see a ship wrecked on his coast. It is empty when he arrives on the scene to investigate. Crusoe once again thanks Providence for having been saved. Soon afterward, Crusoe discovers that the shore has been strewn with human carnage, apparently the remains of a cannibal feast. He is alarmed and continues to be vigilant. Later Crusoe catches sight of thirty cannibals heading for shore with their victims. One of the victims is killed. Another one, waiting to be slaughtered, suddenly breaks free and runs toward Crusoe's dwelling. Crusoe protects him, killing one of the pursuers and injuring the other, whom the victim finally kills. Well-armed, Crusoe defeats most of the cannibals onshore. The victim vows total submission to Crusoe in gratitude for his liberation. Crusoe names him Friday, to commemorate the day on which his life was saved, and takes him as his servant.

Finding Friday cheerful and intelligent, Crusoe teaches him some English words and some elementary Christian concepts. Friday, in turn, explains that the cannibals are divided into distinct nations and that they only eat their enemies. Friday also informs Crusoe that the cannibals saved the men from the shipwreck Crusoe witnessed earlier, and that those men, Spaniards, are living nearby. Friday expresses a longing to return to his people, and Crusoe is upset at the prospect of losing Friday. Crusoe then entertains the idea of making contact with the Spaniards, and Friday admits that he would rather die than lose Crusoe. The two build a boat to visit the cannibals' land together. Before they have a chance to leave, they are surprised by the

arrival of twenty-one cannibals in canoes. The cannibals are holding three victims, one of whom is in European dress. Friday and Crusoe kill most of the cannibals and release the European, a Spaniard. Friday is overjoyed to discover that another of the rescued victims is his father. The four men return to Crusoe's dwelling for food and rest. Crusoe prepares to welcome them into his community permanently. He sends Friday's father and the Spaniard out in a canoe to explore the nearby land.

Eight days later, the sight of an approaching English ship alarms Friday. Crusoe is suspicious. Friday and Crusoe watch as eleven men take three captives onshore in a boat. Nine of the men explore the land, leaving two to guard the captives. Friday and Crusoe overpower these men and release the captives, one of whom is the captain of the ship, which has been taken in a mutiny. Shouting to the remaining mutineers from different points, Friday and Crusoe confuse and tire the men by making them run from place to place. Eventually they confront the mutineers, telling them that all may escape with their lives except the ringleader. The men surrender. Crusoe and the captain pretend that the island is an imperial territory and that the governor has spared their lives in order to send them all to England to face justice. Keeping five men as hostages, Crusoe sends the other men out to seize the ship. When the ship is brought in, Crusoe nearly faints.

On December 19, 1686, Crusoe boards the ship to return to England. There, he finds his family is deceased except for two sisters. His widow friend has kept Crusoe's money safe, and after traveling to Lisbon, Crusoe learns from the Portuguese captain that his plantations in Brazil have been highly profitable. He arranges to sell his Brazilian lands. Wary of sea travel, Crusoe attempts to return to England by land but is threatened by bad weather and wild animals in northern Spain. Finally arriving back in England, Crusoe receives word that the sale of his plantations has been completed and that he has made a considerable fortune. After donating a portion to the widow and his sisters, Crusoe is restless and considers returning to Brazil, but he is dissuaded by the thought that he would have to become Catholic. He marries, and his wife dies. Crusoe finally departs for the East Indies as a trader in 1694. He revisits his island, finding that the Spaniards are governing it well and that it has become a prosperous colony.

A Farewell To Arms

Ernest Hemingway

Lieutenant Frederic Henry is a young American ambulance driver serving in the Italian army during World War I. At the beginning of the novel, the war is winding down with the onset of winter, and Henry arranges to tour Italy. The following spring, upon his return to the front, Henry meets Catherine Barkley, an English nurse's aide at the nearby British hospital and the love interest of his friend Rinaldi. Rinaldi, however, quickly fades from the picture as Catherine and Henry become involved in an elaborate game of seduction. Grieving the recent death of her fiancé, Catherine longs for love so deeply that she will settle for the illusion of it. Her passion, even though pretended, wakens a desire for emotional interaction in Henry, whom the war has left coolly detached and numb.

When Henry is wounded on the battlefield, he is brought to a hospital in Milan to recover. Several doctors recommend that he stay in bed for six months and then undergo a necessary operation on his knee. Unable to accept such a long period of recovery, Henry finds a bold, garrulous surgeon named Dr. Valentini who agrees to operate immediately. Henry learns happily that Catherine has been transferred to Milan and begins his recuperation under her care. During the following months, his relationship with Catherine intensifies. No longer simply a game in which they exchange empty promises and playful kisses, their love becomes powerful and real.

As the lines between scripted and genuine emotions begin to blur, Henry and Catherine become tangled in their love for each other.
Once Henry's damaged leg has healed, the army grants him three weeks convalescence leave, after which he is scheduled to return to the front. He tries to plan a trip with Catherine, who reveals to him that she is pregnant. The following day, Henry is diagnosed with jaundice, and Miss Van Campen, the superintendent of the hospital, accuses him of bringing the disease on himself through excessive drinking. Believing Henry's illness to be an attempt to avoid his duty as a serviceman, Miss Van Campen has Henry's leave revoked, and he is sent to the front once the jaundice has cleared. As they part, Catherine and Henry pledge their mutual devotion.
Henry travels to the front, where Italian forces are losing ground and manpower daily. Soon after Henry's arrival, a bombardment begins. When word comes that German troops are breaking through the Italian lines, the Allied forces prepare to retreat. Henry leads his team of ambulance drivers into the great column of evacuating troops. The men pick up two engineering sergeants and two frightened young girls on their way. Henry and his drivers then decide to leave the column and take secondary roads, which they assume will be faster. When one of their vehicles bogs down in the mud, Henry orders the two engineers to help in the effort to free the vehicle. When they refuse, he shoots one of them. The drivers continue in the other trucks until they get stuck again. They send off the young girls and continue on foot toward Udine. As they march, one of the drivers is shot dead by the easily frightened rear guard of the Italian army. Another driver marches off to surrender himself, while Henry and the remaining driver seek refuge at a farmhouse. When they rejoin the retreat the following day, chaos has broken out: soldiers, angered by the Italian defeat, pull commanding officers from the melee and execute them on sight. The battle police seize Henry, who, at a crucial moment, breaks away and dives into the river. After swimming a safe distance downstream, Henry boards a train bound for Milan. He hides beneath a tarp that covers stockpiled artillery, thinking that his obligations to the war effort are over and dreaming of his return to Catherine.
Henry reunites with Catherine in the town of Stresa. From there, the two escape to safety in Switzerland, rowing all night in a tiny borrowed boat. They settle happily in a lovely alpine town called Montreux and agree to put the war behind them forever. Although Henry is sometimes plagued by guilt for abandoning the men on the front, the two succeed in living a beautiful, peaceful life. When spring arrives, the couple moves to Lausanne so that they can be closer to the hospital. Early one morning, Catherine goes into labor. The delivery is exceptionally painful and complicated. Catherine delivers a stillborn baby boy and, later that night, dies of a hemorrhage. Henry stays at her side until she is gone. He attempts to say goodbye but cannot. He walks back to his hotel in the rain.

Flowers For Algernon

Daniel Keyes

Charlie Gordon, a mentally retarded thirty-two-year-old man, is chosen by a team of scientists to undergo an experimental surgery designed to boost his intelligence. Alice Kinnian, Charlie's teacher at the Beekman College Center for Retarded Adults, has recommended Charlie for the experiment because of his exceptional eagerness to learn. The directors of the experiment, Dr. Strauss and Professor Nemur, ask Charlie to keep a journal. The entire narrative of Flowers for Algernon is composed of the "progress reports" that Charlie writes.
Charlie works at Donner's Bakery in New York City as a janitor and delivery boy. The other employees often taunt him and pick on him, but Charlie is unable to understand that he is the

subject of mockery. He believes that his coworkers are good friends. After a battery of tests—including a maze-solving competition with a mouse named Algernon, who has already had the experimental surgery performed on him—Charlie undergoes the operation. He is initially disappointed that there is no immediate change in his intellect, but with work and help from Alice, he gradually improves his spelling and grammar. Charlie begins to read adult books, slowly at first, then voraciously, filling his brain with knowledge from many academic fields. He shocks the workers at the bakery by inventing a process designed to improve productivity. Charlie also begins to recover lost memories of his childhood, most of which involve his mother, Rose, who resented and often brutally punished Charlie for not being normal like other children. As Charlie becomes more intelligent, he realizes that he is deeply attracted to Alice. She insists on keeping their relationship professional, but it is obvious that she shares Charlie's attraction. When Charlie discovers that one of the bakery employees is stealing from Mr. Donner, he is uncertain what to do until Alice tells him to trust his heart. Delighted by the realization that he is capable of solving moral dilemmas on his own, Charlie confronts the worker and forces him to stop cheating Donner. Not long afterward, Charlie is let go from the bakery because the other workers are disturbed by the sudden change in him, and because Donner can see that Charlie no longer needs his charity. Charlie grows closer to Alice, though whenever the mood becomes too intimate, he experiences a sensation of panic and feels as if his old disabled self is watching him. Charlie recovers memories of his mother beating him for the slightest sexual impulses, and he realizes that this past trauma is likely responsible for his inability to make love to Alice.

Dr. Strauss and Professor Nemur take Charlie and Algernon to a scientific convention in Chicago, where they are the star exhibits. Charlie has become frustrated by Nemur's refusal to recognize his humanity. He feels that Nemur treats him like just another lab animal, even though it is disturbingly clear that Charlie's scientific knowledge has advanced beyond Nemur's. Charlie wreaks havoc at the convention by freeing Algernon from his cage while they are onstage. Charlie flees back to New York with Algernon and gets his own apartment, where the scientists cannot find him. He realizes that Nemur's hypothesis contains an error and that there is a possibility that his intelligence gain will only be temporary.

Charlie meets his neighbor, an attractive, free-spirited artist named Fay Lillman. Charlie does not tell Fay about his past, and he is able to consummate a sexual relationship with her. The foundation that has funded the experiment gives Charlie dispensation to do his own research, so he returns to the lab. However, his commitment to his work begins to consume him, and he drifts away from Fay.

Algernon's intelligence begins to slip, and his behavior becomes erratic. Charlie worries that whatever happens to Algernon will soon happen to him as well. Algernon eventually dies. Fearing a regression to his previous level of intelligence, Charlie visits his mother and sister in order to try to come to terms with his past. He finds the experience moving, thrilling, and devastating. Charlie's mother, now a demented old woman, expresses pride in his accomplishments, and his sister is overjoyed to see him. However, Rose suddenly slips into a delusional flashback and attacks Charlie with a butcher knife. He leaves sobbing, but he feels that he has finally overcome his painful background and become a fully developed individual. Charlie succeeds in finding the error in Nemur's hypothesis, scientifically proving that a flaw in the operation will cause his intelligence to vanish as quickly as it has come. Charlie calls this phenomenon the "Algernon-Gordon Effect." As he passes through a stage of average intelligence on his way back to retardation, Charlie enjoys a brief, passionate relationship with Alice, but he sends her away as he senses the return of his old self. When Charlie's regression is complete, he

briefly returns to his old job at the bakery, where his coworkers welcome him back with kindness.
Charlie forgets that he is no longer enrolled in Alice's night-school class for retarded adults, and he upsets her by showing up. In fact, Charlie has forgotten their entire romantic relationship. Having decided to remove himself from the people who have known him and now feel sorry for him, he checks himself into a home for disabled adults. His last request is for the reader of his manuscript to leave fresh flowers on Algernon's grave.

Silas Marner

George Eliot

Silas Marner is the weaver in the English countryside village of Raveloe in the early nineteenth century. Like many weavers of his time, he is an outsider—the object of suspicion because of his special skills and the fact that he has come to Raveloe from elsewhere. The villagers see Silas as especially odd because of the curious cataleptic fits he occasionally suffers. Silas has ended up in Raveloe because the members of his religious sect in Lantern Yard, an insular neighborhood in a larger town, falsely accused him of theft and excommunicated him.
Much shaken after the accusation, Silas finds nothing familiar in Raveloe to reawaken his faith and falls into a numbing routine of solitary work. His one attempt at neighborliness backfires: when an herbal remedy he suggests for a neighbor's illness works, he is rumored to be a sort of witch doctor. With little else to live for, Silas becomes infatuated with the money he earns for his work and hoards it, living off as little as possible. Every night he pulls his gold out from its hiding place beneath his floorboards to count it. He carries on in this way for fifteen years.
Squire Cass is the wealthiest man in Raveloe, and his two eldest sons are Godfrey and Dunstan, or Dunsey. Dunsey is greedy and cruel, and enjoys tormenting Godfrey, the eldest son. Godfrey is good-natured but weak-willed, and, though secretly married to the opium addict Molly Farren, he is in love with Nancy Lammeter. Dunsey talked Godfrey into the marriage and repeatedly blackmails him with threats to reveal the marriage to their father. Godfrey gives Dunsey 100 pounds of the rent money paid to him by one of their father's tenants. Godfrey then finds himself in a bind when Dunsey insists that Godfrey repay the sum himself. Dunsey once again threatens to reveal Godfrey's marriage but, after some arguing, offers to sell Godfrey's prize horse, Wildfire, to repay the loan.
The next day, Dunsey meets with some friends who are hunting and negotiates the sale of the horse. Dunsey decides to participate in the hunt before finalizing the sale, and, in doing so, he has a riding accident that kills the horse. Knowing the rumors of Silas's hoard, Dunsey makes plans to intimidate the weaver into lending him money. His walk home takes him by Silas's cottage, and, finding the cottage empty, Dunsey steals the money instead.
Silas returns from an errand to find his money gone. Overwhelmed by the loss, he runs to the local tavern for help and announces the theft to a sympathetic audience of tavern regulars. The theft becomes the talk of the village, and a theory arises that the thief might have been a peddler who came through the village some time before. Godfrey, meanwhile, is distracted by thoughts of Dunsey, who has not returned home. After hearing that Wildfire has been found dead, Godfrey decides to tell his father about the money, though not about his marriage. The Squire flies into a rage at the news, but does not do anything drastic to punish Godfrey.
Silas is utterly disconsolate at the loss of his gold and numbly continues his weaving. Some of the townspeople stop by to offer their condolences and advice. Among these visitors, Dolly

Winthrop stands out. Like many of the others, she encourages Silas to go to church—something he has not done since he was banished from Lantern Yard—but she is also gentler and more genuinely sympathetic.

Nancy Lammeter arrives at Squire Cass's famed New Year's dance resolved to reject Godfrey's advances because of his unsound character. However, Godfrey is more direct and insistent than he has been in a long time, and Nancy finds herself exhilarated by the evening in spite of her resolution. Meanwhile, Molly, Godfrey's secret wife, is making her way to the Casses' house to reveal the secret marriage. She has their daughter, a toddler, in her arms. Tiring after her long walk, Molly takes a draft of opium and passes out by the road. Seeing Silas's cottage and drawn by the light of the fire, Molly's little girl wanders through the open door and falls asleep at Silas's hearth.

Silas is having one of his fits at the time and does not notice the little girl enter his cottage. When he comes to, he sees her already asleep on his hearth, and is as stunned by her appearance as he was by the disappearance of his money. A while later, Silas traces the girl's footsteps outside and finds Molly's body lying in the snow. Silas goes to the Squire's house to find the doctor, and causes a stir at the dance when he arrives with the baby girl in his arms. Godfrey, recognizing his daughter, accompanies the doctor to Silas's cottage. When the doctor declares that Molly is dead, Godfrey realizes that his secret is safe. He does not claim his daughter, and Silas adopts her. Silas grows increasingly attached to the child and names her Eppie, after his mother and sister. With Dolly Winthrop's help, Silas raises the child lovingly. Eppie begins to serve as a bridge between Silas and the rest of the villagers, who offer him help and advice and have come to think of him as an exemplary person because of what he has done. Eppie also brings Silas out of the benumbed state he fell into after the loss of his gold. In his newfound happiness, Silas begins to explore the memories of his past that he has long repressed.

The novel jumps ahead sixteen years. Godfrey has married Nancy and Squire Cass has died. Godfrey has inherited his father's house, but he and Nancy have no children. Their one daughter died at birth, and Nancy has refused to adopt. Eppie has grown into a pretty and spirited young woman, and Silas a contented father. The stone-pit behind Silas's cottage is drained to water neighboring fields, and Dunsey's skeleton is found at the bottom, along with Silas's gold. The discovery frightens Godfrey, who becomes convinced that his own secrets are destined to be uncovered as well. He confesses the truth to Nancy about his marriage to Molly and fathering of Eppie. Nancy is not angry but regretful, saying that they could have adopted Eppie legitimately if Godfrey had told her earlier.

That evening, Godfrey and Nancy decide to visit Silas's cottage to confess the truth of Eppie's lineage and claim her as their daughter. However, after hearing Godfrey and Nancy's story, Eppie tells them she would rather stay with Silas than live with her biological father. Godfrey and Nancy leave, resigning themselves to helping Eppie from afar. The next day Silas decides to visit Lantern Yard to see if he was ever cleared of the theft of which he was accused years before. The town has changed almost beyond recognition, though, and Silas's old chapel has been torn down to make way for a new factory. Silas realizes that his questions will never be answered, but he is content with the sense of faith he has regained through his life with Eppie. That summer Eppie is married to Aaron Winthrop, Dolly's son. Aaron comes to live in Silas's cottage, which has been expanded and refurbished at Godfrey's expense.

The Canterbury Tails

Geoffrey Chaucer

At the Tabard Inn, a tavern in Southwark, near London, the narrator joins a company of twenty-nine pilgrims. The pilgrims, like the narrator, are traveling to the shrine of the martyr Saint Thomas Becket in Canterbury. The narrator gives a descriptive account of twenty-seven of these pilgrims, including a Knight, Squire, Yeoman, Prioress, Monk, Friar, Merchant, Clerk, Man of Law, Franklin, Haberdasher, Carpenter, Weaver, Dyer, Tapestry-Weaver, Cook, Shipman, Physician, Wife, Parson, Plowman, Miller, Manciple, Reeve, Summoner, Pardoner, and Host. (He does not describe the Second Nun or the Nun's Priest, although both characters appear later in the book.) The Host, whose name, we find out in the Prologue to the Cook's Tale, is Harry Bailey, suggests that the group ride together and entertain one another with stories. He decides that each pilgrim will tell two stories on the way to Canterbury and two on the way back. Whomever he judges to be the best storyteller will receive a meal at Bailey's tavern, courtesy of the other pilgrims. The pilgrims draw lots and determine that the Knight will tell the first tale.

The Pearl

John Steinbeck

Kino, Juana, and their infant son, Coyotito, live in a modest brush house by the sea. One morning, calamity strikes when a scorpion stings Coyotito. Hoping to protect their son, Kino and Juana rush him to the doctor in town. When they arrive at the doctor's gate, they are turned away because they are poor natives who cannot pay enough.

Later that same morning, Kino and Juana take their family canoe, an heirloom, out to the estuary to go diving for pearls. Juana makes a poultice for Coyotito's wound, while Kino searches the sea bottom. Juana's prayers for a large pearl are answered when Kino surfaces with the largest pearl either of them has ever seen. Kino lets out a triumphant yell at his good fortune, prompting the surrounding boats to circle in and examine the treasure.

In the afternoon, the whole neighborhood gathers at Kino's brush house to celebrate his find. Kino names a list of things that he will secure for his family with his newfound wealth, including a church wedding and an education for his son. The neighbors marvel at Kino's boldness and wonder if he is foolish or wise to harbor such ambitions.

Toward evening, the local priest visits Kino to bless him in his good fortune and to remind him of his place within the church. Shortly thereafter, the doctor arrives, explaining that he was out in the morning but has come now to cure Coyotito. He administers a powdered capsule and promises to return in an hour.

In the intervening period, Coyotito grows violently ill, and Kino decides to bury the pearl under the floor in a corner of the brush house. The doctor returns and feeds Coyotito a potion to quiet his spasms. When the doctor inquires about payment, Kino explains that soon he will sell his large pearl and inadvertently glances toward the corner where he has hidden the pearl. This mention of the pearl greatly intrigues the doctor, and Kino is left with an uneasy feeling.

Before going to bed, Kino reburies the pearl under a stone in his fire hole. That night, he is roused by an intruder digging around in the corner. A violent struggle ensues, and Kino's efforts to chase away the criminal leave him bloodied. Terribly upset by this turn of events, Juana proposes that they abandon the pearl, which she considers an agent of evil.

The next morning, Kino and Juana make their way to town to sell the pearl. Juan Tomás, Kino's brother, advises Kino to be wary of cheats. Indeed, all of the dealers conspire to bid low on the pearl. Kino indignantly refuses to accept their offers, resolving instead to take his pearl to the capital. That evening, as Kino and Juana prepare to leave, Juan Tomás cautions Kino against

being overly proud, and Juana repeats her wish to be rid of the pearl. Kino silences her, explaining that he is a man and will take care of things.
In the middle of the night, Juana steals away with the pearl. Kino wakes as she leaves and pursues her, apprehending her just as she is poised to throw the pearl into the sea. He tackles her, takes the pearl back, and beats her violently, leaving her in a crumpled heap on the beach. As he returns to the brush house, a group of hostile men confronts him and tries to take the pearl from him. He fights the men off, killing one and causing the rest to flee, but drops the pearl in the process.
As Juana ascends from the shore to the brush house, she finds the pearl lying in the path. Just beyond, she sees Kino on the ground, next to the dead man. He bemoans the loss of the pearl, which she presents to him. Though Kino explains that he had no intention to kill, Juana insists that he will be labeled a murderer. They resolve to flee at once. Kino rushes back to the shore to prepare the canoe, while Juana returns home to gather Coyotito and their belongings.
Kino arrives at the shore and finds his canoe destroyed by vandals. When he climbs the hill, he sees a fire blazing, and realizes that his house has burned down. Desperate to find refuge, Kino, Juana and Coyotito duck into Juan Tomás's house, where they hide out for the day. Relieved that the three did not perish in the blaze, as the rest of the neighborhood believes, Juan Tomás and his wife, Apolonia, reluctantly agree to keep Kino and Juana's secret and provide shelter for them while pretending to be ignorant of their whereabouts.
At nightfall, Kino, Juana, and Coyotito set out for the capital. Skirting the town, they travel north until sunrise and then take covert shelter by the roadside. They sleep for most of the day and are preparing to set out again when Kino discovers that three trackers are following them. After hesitating briefly, Kino decides that they must hurry up the mountain, in hopes of eluding the trackers. A breathless ascent brings them to a water source, where they rest and take shelter in a nearby cave. Kino attempts to mislead the trackers by creating a false trail up the mountain. Kino, Juana, and Coyotito then hide in the cave and wait for an opportunity to escape back down the mountain.
The trackers are slow in their pursuit and finally arrive at the watering hole at dusk. They make camp nearby, and two of the trackers sleep while the third stands watch. Kino decides that he must attempt to attack them before the late moon rises. He strips naked to avoid being seen and sneaks up to striking distance. Just as Kino prepares to attack, Coyotito lets out a cry, waking the sleepers. When one of them fires his rifle in the direction of the cry, Kino makes his move, killing the trackers in a violent fury. In the aftermath, Kino slowly realizes that the rifle shot struck and killed his son in the cave.
The next day, Kino and Juana make their way back through town and the outlying brush houses. Juana carries her dead son slung over her shoulder. They walk all the way to the sea, as onlookers watch in silent fascination. At the shore, Kino pulls the pearl out of his clothing and takes one last, hard look at it. Then, with all his might, under a setting sun, he flings the pearl back into the sea.

Dante's Inferno

Dante Alighieri

Inferno opens on the evening of Good Friday in the year 1300. Traveling through a dark wood, Dante Alighieri has lost his path and now wanders fearfully through the forest. The sun shines down on a mountain above him, and he attempts to climb up to it but finds his way blocked by three beasts—a leopard, a lion, and a she-wolf. Frightened and helpless, Dante returns to the dark

wood. Here he encounters the ghost of Virgil, the great Roman poet, who has come to guide Dante back to his path, to the top of the mountain. Virgil says that their path will take them through Hell and that they will eventually reach Heaven, where Dante's beloved Beatrice awaits. He adds that it was Beatrice, along with two other holy women, who, seeing Dante lost in the wood, sent Virgil to guide him.

Virgil leads Dante through the gates of Hell, marked by the haunting inscription "abandon all hope, you who enter here" (III.7). They enter the outlying region of Hell, the Ante-Inferno, where the souls who in life could not commit to either good or evil now must run in a futile chase after a blank banner, day after day, while hornets bite them and worms lap their blood. Dante witnesses their suffering with repugnance and pity. The ferryman Charon then takes him and his guide across the river Acheron, the real border of Hell. The First Circle of Hell, Limbo, houses pagans, including Virgil and many of the other great writers and poets of antiquity, who died without knowing of Christ. After meeting Horace, Ovid, and Lucan, Dante continues into the Second Circle of Hell, reserved for the sin of Lust. At the border of the Second Circle, the monster Minos lurks, assigning condemned souls to their punishments. He curls his tail around himself a certain number of times, indicating the number of the circle to which the soul must go. Inside the Second Circle, Dante watches as the souls of the Lustful swirl about in a terrible storm; Dante meets Francesca, who tells him the story of her doomed love affair with Paolo da Rimini, her husband's brother; the relationship has landed both in Hell.

In the Third Circle of Hell, the Gluttonous must lie in mud and endure a rain of filth and excrement. In the Fourth Circle, the Avaricious and the Prodigal are made to charge at one another with giant boulders. The Fifth Circle of Hell contains the river Styx, a swampy, fetid cesspool in which the Wrathful spend eternity struggling with one another; the Sullen lie bound beneath the Styx's waters, choking on the mud. Dante glimpses Filippo Argenti, a former political enemy of his, and watches in delight as other souls tear the man to pieces.

Virgil and Dante next proceed to the walls of the city of Dis, a city contained within the larger region of Hell. The demons who guard the gates refuse to open them for Virgil, and an angelic messenger arrives from Heaven to force the gates open before Dante. The Sixth Circle of Hell houses the Heretics, and there Dante encounters a rival political leader named Farinata. A deep valley leads into the First Ring of the Seventh Circle of Hell, where those who were violent toward others spend eternity in a river of boiling blood. Virgil and Dante meet a group of Centaurs, creatures who are half man, half horse. One of them, Nessus, takes them into the Second Ring of the Seventh Circle of Hell, where they encounter those who were violent toward themselves (the Suicides). These souls must endure eternity in the form of trees. Dante there speaks with Pier della Vigna. Going deeper into the Seventh Circle of Hell, the travelers find those who were violent toward God (the Blasphemers); Dante meets his old patron, Brunetto Latini, walking among the souls of those who were violent toward Nature (the Sodomites) on a desert of burning sand. They also encounter the Usurers, those who were violent toward Art.

The monster Geryon transports Virgil and Dante across a great abyss to the Eighth Circle of Hell, known as Malebolge, or "evil pockets" (or "pouches"); the term refers to the circle's division into various pockets separated by great folds of earth. In the First Pouch, the Panderers and the Seducers receive lashings from whips; in the second, the Flatterers must lie in a river of human feces. The Simoniacs in the Third Pouch hang upside down in baptismal fonts while their feet burn with fire. In the Fourth Pouch are the Astrologists or Diviners, forced to walk with their heads on backward, a sight that moves Dante to great pity. In the Fifth Pouch, the Barrators (those who accepted bribes) steep in pitch while demons tear them apart. The Hypocrites in the

Sixth Pouch must forever walk in circles, wearing heavy robes made of lead. Caiphas, the priest who confirmed Jesus' death sentence, lies crucified on the ground; the other sinners tread on him as they walk. In the horrifying Seventh Pouch, the Thieves sit trapped in a pit of vipers, becoming vipers themselves when bitten; to regain their form, they must bite another thief in turn.

In the Eighth Pouch of the Eighth Circle of Hell, Dante speaks to Ulysses, the great hero of Homer's epics, now doomed to an eternity among those guilty of Spiritual Theft (the False Counselors) for his role in executing the ruse of the Trojan Horse. In the Ninth Pouch, the souls of Sowers of Scandal and Schism walk in a circle, constantly afflicted by wounds that open and close repeatedly. In the Tenth Pouch, the Falsifiers suffer from horrible plagues and diseases.

Virgil and Dante proceed to the Ninth Circle of Hell through the Giants' Well, which leads to a massive drop to Cocytus, a great frozen lake. The giant Antaeus picks Virgil and Dante up and sets them down at the bottom of the well, in the lowest region of Hell. In Caina, the First Ring of the Ninth Circle of Hell, those who betrayed their kin stand frozen up to their necks in the lake's ice. In Antenora, the Second Ring, those who betrayed their country and party stand frozen up to their heads; here Dante meets Count Ugolino, who spends eternity gnawing on the head of the man who imprisoned him in life. In Ptolomea, the Third Ring, those who betrayed their guests spend eternity lying on their backs in the frozen lake, their tears making blocks of ice over their eyes. Dante next follows Virgil into Judecca, the Fourth Ring of the Ninth Circle of Hell and the lowest depth. Here, those who betrayed their benefactors spend eternity in complete icy submersion.

A huge, mist-shrouded form lurks ahead, and Dante approaches it. It is the three-headed giant Lucifer, plunged waist-deep into the ice. His body pierces the center of the Earth, where he fell when God hurled him down from Heaven. Each of Lucifer's mouths chews one of history's three greatest sinners: Judas, the betrayer of Christ, and Cassius and Brutus, the betrayers of Julius Caesar. Virgil leads Dante on a climb down Lucifer's massive form, holding on to his frozen tufts of hair. Eventually, the poets reach the Lethe, the river of forgetfulness, and travel from there out of Hell and back onto Earth. They emerge from Hell on Easter morning, just before sunrise.

David Copperfield

Charles Dickens

Now a grown man, david copperfield tells the story of his youth. As a young boy, he lives happily with his mother and his nurse, Peggotty. His father died before he was born. During David's early childhood, his mother marries the violent Mr. Murdstone, who brings his strict sister, Miss Murdstone, into the house. The Murdstones treat David cruelly, and David bites Mr. Murdstone's hand during one beating. The Murdstones send David away to school.

Peggotty takes David to visit her family in Yarmouth, where David meets Peggotty's brother, Mr. Peggotty, and his two adopted children, Ham and Little Em'ly. Mr. Peggotty's family lives in a boat turned upside down—a space they share with Mrs. Gummidge, the widowed wife of Mr. Peggotty's brother. After this visit, David attends school at Salem House, which is run by a man named Mr. Creakle. David befriends and idolizes an egotistical young man named James Steerforth. David also befriends Tommy Traddles, an unfortunate, fat young boy who is beaten more than the others.

David's mother dies, and David returns home, where the Murdstones neglect him. He works at Mr. Murdstone's wine-bottling business and moves in with Mr. Micawber, who mismanages his

finances. When Mr. Micawber leaves London to escape his creditors, David decides to search for his father's sister, Miss Betsey Trotwood—his only living relative. He walks a long distance to Miss Betsey's home, and she takes him in on the advice of her mentally unstable friend, Mr. Dick.

Miss Betsey sends David to a school run by a man named Doctor Strong. David moves in with Mr. Wickfield and his daughter, Agnes, while he attends school. Agnes and David become best friends. Among Wickfield's boarders is Uriah Heep, a snakelike young man who often involves himself in matters that are none of his business. David graduates and goes to Yarmouth to visit Peggotty, who is now married to Mr. Barkis, the carrier. David reflects on what profession he should pursue.

On his way to Yarmouth, David encounters James Steerforth, and they take a detour to visit Steerforth's mother. They arrive in Yarmouth, where Steerforth and the Peggottys become fond of one another. When they return from Yarmouth, Miss Betsey persuades David to pursue a career as a proctor, a kind of lawyer. David apprentices himself at the London firm of Spenlow and Jorkins and takes up lodgings with a woman named Mrs. Crupp. Mr. Spenlow invites David to his house for a weekend. There, David meets Spenlow's daughter, Dora, and quickly falls in love with her.

In London, David is reunited with Tommy Traddles and Mr. Micawber. Word reaches David, through Steerforth, that Mr. Barkis is terminally ill. David journeys to Yarmouth to visit Peggotty in her hour of need. Little Em'ly and Ham, now engaged, are to be married upon Mr. Barkis's death. David, however, finds Little Em'ly upset over her impending marriage. When Mr. Barkis dies, Little Em'ly runs off with Steerforth, who she believes will make her a lady. Mr. Peggotty is devastated but vows to find Little Em'ly and bring her home.

Miss Betsey visits London to inform David that her financial security has been ruined because Mr. Wickfield has joined into a partnership with Uriah Heep. David, who has become increasingly infatuated with Dora, vows to work as hard as he can to make their life together possible. Mr. Spenlow, however, forbids Dora from marrying David. Mr. Spenlow dies in a carriage accident that night, and Dora goes to live with her two aunts. Meanwhile, Uriah Heep informs Doctor Strong that he suspects Doctor Strong's wife, Annie, of having an affair with her young cousin, Jack Maldon.

Dora and David marry, and Dora proves a terrible housewife, incompetent in her chores. David loves her anyway and is generally happy. Mr. Dick facilitates a reconciliation between Doctor Strong and Annie, who was not, in fact, cheating on her husband. Miss Dartle, Mrs. Steerforth's ward, summons David and informs him that Steerforth has left Little Em'ly. Miss Dartle adds that Steerforth's servant, Littimer, has proposed to her and that Little Em'ly has run away. David and Mr. Peggotty enlist the help of Little Em'ly's childhood friend Martha, who locates Little Em'ly and brings Mr. Peggotty to her. Little Em'ly and Mr. Peggotty decide to move to Australia, as do the Micawbers, who first save the day for Agnes and Miss Betsey by exposing Uriah Heep's fraud against Mr. Wickfield.

A powerful storm hits Yarmouth and kills Ham while he attempts to rescue a shipwrecked sailor. The sailor turns out to be Steerforth. Meanwhile, Dora falls ill and dies. David leaves the country to travel abroad. His love for Agnes grows. When David returns, he and Agnes, who has long harbored a secret love for him, get married and have several children. David pursues his writing career with increasing commercial success

Last Of The Mohican's

James Fenimore Cooper

It is the late 1750s, and the French and Indian War grips the wild forest frontier of western New York. The French army is attacking Fort William Henry, a British outpost commanded by Colonel Munro. Munro's daughters Alice and Cora set out from Fort Edward to visit their father, escorted through the dangerous forest by Major Duncan Heyward and guided by an Indian named Magua. Soon they are joined by David Gamut, a singing master and religious follower of Calvinism. Traveling cautiously, the group encounters the white scout Natty Bumppo, who goes by the name Hawkeye, and his two Indian companions, Chingachgook and Uncas, Chingachgook's son, the only surviving members of the once great Mohican tribe. Hawkeye says that Magua, a Huron, has betrayed the group by leading them in the wrong direction. The Mohicans attempt to capture the traitorous Huron, but he escapes.

Hawkeye and the Mohicans lead the group to safety in a cave near a waterfall, but Huron allies of Magua attack early the next morning. Hawkeye and the Mohicans escape down the river, but Hurons capture Alice, Cora, Heyward, and Gamut. Magua celebrates the kidnapping. When Heyward tries to convert Magua to the English side, the Huron reveals that he seeks revenge on Munro for past humiliation and proposes to free Alice if Cora will marry him. Cora has romantic feelings for Uncas, however, and angrily refuses Magua. Suddenly Hawkeye and the Mohicans burst onto the scene, rescuing the captives and killing every Huron but Magua, who escapes.

After a harrowing journey impeded by Indian attacks, the group reaches Fort William Henry, the English stronghold. They sneak through the French army besieging the fort, and, once inside, Cora and Alice reunite with their father.

A few days later, the English forces call for a truce. Munro learns that he will receive no reinforcements for the fort and will have to surrender. He reveals to Heyward that Cora's mother was part "Negro," which explains her dark complexion and raven hair. Munro accuses Heyward of racism because he prefers to marry blonde Alice over dark Cora, but Heyward denies the charge. During the withdrawal of the English troops from Fort William Henry, the Indian allies of the French indulge their bloodlust and prey upon the vulnerable retreating soldiers. In the chaos of slaughter, Magua manages to recapture Cora, Alice, and Gamut and to escape with them into the forest.

Three days later, Heyward, Hawkeye, Munro, and the Mohicans discover Magua's trail and begin to pursue the villain. Gamut reappears and explains that Magua has separated his captives, confining Alice to a Huron camp and sending Cora to a Delaware camp. Using deception and a variety of disguises, the group manages to rescue Alice from the Hurons, at which point Heyward confesses his romantic interest in her. At the Delaware village, Magua convinces the tribe that Hawkeye and his companions are their racist enemies. Uncas reveals his exalted heritage to the Delaware sage Tamenund and then demands the release of all his friends but Cora, who he admits belongs to Magua. Magua departs with Cora. A chase and a battle ensue. Magua and his Hurons suffer painful defeat, but a rogue Huron kills Cora. Uncas begins to attack the Huron who killed Cora, but Magua stabs Uncas in the back. Magua tries to leap across a great divide, but he falls short and must cling to a shrub to avoid tumbling off and dying. Hawkeye shoots him, and Magua at last plummets to his death.

Cora and Uncas receive proper burials the next morning amid ritual chants performed by the Delawares. Chingachgook mourns the loss of his son, while Tamenund sorrowfully declares that he has lived to see the last warrior of the noble race of the Mohicans.

Beowulf

Author Unknown

King Hrothgar of Denmark, a descendant of the great king Shield Sheafson, enjoys a prosperous and successful reign. He builds a great mead-hall, called Heorot, where his warriors can gather to drink, receive gifts from their lord, and listen to stories sung by the scops, or bards. But the jubilant noise from Heorot angers Grendel, a horrible demon who lives in the swamplands of Hrothgar's kingdom. Grendel terrorizes the Danes every night, killing them and defeating their efforts to fight back. The Danes suffer many years of fear, danger, and death at the hands of Grendel. Eventually, however, a young Geatish warrior named Beowulf hears of Hrothgar's plight. Inspired by the challenge, Beowulf sails to Denmark with a small company of men, determined to defeat Grendel.

Hrothgar, who had once done a great favor for Beowulf's father Ecgtheow, accepts Beowulf's offer to fight Grendel and holds a feast in the hero's honor. During the feast, an envious Dane named Unferth taunts Beowulf and accuses him of being unworthy of his reputation. Beowulf responds with a boastful description of some of his past accomplishments. His confidence cheers the Danish warriors, and the feast lasts merrily into the night. At last, however, Grendel arrives. Beowulf fights him unarmed, proving himself stronger than the demon, who is terrified. As Grendel struggles to escape, Beowulf tears the monster's arm off. Mortally wounded, Grendel slinks back into the swamp to die. The severed arm is hung high in the mead-hall as a trophy of victory.

Overjoyed, Hrothgar showers Beowulf with gifts and treasure at a feast in his honor. Songs are sung in praise of Beowulf, and the celebration lasts late into the night. But another threat is approaching. Grendel's mother, a swamp-hag who lives in a desolate lake, comes to Heorot seeking revenge for her son's death. She murders Aeschere, one of Hrothgar's most trusted advisers, before slinking away. To avenge Aeschere's death, the company travels to the murky swamp, where Beowulf dives into the water and fights Grendel's mother in her underwater lair. He kills her with a sword forged for a giant, then, finding Grendel's corpse, decapitates it and brings the head as a prize to Hrothgar. The Danish countryside is now purged of its treacherous monsters.

The Danes are again overjoyed, and Beowulf's fame spreads across the kingdom. Beowulf departs after a sorrowful goodbye to Hrothgar, who has treated him like a son. He returns to Geatland, where he and his men are reunited with their king and queen, Hygelac and Hygd, to whom Beowulf recounts his adventures in Denmark. Beowulf then hands over most of his treasure to Hygelac, who, in turn, rewards him.

In time, Hygelac is killed in a war against the Shylfings, and, after Hygelac's son dies, Beowulf ascends to the throne of the Geats. He rules wisely for fifty years, bringing prosperity to Geatland. When Beowulf is an old man, however, a thief disturbs a barrow, or mound, where a great dragon lies guarding a horde of treasure. Enraged, the dragon emerges from the barrow and begins unleashing fiery destruction upon the Geats. Sensing his own death approaching, Beowulf goes to fight the dragon. With the aid of Wiglaf, he succeeds in killing the beast, but at a heavy cost. The dragon bites Beowulf in the neck, and its fiery venom kills him moments after their encounter. The Geats fear that their enemies will attack them now that Beowulf is dead. According to Beowulf's wishes, they burn their departed king's body on a huge funeral pyre and then bury him with a massive treasure in a barrow overlooking the sea.

Moby Dick

Herman Melville

Ishmael, the narrator, announces his intent to ship aboard a whaling vessel. He has made several voyages as a sailor but none as a whaler. He travels to New Bedford, Massachusetts, where he stays in a whalers' inn. Since the inn is rather full, he has to share a bed with a harpooner from the South Pacific named Queequeg. At first repulsed by Queequeg's strange habits and shocking appearance (Queequeg is covered with tattoos), Ishmael eventually comes to appreciate the man's generosity and kind spirit, and the two decide to seek work on a whaling vessel together. They take a ferry to Nantucket, the traditional capital of the whaling industry. There they secure berths on the Pequod, a savage-looking ship adorned with the bones and teeth of sperm whales. Peleg and Bildad, the Pequod's Quaker owners, drive a hard bargain in terms of salary. They also mention the ship's mysterious captain, Ahab, who is still recovering from losing his leg in an encounter with a sperm whale on his last voyage.

The Pequod leaves Nantucket on a cold Christmas Day with a crew made up of men from many different countries and races. Soon the ship is in warmer waters, and Ahab makes his first appearance on deck, balancing gingerly on his false leg, which is made from a sperm whale's jaw. He announces his desire to pursue and kill Moby Dick, the legendary great white whale who took his leg, because he sees this whale as the embodiment of evil. Ahab nails a gold doubloon to the mast and declares that it will be the prize for the first man to sight the whale. As the Pequod sails toward the southern tip of Africa, whales are sighted and unsuccessfully hunted. During the hunt, a group of men, none of whom anyone on the ship's crew has seen before on the voyage, emerges from the hold. The men's leader is an exotic-looking man named Fedallah. These men constitute Ahab's private harpoon crew, smuggled aboard in defiance of Bildad and Peleg. Ahab hopes that their skills and Fedallah's prophetic abilities will help him in his hunt for Moby Dick.

The Pequod rounds Africa and enters the Indian Ocean. A few whales are successfully caught and processed for their oil. From time to time, the ship encounters other whaling vessels. Ahab always demands information about Moby Dick from their captains. One of the ships, the Jeroboam, carries Gabriel, a crazed prophet who predicts doom for anyone who threatens Moby Dick. His predictions seem to carry some weight, as those aboard his ship who have hunted the whale have met disaster. While trying to drain the oil from the head of a captured sperm whale, Tashtego, one of the Pequod's harpooners, falls into the whale's voluminous head, which then rips free of the ship and begins to sink. Queequeg saves Tashtego by diving into the ocean and cutting into the slowly sinking head.

During another whale hunt, Pip, the Pequod's black cabin boy, jumps from a whaleboat and is left behind in the middle of the ocean. He goes insane as the result of the experience and becomes a crazy but prophetic jester for the ship. Soon after, the Pequod meets the Samuel Enderby, a whaling ship whose skipper, Captain Boomer, has lost an arm in an encounter with Moby Dick. The two captains discuss the whale; Boomer, happy simply to have survived his encounter, cannot understand Ahab's lust for vengeance. Not long after, Queequeg falls ill and has the ship's carpenter make him a coffin in anticipation of his death. He recovers, however, and the coffin eventually becomes the Pequod's replacement life buoy.

Ahab orders a harpoon forged in the expectation that he will soon encounter Moby Dick. He baptizes the harpoon with the blood of the Pequod's three harpooners. The Pequod kills several more whales. Issuing a prophecy about Ahab's death, Fedallah declares that Ahab will first see two hearses, the second of which will be made only from American wood, and that he will be killed by hemp rope. Ahab interprets these words to mean that he will not die at sea, where there are no hearses and no hangings. A typhoon hits the Pequod, illuminating it with electrical fire. Ahab takes this occurrence as a sign of imminent confrontation and success, but Starbuck, the

ship's first mate, takes it as a bad omen and considers killing Ahab to end the mad quest. After the storm ends, one of the sailors falls from the ship's masthead and drowns—a grim foreshadowing of what lies ahead.

Ahab's fervent desire to find and destroy Moby Dick continues to intensify, and the mad Pip is now his constant companion. The Pequod approaches the equator, where Ahab expects to find the great whale. The ship encounters two more whaling ships, the Rachel and the Delight, both of which have recently had fatal encounters with the whale. Ahab finally sights Moby Dick. The harpoon boats are launched, and Moby Dick attacks Ahab's harpoon boat, destroying it. The next day, Moby Dick is sighted again, and the boats are lowered once more. The whale is harpooned, but Moby Dick again attacks Ahab's boat. Fedallah, trapped in the harpoon line, is dragged overboard to his death. Starbuck must maneuver the Pequod between Ahab and the angry whale. On the third day, the boats are once again sent after Moby Dick, who once again attacks them. The men can see Fedallah's corpse lashed to the whale by the harpoon line. Moby Dick rams the Pequod and sinks it. Ahab is then caught in a harpoon line and hurled out of his harpoon boat to his death. All of the remaining whaleboats and men are caught in the vortex created by the sinking Pequod and pulled under to their deaths. Ishmael, who was thrown from a boat at the beginning of the chase, was far enough away to escape the whirlpool, and he alone survives. He floats atop Queequeg's coffin, which popped back up from the wreck, until he is picked up by the Rachel, which is still searching for the crewmen lost in her earlier encounter with Moby Dick.

Animal Farm

George Orwell

Old Major, a prize-winning boar, gathers the animals of the Manor Farm for a meeting in the big barn. He tells them of a dream he has had in which all animals live together with no human beings to oppress or control them. He tells the animals that they must work toward such a paradise and teaches them a song called "Beasts of England," in which his dream vision is lyrically described. The animals greet Major's vision with great enthusiasm. When he dies only three nights after the meeting, three younger pigs—Snowball, Napoleon, and Squealer—formulate his main principles into a philosophy called Animalism. Late one night, the animals manage to defeat the farmer Mr. Jones in a battle, running him off the land. They rename the property Animal Farm and dedicate themselves to achieving Major's dream. The cart-horse Boxer devotes himself to the cause with particular zeal, committing his great strength to the prosperity of the farm and adopting as a personal maxim the affirmation "I will work harder."

At first, Animal Farm prospers. Snowball works at teaching the animals to read, and Napoleon takes a group of young puppies to educate them in the principles of Animalism. When Mr. Jones reappears to take back his farm, the animals defeat him again, in what comes to be known as the Battle of the Cowshed, and take the farmer's abandoned gun as a token of their victory. As time passes, however, Napoleon and Snowball increasingly quibble over the future of the farm, and they begin to struggle with each other for power and influence among the other animals. Snowball concocts a scheme to build an electricity-generating windmill, but Napoleon solidly opposes the plan. At the meeting to vote on whether to take up the project, Snowball gives a passionate speech. Although Napoleon gives only a brief retort, he then makes a strange noise, and nine attack dogs—the puppies that Napoleon had confiscated in order to "educate"—burst into the barn and chase Snowball from the farm. Napoleon assumes leadership of Animal Farm and declares that there will be no more meetings. From that point on, he asserts, the pigs alone will make all of the decisions—for the good of every animal.

Napoleon now quickly changes his mind about the windmill, and the animals, especially Boxer, devote their efforts to completing it. One day, after a storm, the animals find the windmill toppled. The human farmers in the area declare smugly that the animals made the walls too thin, but Napoleon claims that Snowball returned to the farm to sabotage the windmill. He stages a great purge, during which various animals who have allegedly participated in Snowball's great conspiracy—meaning any animal who opposes Napoleon's uncontested leadership—meet instant death at the teeth of the attack dogs. With his leadership unquestioned (Boxer has taken up a second maxim, "Napoleon is always right"), Napoleon begins expanding his powers, rewriting history to make Snowball a villain. Napoleon also begins to act more and more like a human being—sleeping in a bed, drinking whisky, and engaging in trade with neighboring farmers. The original Animalist principles strictly forbade such activities, but Squealer, Napoleon's propagandist, justifies every action to the other animals, convincing them that Napoleon is a great leader and is making things better for everyone—despite the fact that the common animals are cold, hungry, and overworked.

Mr. Frederick, a neighboring farmer, cheats Napoleon in the purchase of some timber and then attacks the farm and dynamites the windmill, which had been rebuilt at great expense. After the demolition of the windmill, a pitched battle ensues, during which Boxer receives major wounds. The animals rout the farmers, but Boxer's injuries weaken him. When he later falls while working on the windmill, he senses that his time has nearly come. One day, Boxer is nowhere to be found. According to Squealer, Boxer has died in peace after having been taken to the hospital, praising the Rebellion with his last breath. In actuality, Napoleon has sold his most loyal and long-suffering worker to a glue maker in order to get money for whisky.

Years pass on Animal Farm, and the pigs become more and more like human beings—walking upright, carrying whips, and wearing clothes. Eventually, the seven principles of Animalism, known as the Seven Commandments and inscribed on the side of the barn, become reduced to a single principle reading "all animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others." Napoleon entertains a human farmer named Mr. Pilkington at a dinner and declares his intent to ally himself with the human farmers against the laboring classes of both the human and animal communities. He also changes the name of Animal Farm back to the Manor Farm, claiming that this title is the "correct" one. Looking in at the party of elites through the farmhouse window, the common animals can no longer tell which are the pigs and which are the human beings.

Catch-22

Joseph Heller

During the second half of World War II, a soldier named Yossarian is stationed with his Air Force squadron on the island of Pianosa, near the Italian coast in the Mediterranean Sea. Yossarian and his friends endure a nightmarish, absurd existence defined by bureaucracy and violence: they are inhuman resources in the eyes of their blindly ambitious superior officers. The squadron is thrown thoughtlessly into brutal combat situations and bombing runs in which it is more important for the squadron members to capture good aerial photographs of explosions than to destroy their targets. Their colonels continually raise the number of missions that they are required to fly before being sent home, so that no one is ever sent home. Still, no one but Yossarian seems to realize that there is a war going on; everyone thinks he is crazy when he insists that millions of people are trying to kill him.

Yossarian's story forms the core of the novel, so most events are refracted through his point of view. Yossarian takes the whole war personally: unswayed by national ideals or abstract

principles, Yossarian is furious that his life is in constant danger through no fault of his own. He has a strong desire to live and is determined to be immortal or die trying. As a result, he spends a great deal of his time in the hospital, faking various illnesses in order to avoid the war. As the novel progresses through its loosely connected series of recurring stories and anecdotes, Yossarian is continually troubled by his memory of Snowden, a soldier who died in his arms on a mission when Yossarian lost all desire to participate in the war. Yossarian is placed in ridiculous, absurd, desperate, and tragic circumstances—he sees friends die and disappear, his squadron get bombed by its own mess officer, and colonels and generals volunteer their men for the most perilous battle in order to enhance their own reputations.

Catch-22 is a law defined in various ways throughout the novel. First, Yossarian discovers that it is possible to be discharged from military service because of insanity. Always looking for a way out, Yossarian claims that he is insane, only to find out that by claiming that he is insane he has proved that he is obviously sane—since any sane person would claim that he or she is insane in order to avoid flying bombing missions. Elsewhere, Catch-22 is defined as a law that is illegal to read. Ironically, the place where it is written that it is illegal is in Catch-22 itself. It is yet again defined as the law that the enemy is allowed to do anything that one can't keep him from doing. In short, then, Catch-22 is any paradoxical, circular reasoning that catches its victim in its illogic and serves those who have made the law. Catch-22 can be found in the novel not only where it is explicitly defined but also throughout the characters' stories, which are full of catches and instances of circular reasoning that trap unwitting bystanders in their snares—for instance, the ability of the powerful officer Milo Minderbinder to make great sums of money by trading among the companies that he himself owns.

As Yossarian struggles to stay alive, a number of secondary stories unfold around him. His friend Nately falls in love with a whore from Rome and woos her constantly, despite her continued indifference and the fact that her kid sister constantly interferes with their romantic rendezvous. Finally, she falls in love with Nately, but he is killed on his very next mission. When Yossarian brings her the bad news, she blames him for Nately's death and tries to stab him every time she sees him thereafter. Another subplot follows the rise of the black-market empire of Milo Minderbinder, the squadron's mess hall officer. Milo runs a syndicate in which he borrows military planes and pilots to transport food between various points in Europe, making a massive profit from his sales. Although he claims that "everyone has a share" in the syndicate, this promise is later proven false. Milo's enterprise flourishes nonetheless, and he is revered almost religiously by communities all over Europe.

The novel draws to a close as Yossarian, troubled by Nately's death, refuses to fly any more missions. He wanders the streets of Rome, encountering every kind of human horror—rape, disease, murder. He is eventually arrested for being in Rome without a pass, and his superior officers, Colonel Cathcart and Colonel Korn, offer him a choice. He can either face a court-martial or be released and sent home with an honorable discharge. There is only one condition: in order to be released, he must approve of Cathcart and Korn and state his support for their policy, which requires all the men in the squadron to fly eighty missions. Although he is tempted by the offer, Yossarian realizes that to comply would be to endanger the lives of other innocent men. He chooses another way out, deciding to desert the army and flee to neutral Sweden. In doing so, he turns his back on the dehumanizing machinery of the military, rejects the rule of Catch-22, and strives to gain control of his own life.

The Glass Menagerie

Tennessee Williams

The Glass Menagerie is a memory play, and its action is drawn from the memories of the narrator, Tom Wingfield. Tom is a character in the play, which is set in St. Louis in 1937. He is an aspiring poet who toils in a shoe warehouse to support his mother, Amanda, and sister, Laura. Mr. Wingfield, Tom and Laura's father, ran off years ago and, except for one postcard, has not been heard from since.

Amanda, originally from a genteel Southern family, regales her children frequently with tales of her idyllic youth and the scores of suitors who once pursued her. She is disappointed that Laura, who wears a brace on her leg and is painfully shy, does not attract any gentleman callers. She enrolls Laura in a business college, hoping that she will make her own and the family's fortune through a business career. Weeks later, however, Amanda discovers that Laura's crippling shyness has led her to drop out of the class secretly and spend her days wandering the city alone. Amanda then decides that Laura's last hope must lie in marriage and begins selling newspaper subscriptions to earn the extra money she believes will help to attract suitors for Laura. Meanwhile, Tom, who loathes his warehouse job, finds escape in liquor, movies, and literature, much to his mother's chagrin. During one of the frequent arguments between mother and son, Tom accidentally breaks several of the glass animal figurines that are Laura's most prized possessions.

Amanda and Tom discuss Laura's prospects, and Amanda asks Tom to keep an eye out for potential suitors at the warehouse. Tom selects Jim O'Connor, a casual friend, and invites him to dinner. Amanda quizzes Tom about Jim and is delighted to learn that he is a driven young man with his mind set on career advancement. She prepares an elaborate dinner and insists that Laura wear a new dress. At the last minute, Laura learns the name of her caller; as it turns out, she had a devastating crush on Jim in high school. When Jim arrives, Laura answers the door, on Amanda's orders, and then quickly disappears, leaving Tom and Jim alone. Tom confides to Jim that he has used the money for his family's electric bill to join the merchant marine and plans to leave his job and family in search of adventure. Laura refuses to eat dinner with the others, feigning illness. Amanda, wearing an ostentatious dress from her glamorous youth, talks vivaciously with Jim throughout the meal.

As dinner is ending, the lights go out as a consequence of the unpaid electric bill. The characters light candles, and Amanda encourages Jim to entertain Laura in the living room while she and Tom clean up. Laura is at first paralyzed by Jim's presence, but his warm and open behavior soon draws her out of her shell. She confesses that she knew and liked him in high school but was too shy to approach him. They continue talking, and Laura reminds him of the nickname he had given her: "Blue Roses," an accidental corruption of the word for Laura's medical condition, pleurosis. He reproaches her for her shyness and low self-esteem but praises her uniqueness. Laura then ventures to show him her favorite glass animal, a unicorn. Jim dances with her, but in the process, he accidentally knocks over the unicorn, breaking off its horn. Laura is forgiving, noting that now the unicorn is a normal horse. Jim then kisses her, but he quickly draws back and apologizes, explaining that he was carried away by the moment and that he actually has a serious girlfriend. Resigned, Laura offers him the broken unicorn as a souvenir.

Amanda enters the living room, full of good cheer. Jim hastily explains that he must leave because of an appointment with his fiancée. Amanda sees him off warmly but, after he is gone, turns on Tom, who had not known that Jim was engaged. Amanda accuses Tom of being an inattentive, selfish dreamer and then throws herself into comforting Laura. From the fire escape

outside of their apartment, Tom watches the two women and explains that, not long after Jim's visit, he gets fired from his job and leaves Amanda and Laura behind. Years later, though he travels far, he finds that he is unable to leave behind guilty memories of Laura.

Our Town

Thornton Wilder

Our Town is introduced and narrated by the Stage Manager, who welcomes the audience to the fictional town of Grover's Corners, New Hampshire, early on a May morning in 1901. In the opening scene, the stage is largely empty, except for some tables and chairs that represent the homes of the Gibbs and Webb families, the setting of most of the action in Act I. The set remains sparse throughout the rest of the play.

After the Stage Manager's introduction, the activities of a typical day begin. Howie Newsome, the milkman, and Joe Crowell, Jr., the paperboy, make their delivery rounds. Dr. Gibbs returns from delivering a set of twins at one of the homes in town. Mrs. Gibbs and Mrs. Webb make breakfast, send their children off to school, and meet in their gardens to gossip. The two women also discuss their modest ambitions, and Mrs. Gibbs reveals that she longs to visit Paris.

Throughout the play, the characters pantomime their activities and chores. When Howie makes his milk deliveries, for example, no horse appears onstage despite the fact that he frequently addresses his horse as "Bessie." Howie does not actually hold anything in his hands, but he pantomimes carrying bottles of milk, and the sound of clinking milk bottles comes from offstage. This deliberate abandonment of props goes hand in hand with the minimal set.

The Stage Manager interrupts the action. He calls Professor Willard and then Mr. Webb out onto the stage to tell the audience some basic facts about Grover's Corners. Mr. Webb not only reports to the audience, but also takes questions from some "audience members" who are actually characters in the play seated in the audience.

Afternoon arrives, school lets out, and George Gibbs meets his neighbor Emily Webb outside the gate of her house. We see the first inkling of George and Emily's romantic affection for one another during this scene and during Emily's subsequent conversation with her mother. The Stage Manager thanks and dismisses Emily and Mrs. Webb, then launches into a discussion of a time capsule that will be placed in the foundation of a new bank building in town. He tells us that he wishes to put a copy of Our Town into this time capsule.

Now evening, a choir in the orchestra pit begins to sing "Blessed Be the Tie That Binds." The choir, directed by the bitter yet comical choirmaster Simon Stimson, continues to sing as George and Emily talk to each other through their open windows. Mrs. Webb, Mrs. Gibbs, and their gossipy friend Mrs. Soames return home from choir practice and chat about the choirmaster's alcoholism. The women return to their respective homes. George and his sister Rebecca sit at a window and look outside. Rebecca ponders the position of Grover's Corners within the vastness of the universe, which she believes is contained within "the Mind of God." Night has fallen on Grover's Corners, and the first act comes to an end.

Act II takes place three years later, on George and Emily's wedding day. George tries to visit his fiancée, but he is shooed away by Mr. and Mrs. Webb, who insist that it is bad luck for the groom to see the bride-to-be on the wedding day anytime before the ceremony. Mrs. Webb goes upstairs to make sure Emily does not come downstairs. George is left alone with Mr. Webb. The young man and his future father-in-law awkwardly discuss marriage and how to be a virtuous husband.

The Stage Manager interjects and introduces a flashback to the previous year. George and Emily are on their way home from school. George has just been elected class president and Emily has

just been elected secretary and treasurer. George has also become something of a local baseball star. Emily tells George that his popularity has made him "conceited and stuck-up." George, though hurt, thanks Emily for her honesty, but Emily becomes mortified by her own words and asks George to forget them. The two stop at Mr. Morgan's drugstore for ice-cream sodas and, over the course of their drink, admit their mutual affection. George decides to scrap his plan of attending agriculture school in favor of staying in Grover's Corners with Emily.

We return to the day of the wedding in 1904. Both the bride and groom feel jittery, but their parents calm them down and the ceremony goes ahead as planned. The Stage Manager acts as the clergyman. The newlyweds run out through the audience, and the second act ends with the Stage Manager's announcement that it is time for another intermission.

Act III takes place nine years later, in a cemetery on a hilltop overlooking the town. Emily has died in childbirth and is about to be buried. The funeral party occupies the back of the stage. The most prominent characters in this act, the dead souls who already inhabit the cemetery, sit in chairs at the front of the stage. Among the dead are Mrs. Gibbs, Mrs. Soames, Wally Webb, and Simon Stimson. As the funeral takes place, the dead speak, serving as detached witnesses. Death has rendered them largely indifferent to earthly events. Emily joins the dead, but she misses her previous life and decides to go back and relive part of it. The other souls disapprove and advise Emily to stay in the cemetery.

With the aid of the Stage Manager, Emily steps into the past, revisiting the morning of her twelfth birthday. Howie Newsome and Joe Crowell, Jr. make their deliveries as usual. Mrs. Webb gives her daughter some presents and calls to Mr. Webb. As Emily participates, she also watches the scene as an observer, noting her parents' youth and beauty. Emily now has a nostalgic appreciation for everyday life that her parents and the other living characters do not share. She becomes agonized by the beauty and transience of everyday life and demands to be taken back to the cemetery. As Emily settles in among the dead souls, George lays prostrate by her tomb. "They don't understand," she says of the living. The stars come out over Grover's Corners, and the play ends.

The Call Of The Wild

Jack London

Buck, a powerful dog, half St. Bernard and half sheepdog, lives on Judge Miller's estate in California's Santa Clara Valley. He leads a comfortable life there, but it comes to an end when men discover gold in the Klondike region of Canada and a great demand arises for strong dogs to pull sleds. Buck is kidnapped by a gardener on the Miller estate and sold to dog traders, who teach Buck to obey by beating him with a club and, subsequently, ship him north to the Klondike.

Arriving in the chilly North, Buck is amazed by the cruelty he sees around him. As soon as another dog from his ship, Curly, gets off the boat, a pack of huskies violently attacks and kills her. Watching her death, Buck vows never to let the same fate befall him. Buck becomes the property of Francois and Perrault, two mail carriers working for the Canadian government, and begins to adjust to life as a sled dog. He recovers the instincts of his wild ancestors: he learns to fight, scavenge for food, and sleep beneath the snow on winter nights. At the same time, he develops a fierce rivalry with Spitz, the lead dog in the team. One of their fights is broken up when a pack of wild dogs invades the camp, but Buck begins to undercut Spitz's authority, and

eventually the two dogs become involved in a major fight. Buck kills Spitz and takes his place as the lead dog.

With Buck at the head of the team, Francois and Perrault's sled makes record time. However, the men soon turn the team over to a mail carrier who forces the dogs to carry much heavier loads. In the midst of a particularly arduous trip, one of the dogs becomes ill, and eventually the driver has to shoot him. At the end of this journey, the dogs are exhausted, and the mail carrier sells them to a group of American gold hunters—Hal, Charles, and Mercedes.

Buck's new masters are inexperienced and out of place in the wilderness. They overload the sled, beat the dogs, and plan poorly. Halfway through their journey, they begin to run out of food. While the humans bicker, the dogs begin to starve, and the weaker animals soon die. Of an original team of fourteen, only five are still alive when they limp into John Thornton's camp, still some distance from their destination. Thornton warns them that the ice over which they are traveling is melting and that they may fall through it. Hal dismisses these warnings and tries to get going immediately. The other dogs begin to move, but Buck refuses. When Hal begins to beat him, Thornton intervenes, knocking a knife from Hal's hand and cutting Buck loose. Hal curses Thornton and starts the sled again, but before they have gone a quarter of a mile, the ice breaks open, swallowing both the humans and the dogs.

Thornton becomes Buck's master, and Buck's devotion to him is total. He saves Thornton from drowning in a river, attacks a man who tries to start a fight with Thornton in a bar, and, most remarkably, wins a $1,600 wager for his new master by pulling a sled carrying a thousand-pound load. But Buck's love for Thornton is mixed with a growing attraction to the wild, and he feels as if he is being called away from civilization and into the wilderness. This feeling grows stronger when he accompanies Thornton and his friends in search of a lost mine hidden deep in the Canadian forest.

While the men search for gold, Buck ranges far afield, befriending wolves and hunting bears and moose. He always returns to Thornton in the end, until, one day, he comes back to camp to find that Yeehat Indians have attacked and killed his master. Buck attacks the Indians, killing several and scattering the rest, and then heads off into the wild, where he becomes the leader of a pack of wolves. He becomes a legendary figure, a Ghost Dog, fathering countless cubs and inspiring fear in the Yeehats—but every year he returns to the place where Thornton died, to mourn his master before returning to his life in the wild.

Hound of the Baskervilles

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

The Hound of the Baskervilles opens with a mini mystery—Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson speculate on the identity of the owner of a cane that has been left in their office by an unknown visitor. Wowing Watson with his fabulous powers of observation, Holmes predicts the appearance of James Mortimer, owner of the found object and a convenient entrée into the baffling curse of the Baskervilles.

Entering the office and unveiling an 18th century manuscript, Mortimer recounts the myth of the lecherous HugoBaskerville. Hugo captured and imprisoned a young country lass at his estate in Devonshire, only to fall victim to a marauding hound of hell as he pursued her along the lonesome moors late one night. Ever since, Mortimer reports, the Baskerville line has been plagued by a mysterious and supernatural black hound. The recent death of Sir Charles

Baskervillehas rekindled suspicions and fears. The next of kin, the duo finds out, has arrived in London to take up his post at Baskerville Hall, but he has already been intimidated by an anonymous note of warning and, strangely enough, the theft of a shoe.

Agreeing to take the case, Holmes and Watson quickly discover that Sir Henry Baskerville is being trailed in London by a mysterious bearded stranger, and they speculate as to whether the ghost be friend or foe. Holmes, however, announces that he is too busy in London to accompany Mortimer and Sir Henry to Devonshire to get to the bottom of the case, and he sends Dr. Watson to be his eyes and ears, insisting that he report back regularly.

Once in Devonshire, Watson discovers a state of emergency, with armed guards on the watch for an escaped convict roaming the moors. He meets potential suspects in Mr. Barrymore and Mrs. Barrymore, the domestic help, and Mr. Jack Stapleton and his sister Beryl, Baskerville neighbors.

A series of mysteries arrive in rapid succession: Barrymore is caught skulking around the mansion at night; Watson spies a lonely figure keeping watch over the moors; and the doctor hears what sounds like a dog's howling. Beryl Stapleton provides an enigmatic warning and Watson learns of a secret encounter between Sir Charles and a local woman named Laura Lyons on the night of his death.

Doing his best to unravel these threads of the mystery, Watson discovers that Barrymore's nightly jaunts are just his attempt to aid the escaped con, who turns out to be Mrs. Barrymore's brother. The doctor interviews Laura Lyons to assess her involvement, and discovers that the lonely figure surveying the moors is none other than Sherlock Holmes himself. It takes Holmes—hidden so as not to tip off the villain as to his involvement—to piece together the mystery.

Mr. Stapleton, Holmes has discovered, is actually in line to inherit the Baskerville fortune, and as such is the prime suspect. Laura Lyons was only a pawn in Stapleton's game, a Baskerville beneficiary whom Stapleton convinced to request and then miss a late night appointment with Sir Charles. Having lured Charles onto the moors, Stapleton released his ferocious pet pooch, which frightened the superstitious nobleman and caused a heart attack.

In a dramatic final scene, Holmes and Watson use the younger Baskerville as bait to catch Stapleton red-handed. After a late supper at the Stapletons', Sir Henry heads home across the moors, only to be waylaid by the enormous Stapleton pet. Despite a dense fog, Holmes and Watson are able to subdue the beast, and Stapleton, in his panicked flight from the scene, drowns in a marshland on the moors. Beryl Stapleton, who turns out to be Jack's harried wife and not his sister, is discovered tied up in his house, having refused to participate in his dastardly scheme.

Back in London, Holmes ties up the loose ends, announcing that the stolen shoe was used to give the hound Henry's scent, and that mysterious warning note came from Beryl Stapleton, whose philandering husband had denied their marriage so as to seduce and use Laura Lyons. Watson files the case closed.

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Huckleberry Finn

Mark Twain

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn opens by familiarizing us with the events of the novel that preceded it, The Adventures of Tom Sawyer. Both novels are set in the town of St. Petersburg, Missouri, which lies on the banks of the Mississippi River. At the end of Tom Sawyer, Huckleberry Finn, a poor boy with a drunken bum for a father, and his friend Tom Sawyer, a middle-class boy with an imagination too active for his own good, found a robber's stash of gold. As a result of his adventure, Huck gained quite a bit of money, which the bank held for him in trust. Huck was adopted by the Widow Douglas, a kind but stifling woman who lives with her sister, the self-righteous Miss Watson.

As Huckleberry Finn opens, Huck is none too thrilled with his new life of cleanliness, manners, church, and school. However, he sticks it out at the bequest of Tom Sawyer, who tells him that in order to take part in Tom's new "robbers' gang," Huck must stay "respectable." All is well and good until Huck's brutish, drunken father, Pap, reappears in town and demands Huck's money. The local judge, Judge Thatcher, and the Widow try to get legal custody of Huck, but another well-intentioned new judge in town believes in the rights of Huck's natural father and even takes the old drunk into his own home in an attempt to reform him. This effort fails miserably, and Pap soon returns to his old ways. He hangs around town for several months, harassing his son, who in the meantime has learned to read and to tolerate the Widow's attempts to improve him. Finally, outraged when the Widow Douglas warns him to stay away from her house, Pap kidnaps Huck and holds him in a cabin across the river from St. Petersburg.

Whenever Pap goes out, he locks Huck in the cabin, and when he returns home drunk, he beats the boy. Tired of his confinement and fearing the beatings will worsen, Huck escapes from Pap by faking his own death, killing a pig and spreading its blood all over the cabin. Hiding on Jackson's Island in the middle of the Mississippi River, Huck watches the townspeople search the river for his body. After a few days on the island, he encounters Jim, one of Miss Watson's slaves. Jim has run away from Miss Watson after hearing her talk about selling him to a plantation down the river, where he would be treated horribly and separated from his wife and children. Huck and Jim team up, despite Huck's uncertainty about the legality or morality of helping a runaway slave. While they camp out on the island, a great storm causes the Mississippi to flood. Huck and Jim spy a log raft and a house floating past the island. They capture the raft and loot the house, finding in it the body of a man who has been shot. Jim refuses to let Huck see the dead man's face.

Although the island is blissful, Huck and Jim are forced to leave after Huck learns from a woman onshore that her husband has seen smoke coming from the island and believes that Jim is hiding out there. Huck also learns that a reward has been offered for Jim's capture. Huck and Jim start downriver on the raft, intending to leave it at the mouth of the Ohio River and proceed up that river by steamboat to the free states, where slavery is prohibited. Several days' travel takes them past St. Louis, and they have a close encounter with a gang of robbers on a wrecked steamboat. They manage to escape with the robbers' loot.

During a night of thick fog, Huck and Jim miss the mouth of the Ohio and encounter a group of men looking for escaped slaves. Huck has a brief moral crisis about concealing stolen "property"—Jim, after all, belongs to Miss Watson—but then lies to the men and tells them that his father is on the raft suffering from smallpox. Terrified of the disease, the men give Huck money and hurry away. Unable to backtrack to the mouth of the Ohio, Huck and Jim continue downriver. The next night, a steamboat slams into their raft, and Huck and Jim are separated. Huck ends up in the home of the kindly Grangerfords, a family of Southern aristocrats locked in a bitter and silly feud with a neighboring clan, the Shepherdsons. The elopement of a

Grangerford daughter with a Shepherdson son leads to a gun battle in which many in the families are killed. While Huck is caught up in the feud, Jim shows up with the repaired raft. Huck hurries to Jim's hiding place, and they take off down the river.

A few days later, Huck and Jim rescue a pair of men who are being pursued by armed bandits. The men, clearly con artists, claim to be a displaced English duke (the duke) and the long-lost heir to the French throne (the dauphin). Powerless to tell two white adults to leave, Huck and Jim continue down the river with the pair of "aristocrats." The duke and the dauphin pull several scams in the small towns along the river. Coming into one town, they hear the story of a man, Peter Wilks, who has recently died and left much of his inheritance to his two brothers, who should be arriving from England any day. The duke and the dauphin enter the town pretending to be Wilks's brothers. Wilks's three nieces welcome the con men and quickly set about liquidating the estate. A few townspeople become skeptical, and Huck, who grows to admire the Wilks sisters, decides to thwart the scam. He steals the dead Peter Wilks's gold from the duke and the dauphin but is forced to stash it in Wilks's coffin. Huck then reveals all to the eldest Wilks sister, Mary Jane. Huck's plan for exposing the duke and the dauphin is about to unfold when Wilks's real brothers arrive from England. The angry townspeople hold both sets of Wilks claimants, and the duke and the dauphin just barely escape in the ensuing confusion. Fortunately for the sisters, the gold is found. Unfortunately for Huck and Jim, the duke and the dauphin make it back to the raft just as Huck and Jim are pushing off.

After a few more small scams, the duke and dauphin commit their worst crime yet: they sell Jim to a local farmer, telling him Jim is a runaway for whom a large reward is being offered. Huck finds out where Jim is being held and resolves to free him. At the house where Jim is a prisoner, a woman greets Huck excitedly and calls him "Tom." As Huck quickly discovers, the people holding Jim are none other than Tom Sawyer's aunt and uncle, Silas and Sally Phelps. The Phelpses mistake Huck for Tom, who is due to arrive for a visit, and Huck goes along with their mistake. He intercepts Tom between the Phelps house and the steamboat dock, and Tom pretends to be his own younger brother, Sid.

Tom hatches a wild plan to free Jim, adding all sorts of unnecessary obstacles even though Jim is only lightly secured. Huck is sure Tom's plan will get them all killed, but he complies nonetheless. After a seeming eternity of pointless preparation, during which the boys ransack the Phelps's house and make Aunt Sally miserable, they put the plan into action. Jim is freed, but a pursuer shoots Tom in the leg. Huck is forced to get a doctor, and Jim sacrifices his freedom to nurse Tom. All are returned to the Phelps's house, where Jim ends up back in chains.

When Tom wakes the next morning, he reveals that Jim has actually been a free man all along, as Miss Watson, who made a provision in her will to free Jim, died two months earlier. Tom had planned the entire escape idea all as a game and had intended to pay Jim for his troubles. Tom's Aunt Polly then shows up, identifying "Tom" and "Sid" as Huck and Tom. Jim tells Huck, who fears for his future—particularly that his father might reappear—that the body they found on the floating house off Jackson's Island had been Pap's. Aunt Sally then steps in and offers to adopt Huck, but Huck, who has had enough "sivilizing," announces his plan to set out for the West.

Cry, The Beloved Country

Alan Paton

In the remote village of Ndotsheni, in the Natal province of eastern South Africa, the Reverend Stephen Kumalo receives a letter from a fellow minister summoning him to Johannesburg, a city

in South Africa. He is needed there, the letter says, to help his sister, Gertrude, who the letter says has fallen ill. Kumalo undertakes the difficult and expensive journey to the city in the hopes of aiding Gertrude and of finding his son, Absalom, who traveled to Johannesburg from Ndotsheni and never returned. In Johannesburg, Kumalo is warmly welcomed by Msimangu, the priest who sent him the letter, and given comfortable lodging by Mrs. Lithebe, a Christian woman who feels that helping others is her duty. Kumalo visits Gertrude, who is now a prostitute and liquor-seller, and persuades her to come back to Ndotsheni with her young son.

A more difficult quest follows when Kumalo and Msimangu begin searching the labyrinthine metropolis of Johannesburg for Absalom. They visit Kumalo's brother, John, who has become a successful businessman and politician, and he directs them to the factory where his son and Absalom once worked together. One clue leads to another, and as Kumalo travels from place to place, he begins to see the gaping racial and economic divisions that are threatening to split his country. Eventually, Kumalo discovers that his son has spent time in a reformatory and that he has gotten a girl pregnant.

Meanwhile, the newspapers announce that Arthur Jarvis, a prominent white crusader for racial justice, has been murdered in his home by a gang of burglars. Kumalo and Msimangu learn that the police are looking for Absalom, and Kumalo's worst suspicions are confirmed when Absalom is arrested for Jarvis's murder. Absalom has confessed to the crime, but he claims that two others, including John Kumalo's son, Matthew, aided him and that he did not intend to murder Jarvis. With the help of friends, Kumalo obtains a lawyer for Absalom and attempts to understand what his son has become. John, however, makes arrangements for his own son's defense, even though this split will worsen Absalom's case. When Kumalo tells Absalom's pregnant girlfriend what has happened, she is saddened by the news, but she joyfully agrees to his proposal that she marry his son and return to Ndotsheni as Kumalo's daughter-in-law.

Meanwhile, in the hills above Ndotsheni, Arthur Jarvis's father, James Jarvis, tends his bountiful land and hopes for rain. The local police bring him news of his son's death, and he leaves immediately for Johannesburg with his wife. In an attempt to come to terms with what has happened, Jarvis reads his son's articles and speeches on social inequality and begins a radical reconsideration of his own prejudices. He and Kumalo meet for the first time by accident, and after Kumalo has recovered from his shock, he expresses sadness and regret for Jarvis's loss.

Both men attend Absalom's trial, a fairly straightforward process that ends with the death penalty for Absalom and an acquittal for his co-conspirators. Kumalo arranges for Absalom to marry the girl who bears his child, and they bid farewell. The morning of his departure, Kumalo rouses his new family to bring them back to Ndotsheni only to find that Gertrude has disappeared and run back to her old life of sin.

Kumalo is now deeply aware of how his people have lost the tribal structure that once held them together, and he returns to his village troubled by the situation. It turns out that James Jarvis has been having similar thoughts. Arthur Jarvis's young son befriends Kumalo, and as the young boy and the old man become acquainted, James Jarvis becomes increasingly involved with helping the struggling village. He donates milk at first, then makes plans for a dam and hires an agricultural expert to demonstrate newer, less devastating farming techniques. When Jarvis's wife dies, Kumalo and his congregation send a wreath to express their sympathy. Just as the diocese's bishop is on the verge of transferring Kumalo, Jarvis sends a note of thanks for the wreath and offers to build the congregation a new church, and Kumalo is permitted to stay in his parish.

On the evening before his son's execution, Kumalo goes into the mountains to await the appointed time in solitude. On the way, he encounters Jarvis, and the two men speak of the village, of lost sons, and of Jarvis's bright young grandson, whose innocence and honesty have impressed both men. When Kumalo is alone, he weeps for his son's death and clasps his hands in prayer as dawn breaks over the valley.

Cyrano de Bergerac

Edmond Rostand

In Paris, in the year 1640, a brilliant poet and swordsman named Cyrano de Bergerac finds himself deeply in love with his beautiful, intellectual cousin Roxane. Despite Cyrano's brilliance and charisma, a shockingly large nose afflicts his appearance, and he considers himself too ugly even to risk telling Roxane his feelings. One night, Cyrano goes to the playhouse at the Hotel de Bourgogne to make trouble: he has forbidden the actor Montfleury to take the stage for one month, but Montfleury plans to perform in the night's production of La Clorise, with Roxane in the audience. Also in the audience is a young, handsome nobleman named Christian, who confides in his friend Ligniere that he loves Roxane.

When Montfleury takes the stage, Cyrano bullies him off it. A group of aristocrats tries to send Cyrano away, but he challenges them all to a duel. He fights Valvert, a Vicomte whom the Comte de Guiche has selected as a husband for Roxane. As he fights, Cyrano improvises a poem about the duel. Then, upon speaking his last line, Cyrano thrusts his sword home. His victory causes a sensation, and Roxane's duenna brings him a message from her mistress, asking him to meet her in the morning. As he agrees, he learns that Ligniere has offended a powerful nobleman with his latest satire and that a hundred men are waiting to ambush him on his way home. Cyrano boldly proclaims that he will see Ligniere safely home and, if necessary, fight all hundred men in the process.

The next morning, Cyrano meets Roxane at Ragueneau's pastry shop. He nearly tells her his feelings, but she confides in him that she loves Christian, who will soon join Cyrano's company of guards, the Cadets of Gascoyne. She asks Cyrano to protect Christian, and he agrees. Outside, a crowd has gathered, buzzing with the news about Cyrano's triumphs the night before. Cyrano angrily ignores them, upset by his meeting with Roxane. When the cadets arrive, Christian tries to prove his courage by insulting Cyrano's nose—an act generally considered fatal. Instead of killing Christian, however, Cyrano embraces him and tells him about Roxane's feelings. Delighted at first, Christian then becomes distraught. He considers Roxane an intellectual and sees himself as a simple, unpoetic man. Then Cyrano has a bright idea: Cyrano can write to Roxane -pretending to be Christian. Christian agrees, welcoming the opportunity to reach Roxane's heart. Now, Cyrano can express all his thoughts and feelings secretly.

One night soon after, Roxane confides in Cyrano that she thinks Christian is the most ravishing poet in the world. Cyrano's disguised letters have moved her inexpressibly. Christian tells Cyrano he no longer wants Cyrano's help, and then makes a fool of himself trying to speak seductively to Roxane. Roxane storms into her house, confused and angry. Thinking quickly, Cyrano makes Christian stand in front of Roxane's balcony and speak to her while Cyrano stands under the balcony whispering to Christian what to say. Eventually, Cyrano shoves Christian aside

and, under cover of darkness, pretends to be Christian, wooing Roxane himself. In the process, he wins a kiss for Christian. Roxane and Christian are secretly married by a Capuchin, but their happiness is short-lived: de Guiche, angry to have lost Roxane, declares that he is sending the Cadets of Gascoyne to the front lines of the war with Spain.

At the siege of Arras, the cadets languish and suffer from hunger. Cyrano writes to Roxane every single day, using Christian's name. Moreover, he risks his life each morning by sneaking through the Spanish lines to a place where he can send the letters. De Guiche reveals that the Spaniards will attack within the hour. Suddenly, a coach arrives and Roxane climbs out of it. She has longed to see Christian, again and brings a feast to the soldiers. But Christian has guessed Cyrano's secret feelings for Roxane, and he forces Cyrano to tell her the truth and make her choose between them. On the cusp of revealing his feelings, Cyrano is interrupted by a sudden gunshot that kills Christian. Cyrano cannot tell Roxane the truth. She faints, and de Guiche redeems himself by taking her to safety while Cyrano charges into the battle.

Fifteen years later, Roxane lives in a convent, and Cyrano visits her every week. His friend Le Bret informs Roxane that Cyrano is doing very poorly—he has made many powerful enemies, and his life is constantly in danger. Then, Ragueneau rushes in and privately tells Le Bret that Cyrano has been ambushed and hit with a heavy log pushed out of a high window. His health severely jeopardized, Cyrano could die by simply raising his head from his pillow. Le Bret and Ragueneau rush off to their friend's side. No sooner have they gone than Cyrano appears at the convent, walking slowly and with a pained expression on his face, but sounding as cheerful as ever. He gives Roxane a news update.

As night falls, Cyrano asks to read Christian's last letter to her. He reads it, and when it is completely dark, he continues to read, as if he knows the letter by heart. Roxane realizes that Cyrano wrote the letters—she has found the soul she was in love with all along. Upset, Ragueneau and Le Bret rush in, proclaiming that Cyrano has killed himself by getting out of bed. Cyrano removes his hat, revealing his heavily bandaged head. Roxane exclaims that she loves him and that he cannot die. But Cyrano draws his sword and engages in one last fight with his "old enemies"—falsehood, prejudice, and compromise—slashing at the air insensibly. Then he collapses and dies, smiling as Roxane bends over him and kisses his face.

Don Quixote

Miguel de Cervantes

Don Quixote is a middle-aged gentleman from the region of La Mancha in central Spain. Obsessed with the chivalrous ideals touted in books he has read, he decides to take up his lance and sword to defend the helpless and destroy the wicked. After a first failed adventure, he sets out on a second one with a somewhat befuddled laborer named Sancho Panza, whom he has persuaded to accompany him as his faithful squire. In return for Sancho's services, Don Quixote promises to make Sancho the wealthy governor of an isle. On his horse, Rocinante, a barn nag well past his prime, Don Quixote rides the roads of Spain in search of glory and grand adventure. He gives up food, shelter, and comfort, all in the name of a peasant woman, Dulcinea del Toboso, whom he envisions as a princess.

On his second expedition, Don Quixote becomes more of a bandit than a savior, stealing from and hurting baffled and justifiably angry citizens while acting out against what he perceives as

threats to his knighthood or to the world. Don Quixote abandons a boy, leaving him in the hands of an evil farmer simply because the farmer swears an oath that he will not harm the boy. He steals a barber's basin that he believes to be the mythic Mambrino's helmet, and he becomes convinced of the healing powers of the Balsam of Fierbras, an elixir that makes him so ill that, by comparison, he later feels healed. Sancho stands by Don Quixote, often bearing the brunt of the punishments that arise from Don Quixote's behavior.

The story of Don Quixote's deeds includes the stories of those he meets on his journey. Don Quixote witnesses the funeral of a student who dies as a result of his love for a disdainful lady turned shepherdess. He frees a wicked and devious galley slave, Gines de Pasamonte, and unwittingly reunites two bereaved couples, Cardenio and Lucinda, and Ferdinand and Dorothea. Torn apart by Ferdinand's treachery, the four lovers finally come together at an inn where Don Quixote sleeps, dreaming that he is battling a giant.

Along the way, the simple Sancho plays the straight man to Don Quixote, trying his best to correct his master's outlandish fantasies. Two of Don Quixote's friends, the priest and the barber, come to drag him home. Believing that he is under the force of an enchantment, he accompanies them, thus ending his second expedition and the First Part of the novel.

The Second Part of the novel begins with a passionate invective against a phony sequel of Don Quixote that was published in the interim between Cervantes's two parts. Everywhere Don Quixote goes, his reputation—gleaned by others from both the real and the false versions of the story—precedes him.

As the two embark on their journey, Sancho lies to Don Quixote, telling him that an evil enchanter has transformed Dulcinea into a peasant girl. Undoing this enchantment, in which even Sancho comes to believe, becomes Don Quixote's chief goal.

Don Quixote meets a Duke and Duchess who conspire to play tricks on him. They make a servant dress up as Merlin, for example, and tell Don Quixote that Dulcinea's enchantment—which they know to be a hoax—can be undone only if Sancho whips himself 3,300 times on his naked backside. Under the watch of the Duke and Duchess, Don Quixote and Sancho undertake several adventures. They set out on a flying wooden horse, hoping to slay a giant who has turned a princess and her lover into metal figurines and bearded the princess's female servants.

During his stay with the Duke, Sancho becomes governor of a fictitious isle. He rules for ten days until he is wounded in an onslaught the Duke and Duchess sponsor for their entertainment. Sancho reasons that it is better to be a happy laborer than a miserable governor.

A young maid at the Duchess's home falls in love with Don Quixote, but he remains a staunch worshipper of Dulcinea. Their never-consummated affair amuses the court to no end. Finally, Don Quixote sets out again on his journey, but his demise comes quickly. Shortly after his arrival in Barcelona, the Knight of the White Moon—actually an old friend in disguise—vanquishes him.

Cervantes relates the story of Don Quixote as a history, which he claims he has translated from a manuscript written by a Moor named Cide Hamete Benengeli. Cervantes becomes a party to his own fiction, even allowing Sancho and Don Quixote to modify their own histories and comment negatively upon the false history published in their names.

In the end, the beaten and battered Don Quixote forswears all the chivalric truths he followed so fervently and dies from a fever. With his death, knights-errant become extinct. Benengeli returns at the end of the novel to tell us that illustrating the demise of chivalry was his main purpose in writing the history of Don Quixote.

A Connecticut Yankee In King Arthur's Court

Mark Twain

Mark Twain, the author and narrator of the tale, is on a visit to Warwick Castle, England, when he meets a stranger. The stranger, introducing himself as Hank Morgan from Connecticut, hands Twain a manuscript that he claims to have written during the sixth century, thirteen hundred years earlier, about his life during that time. He explains that he was injured in a fight and woke in Camelot, the court of King Arthur. What follows is his story about Camelot and the effect that he, a man of the nineteenth century, had on society of that time.

In his story, he reveals that he used his own nineteenth century understanding of technology and industry to try and revolutionize the crude country ways of the medieval people. As a result of his much more modern behavior and understanding, he was thought to be a magician whom the medieval men soon grew accustomed to calling The Boss.

His narrative, which begins in Chapter 2, starts from the moment of waking in Camelot. When he wakes, he is immediately captured by a Knight and led to the city. Once there, he is sentenced to die for speaking impertinently to the knight, whom he thinks is insane. Using his knowledge of astronomy, he remembers an eclipse that is about to happen and tells the superstitious people of Camelot that he will blot out the sun if he is not released. When the eclipse happens, the people think he is a terribly powerful magician. He is released and given a position of honor in society. The King's primary magician, Merlin, is jealous and skeptical of this new magician, and openly declares he is a fraud. The Boss, in an effort to bolster his position and humiliate the old magician, declares he will cause lightning from the sky to blow up Merlin's tower. With a few of his supporters, he produces explosives and a lightning rod and proceeds to put on a magnificent show of blowing up the old magician's tower.

Just when he is basking under the glory of power and position, he is challenged by Sir Sagramour Le Desirous to fight a duel in a tournament. However, the date is unspecified since Sagramour is leaving to find the Holy Grail. The King and other Knights insist that the Boss must also go on a quest to prove his eligibility to face Sir Sagramour. He requests some time before he leaves in order to

introduce education and technology in Camelot. With the help of Clarence he thus establishes schools, military academies, factories, telephones and telegraph operations, making Camelot very much like nineteenth century England. He does all this without the consent or knowledge of the church, which very much opposes modernizing Camelot since it will make the people more difficult to rule.

Finally, it is time for The Boss to start his quest. He accompanies Demoiselle Alisande Le Carteloise, or Sandy, on a mission to free her mistress and forty-four princesses from captivity. Burdened with a heavy armor, The Boss braves heat, exhaustion, the continuous chatter of Sandy, and a horde of Knights to reach the castle of Morgan le Fay. Morgan is pleasant to look at but cruel in her attitude to her subordinates. The Boss wins her favor by projecting himself as a powerful magician and moves on. They encounter various difficulties and meet many mythical people, including the notorious Morgan LeFay of Camelot lore. At some point, they are summoned to the Valley where the pilgrims meet, since there is a problem with the Holy Well and the people believe only The Boss can help.

The Good Earth

Pearl Buck

Wang Lung is a poor young farmer in rural, turn-of-the-century China. During the time in which the novel takes place, Chinese society is showing signs of modernization while remaining deeply connected to ancient traditions and customs. When Wang Lung reaches a marriageable age, his father approaches the powerful local Hwang family to ask if they have a spare slave who could marry his son. The Hwangs agree to sell Wang a 20-year-old slave named O-lan, who becomes his wife. O-lan and Wang Lung are pleased with each other, although they exchange few words and although Wang is initially disappointed that O-lan does not have bound feet.

Together, Wang Lung and O-lan cultivate a bountiful and profitable harvest from their land. O-lan becomes pregnant, and Wang Lung is overjoyed when O-lan's first child is a son. Meanwhile, the powerful Hwang family lives decadently—the husband is obsessed with women, and the wife is an opium addict. Because of their costly habits, the Hwangs fall on hard times, and Wang Lung is able to purchase a piece of their fertile rice land. He enjoys another profitable harvest, and O-lan gives birth to another son. Wang Lung's new wealth catches the attention of his greedy, lazy uncle. Custom dictates that Wang Lung must show the utmost respect to members of the older generation, especially relatives, so he is forced to loan his uncle money despite knowing that the money will be wasted on drinking and gambling. The Hwang family's finances continue to falter, and the Hwangs sell another tract of land to Wang Lung.

After O-lan gives birth to a daughter, a terrible famine settles on the land. In the midst of this crisis, O-lan gives birth to another daughter. She strangles the second girl because there is not enough food to feed the baby and the rest of the family. Wang Lung is forced to take his family to a southern city for the winter. There, O-lan and the children beg while Wang Lung earns money by transporting people in a rented rickshaw. They earn just enough money to eat. Wang Lung begins to despair of ever making enough money to return to his land. He and O-lan briefly consider selling their surviving daughter as a slave. Eventually, a group of poor and desperate people ransacks a rich man's home, and Wang Lung and O-lan join them. Wang Lung steals a pile of gold coins. With this new wealth, he moves the family back home and purchases a new ox and some seeds. O-lan had stolen some jewels during the looting. Wang Lung allows her to keep two small pearls, but he takes the rest and hurries to buy three hundred acres of Old Master Hwang's land. O-lan gives birth to twins shortly thereafter. The couple realizes that their oldest daughter is severely retarded, but Wang Lung loves the child dearly.

Wang Lung hires laborers to plant and harvest his land. He enjoys several years of profitable harvests and becomes a rich man. When a flood forces him to be idle, he begins to feel restless and bored. He finds fault with O-lan's appearance and cruelly criticizes her for having big feet. He becomes obsessed with Lotus, a beautiful, delicate prostitute with bound feet. Eventually, he purchases Lotus to be his concubine. When O-lan becomes terminally ill, Wang Lung regrets his cruel words and comes to appreciate everything his wife has done for him. Meanwhile, to lessen the demands of his uncle and his uncle's wife, who have moved their family into his house and continued to exploit his wealth, he tricks them into becoming opium addicts. Eventually, Wang Lung buys the Hwangs' house and moves into it with his family, leaving his own house to his uncle's family.

After O-lan's death, Wang Lung's sons begin to rebel against his plans for their life. They do not want to work as farmers and do not have his devotion to the land. Furthermore, his first and second sons often argue over money, and their wives develop an intense animosity toward one another. In his old age, Wang Lung takes a young slave, Pear Blossom, as a concubine. She promises to care for his retarded daughter after his death. In time, Wang Lung is surrounded by grandchildren, but he is also surrounded by petty family disagreements. By the end of the novel, despite Wang's passionate dissent, his sons plan to sell the family land and divide the money among themselves, signaling their final break with the land that made them wealthy.

The Great Gatsby

F. Scott Fitzgerald

Nick Carraway, a young man from Minnesota, moves to New York in the summer of 1922 to learn about the bond business. He rents a house in the West Egg district of Long Island, a wealthy but unfashionable area populated by the new rich, a group who have made their fortunes too recently to have established social connections and who are prone to garish displays of wealth. Nick's next-door neighbor in West Egg is a mysterious man named Jay Gatsby, who lives in a gigantic Gothic mansion and throws extravagant parties every Saturday night.

Nick is unlike the other inhabitants of West Egg—he was educated at Yale and has social connections in East Egg, a fashionable area of Long Island home to the established upper class. Nick drives out to East Egg one evening for dinner with his cousin, Daisy Buchanan, and her husband, Tom, an erstwhile classmate of Nick's at Yale. Daisy and Tom introduce Nick to Jordan Baker, a beautiful, cynical young woman with whom Nick begins a romantic relationship. Nick also learns a bit about Daisy and Tom's marriage: Jordan tells him that Tom has a lover, Myrtle Wilson, who lives in the valley of ashes, a gray industrial dumping ground between West Egg and New York City. Not long after this revelation, Nick travels to New York City with Tom and Myrtle. At a vulgar, gaudy party in the apartment that Tom keeps for the affair, Myrtle begins to taunt Tom about Daisy, and Tom responds by breaking her nose.

As the summer progresses, Nick eventually garners an invitation to one of Gatsby's legendary parties. He encounters Jordan Baker at the party, and they meet Gatsby himself, a surprisingly young man who affects an English accent, has a remarkable smile, and calls everyone "old sport." Gatsby asks to speak to Jordan alone, and, through Jordan, Nick later learns more about his mysterious neighbor. Gatsby tells Jordan that he knew Daisy in Louisville in 1917 and is deeply in love with her. He spends many nights staring at the green light at the end of her dock, across the bay from his mansion. Gatsby's extravagant lifestyle and wild parties are simply an attempt to impress Daisy. Gatsby now wants Nick to arrange a reunion between himself and Daisy, but he is afraid that Daisy will refuse to see him if she knows that he still loves her. Nick invites Daisy to have tea at his house, without telling her that Gatsby will also be there. After an initially awkward reunion, Gatsby and Daisy reestablish their connection. Their love rekindled, they begin an affair.

After a short time, Tom grows increasingly suspicious of his wife's relationship with Gatsby. At a luncheon at the Buchanans' house, Gatsby stares at Daisy with such undisguised passion that Tom realizes Gatsby is in love with her. Though Tom is himself involved in an extramarital affair, he is deeply outraged by the thought that his wife could be unfaithful to him. He forces the group to drive into New York City, where he confronts Gatsby in a suite at the Plaza Hotel. Tom asserts that he and Daisy have a history that Gatsby could never understand, and he announces to his wife that Gatsby is a criminal—his fortune comes from bootlegging alcohol and other illegal activities. Daisy realizes that her allegiance is to Tom, and Tom contemptuously sends her back to East Egg with Gatsby, attempting to prove that Gatsby cannot hurt him.

When Nick, Jordan, and Tom drive through the valley of ashes, however, they discover that Gatsby's car has struck and killed Myrtle, Tom's lover. They rush back to Long Island, where Nick learns from Gatsby that Daisy was driving the car when it struck Myrtle, but that Gatsby intends to take the blame. The next day, Tom tells Myrtle's husband, George, that Gatsby was the driver of the car. George, who has leapt to the conclusion that the driver of the car that killed Myrtle must have been her lover, finds Gatsby in the pool at his mansion and shoots him dead. He then fatally shoots himself.

Nick stages a small funeral for Gatsby, ends his relationship with Jordan, and moves back to the Midwest to escape the disgust he feels for the people surrounding Gatsby's life and for the emptiness and moral decay of life among the wealthy on the East Coast. Nick reflects that just as Gatsby's dream of Daisy was corrupted by money and dishonesty, the American dream of

happiness and individualism has disintegrated into the mere pursuit of wealth. Though Gatsby's power to transform his dreams into reality is what makes him "great," Nick reflects that the era of dreaming—both Gatsby's dream and the American dream—is over.

Hamlet

William Shakespeare

On a dark winter night, a ghost walks the ramparts of Elsinore Castle in Denmark. Discovered first by a pair of watchmen, then by the scholar Horatio, the ghost resembles the recently deceased King Hamlet, whose brother Claudius has inherited the throne and married the king's widow, Queen Gertrude. When Horatio and the watchmen bring Prince Hamlet, the son of Gertrude and the dead king, to see the ghost, it speaks to him, declaring ominously that it is indeed his father's spirit, and that he was murdered by none other than Claudius. Ordering Hamlet to seek revenge on the man who usurped his throne and married his wife, the ghost disappears with the dawn.

Prince Hamlet devotes himself to avenging his father's death, but, because he is contemplative and thoughtful by nature, he delays, entering into a deep melancholy and even apparent madness. Claudius and Gertrude worry about the prince's erratic behavior and attempt to discover its cause. They employ a pair of Hamlet's friends, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, to watch him. When Polonius, the pompous Lord Chamberlain, suggests that Hamlet may be mad with love for his daughter, Ophelia, Claudius agrees to spy on Hamlet in conversation with the girl. But though Hamlet certainly seems mad, he does not seem to love Ophelia: he orders her to enter a nunnery and declares that he wishes to ban marriages.

A group of traveling actors comes to Elsinore, and Hamlet seizes upon an idea to test his uncle's guilt. He will have the players perform a scene closely resembling the sequence by which Hamlet imagines his uncle to have murdered his father, so that if Claudius is guilty, he will surely react. When the moment of the murder arrives in the theater, Claudius leaps up and leaves the room. Hamlet and Horatio agree that this proves his guilt. Hamlet goes to kill Claudius but finds him praying. Since he believes that killing Claudius while in prayer would send Claudius's soul to heaven, Hamlet considers that it would be an inadequate revenge and decides to wait. Claudius, now frightened of Hamlet's madness and fearing for his own safety, orders that Hamlet be sent to England at once.

Hamlet goes to confront his mother, in whose bedchamber Polonius has hidden behind a tapestry. Hearing a noise from behind the tapestry, Hamlet believes the king is hiding there. He draws his sword and stabs through the fabric, killing Polonius. For this crime, he is immediately dispatched to England with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. However, Claudius's plan for Hamlet includes more than banishment, as he has given Rosencrantz and Guildenstern sealed orders for the King of England demanding that Hamlet be put to death.

In the aftermath of her father's death, Ophelia goes mad with grief and drowns in the river. Polonius's son, Laertes, who has been staying in France, returns to Denmark in a rage. Claudius convinces him that Hamlet is to blame for his father's and sister's deaths. When Horatio and the king receive letters from Hamlet indicating that the prince has returned to Denmark after pirates attacked his ship en route to England, Claudius concocts a plan to use Laertes' desire for revenge to secure Hamlet's death. Laertes will fence with Hamlet in innocent sport, but Claudius will poison Laertes' blade so that if he draws blood, Hamlet will die. As a backup plan, the king decides to poison a goblet, which he will give Hamlet to drink should Hamlet score the first or second hits of the match. Hamlet returns to the vicinity of Elsinore just as Ophelia's funeral is taking place. Stricken with grief, he attacks Laertes and declares that he had in fact always loved Ophelia. Back at the castle, he tells Horatio that he believes one must be prepared to die, since death can come at any moment. A foolish courtier named Osric arrives on Claudius's orders to arrange the fencing match between Hamlet and Laertes.

The sword-fighting begins. Hamlet scores the first hit, but declines to drink from the king's proffered goblet. Instead, Gertrude takes a drink from it and is swiftly killed by the poison. Laertes succeeds in wounding Hamlet, though Hamlet does not die of the poison immediately. First, Laertes is cut by his own sword's blade, and, after revealing to Hamlet that Claudius is responsible for the queen's death, he dies from the blade's poison. Hamlet then stabs Claudius through with the poisoned sword and forces him to drink down the rest of the poisoned wine. Claudius dies, and Hamlet dies immediately after achieving his revenge.

At this moment, a Norwegian prince named Fortinbras, who has led an army to Denmark and attacked Poland earlier in the play, enters with ambassadors from England, who report that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are dead. Fortinbras is stunned by the gruesome sight of the entire royal family lying sprawled on the floor dead. He moves to take power of the kingdom. Horatio, fulfilling Hamlet's last request, tells him Hamlet's tragic story. Fortinbras orders that Hamlet be carried away in a manner befitting a fallen soldier.

Ivanhoe

Sir Walter Scott

It is a dark time for England. Four generations after the Norman conquest of the island, the tensions between Saxons and Normans are at a peak; the two peoples even refuse to speak one another's languages. King Richard is in an Austrian prison after having been captured on his way home from the Crusades; his avaricious brother, Prince John, sits on the throne, and under his reign the Norman nobles have begun routinely abusing their power. Saxon lands are capriciously repossessed, and many Saxon landowners are made into serfs. These practices have enraged the Saxon nobility, particularly the fiery Cedric of Rotherwood. Cedric is so loyal to the Saxon cause that he has disinherited his son Ivanhoe for following King Richard to war. Additionally, Ivanhoe fell in love with Cedric's high-born ward Rowena, whom Cedric intends to marry to Athelstane, a descendent of a long-dead Saxon king. Cedric hopes that the union will reawaken the Saxon royal line.

Unbeknownst to his father, Ivanhoe has recently returned to England disguised as a religious pilgrim. Assuming a new disguise as the Disinherited Knight, he fights in the great tournament at Ashby-de-la-Zouche. Here, with the help of a mysterious Black Knight, he vanquishes his great enemy, the Templar Brian de Bois-Guilbert, and wins the tournament. He names Rowena the Queen of Love and Beauty, and reveals his identity to the crowd. But he is badly wounded and collapses on the field. In the meantime, the wicked Prince John has heard a rumor that Richard is free from his Austrian prison. He and his advisors, Waldemar Fitzurse, Maurice de Bracy, and Reginald Front-de-Boeuf, begin plotting how to stop Richard from returning to power in England.

John has a scheme to marry Rowena to de Bracy; unable to wait, de Bracy kidnaps Cedric's party on its way home from the tournament, imprisoning the Saxons in Front-de-Boeuf's castle of Torquilstone. With the party are Cedric, Rowena, and Athelstane, as well as Isaac and Rebecca, a Jewish father and daughter who have been tending to Ivanhoe after his injury, and Ivanhoe himself. De Bracy attempts to convince Rowena to marry him, while de Bois-Guilbert attempts to seduce Rebecca, who has fallen in love with Ivanhoe. Both men fail, and the castle is attacked by a force led by the Black Knight who helped Ivanhoe at the tournament. Fighting with the Black Knight are the legendary outlaws of the forest, Robin Hoodand his merry men. The villains are defeated and the prisoners are freed, but de Bois-Guilbert succeeds in kidnapping Rebecca. As the battle winds down, Ulrica, a Saxon crone, lights the castle on fire, and it burns to the ground, engulfing both Ulrica and Front-de-Boeuf.

At Templestowe, the stronghold of the Knights-Templars, de Bois-Guilbert comes under fire from his commanders for bringing a Jew into their sacred fortress. It is speculated among the Templars that perhaps Rebecca is a sorceress who has enchanted de Bois-Guilbert against his will; the Grand Master of the Templars concurs and orders a trial for Rebecca. On the advice of de Bois-Guilbert, who has fallen in love with her, Rebecca demands a trial-by-combat, and can do nothing but await a hero to defend her. To his dismay, de Bois-Guilbert is appointed to fight for the Templars: if he wins, Rebecca will be killed, and if he loses, he himself will die. At the last moment, Ivanhoe appears to defend Rebecca, but he is so exhausted from the journey that de Bois-Guilbert unseats him in the first pass. But Ivanhoe wins a strange victory when de Bois-Guilbert falls dead from his horse, killed by his own conflicting passions.

In the meantime, the Black Knight has defeated an ambush carried out by Waldemar Fitzurse and announced himself as King Richard, returned to England at last. When Athelstane steps out of the way, Ivanhoe and Rowena are married; Rebecca visits Rowena one last time to thank her for Ivanhoe's role in saving her life. Rebecca and Isaac are sailing for their new home in Granada; Ivanhoe goes on to have a heroic career under King Richard, until the king's untimely death puts an end to all his worldly projects.

The Iliad

Homer

Nine years after the start of the Trojan War, the Greek ("Achaean") army sacks Chryse, a town allied with Troy. During the battle, the Achaeans capture a pair of beautiful maidens, Chryseis and Briseis. Agamemnon, the leader of the Achaean forces, takes Chryseis as his prize, and Achilles, the Achaeans' greatest warrior, claims Briseis. Chryseis's father, Chryses, who serves as a priest of the god Apollo, offers an enormous ransom in return for his daughter, but Agamemnon refuses to give Chryseis back. Chryses then prays to Apollo, who sends a plague upon the Achaean camp.

After many Achaeans die, Agamemnon consults the prophet Calchas to determine the cause of the plague. When he learns that Chryseis is the cause, he reluctantly gives her up but then demands Briseis from Achilles as compensation. Furious at this insult, Achilles returns to his tent in the army camp and refuses to fight in the war any longer. He vengefully yearns to see the Achaeans destroyed and asks his mother, the sea-nymph Thetis, to enlist the services of Zeus, king of the gods, toward this end. The Trojan and Achaean sides have declared a cease-fire with each other, but now the Trojans breach the treaty and Zeus comes to their aid.

With Zeus supporting the Trojans and Achilles refusing to fight, the Achaeans suffer great losses. Several days of fierce conflict ensue, including duels between Paris and Menelaus and between Hector and Ajax. The Achaeans make no progress; even the heroism of the great Achaean warrior Diomedes proves fruitless. The Trojans push the Achaeans back, forcing them to take refuge behind the ramparts that protect their ships. The Achaeans begin to nurture some hope for the future when a nighttime reconnaissance mission by Diomedes and Odysseus yields information about the Trojans' plans, but the next day brings disaster. Several Achaean commanders become wounded, and the Trojans break through the Achaean ramparts. They advance all the way up to the boundary of the Achaean camp and set fire to one of the ships. Defeat seems imminent, because without the ships, the army will be stranded at Troy and almost certainly destroyed.

Concerned for his comrades but still too proud to help them himself, Achilles agrees to a plan proposed by Nestor that will allow his beloved friend Patroclus to take his place in battle, wearing his armor. Patroclus is a fine warrior, and his presence on the battlefield helps the Achaeans push the Trojans away from the ships and back to the city walls. But the counterattack soon falters. Apollo knocks Patroclus's armor to the ground, and Hector slays him. Fighting then breaks out as both sides try to lay claim to the body and armor. Hector ends up with the armor, but the Achaeans, thanks to a courageous effort by Menelaus and others, manage to bring the body back to their camp. When Achilles discovers that Hector has killed Patroclus, he fills with such grief and rage that he agrees to reconcile with Agamemnon and rejoin the battle. Thetis goes to Mount Olympus and persuades the god Hephaestus to forge Achilles a new suit of armor, which she presents to him the next morning. Achilles then rides out to battle at the head of the Achaean army.

Meanwhile, Hector, not expecting Achilles to rejoin the battle, has ordered his men to camp outside the walls of Troy. But when the Trojan army glimpses Achilles, it flees in terror back behind the city walls. Achilles cuts down every Trojan he sees. Strengthened by his rage, he even fights the god of the river Xanthus, who is angered that Achilles has caused so many corpses to fall into his streams. Finally, Achilles confronts Hector outside the walls of Troy. Ashamed at the poor advice that he gave his comrades, Hector refuses to flee inside the city with them. Achilles chases him around the city's periphery three times, but the goddess Athena finally tricks Hector into turning around and fighting Achilles. In a dramatic duel, Achilles kills Hector. He then lashes the body to the back of his chariot and drags it across the battlefield to the Achaean camp. Upon Achilles' arrival, the triumphant Achaeans celebrate Patroclus's funeral with a long series of athletic games in his honor. Each day for the next nine days, Achilles drags Hector's body in circles around Patroclus's funeral bier.

At last, the gods agree that Hector deserves a proper burial. Zeus sends the god Hermes to escort King Priam, Hector's father and the ruler of Troy, into the Achaean camp. Priam tearfully pleads with Achilles to take pity on a father bereft of his son and return Hector's body. He invokes the memory of Achilles' own father, Peleus. Deeply moved, Achilles finally relents and returns Hector's corpse to the Trojans. Both sides agree to a temporary truce, and Hector receives a hero's funeral.

The Last of the Mohicans

James Fennimore Cooper

IIt is the late 1750s, and the French and Indian War grips the wild forest frontier of western New York. The French army is attacking Fort William Henry, a British outpost commanded by Colonel Munro. Munro's daughters Alice and Cora set out from Fort Edward to visit their father, escorted through the dangerous forest by Major Duncan Heyward and guided by an Indian named Magua. Soon they are joined by David Gamut, a singing master and religious follower of Calvinism. Traveling cautiously, the group encounters the white scout Natty Bumppo, who goes by the name Hawkeye, and his two Indian companions, Chingachgook and Uncas, Chingachgook's son, the only surviving members of the once great Mohican tribe. Hawkeye says that Magua, a Huron, has betrayed the group by leading them in the wrong direction. The Mohicans attempt to capture the traitorous Huron, but he escapes.

Hawkeye and the Mohicans lead the group to safety in a cave near a waterfall, but Huron allies of Magua attack early the next morning. Hawkeye and the Mohicans escape down the river, but Hurons capture Alice, Cora, Heyward, and Gamut. Magua celebrates the kidnapping. When Heyward tries to convert Magua to the English side, the Huron reveals that he seeks revenge on Munro for past humiliation and proposes to free Alice if Cora will marry him. Cora has romantic feelings for Uncas, however, and angrily refuses Magua. Suddenly Hawkeye and the Mohicans

burst onto the scene, rescuing the captives and killing every Huron but Magua, who escapes. After a harrowing journey impeded by Indian attacks, the group reaches Fort William Henry, the English stronghold. They sneak through the French army besieging the fort, and, once inside, Cora and Alice reunite with their father.

A few days later, the English forces call for a truce. Munro learns that he will receive no reinforcements for the fort and will have to surrender. He reveals to Heyward that Cora's mother was part "Negro," which explains her dark complexion and raven hair. Munro accuses Heyward of racism because he prefers to marry blonde Alice over dark Cora, but Heyward denies the charge. During the withdrawal of the English troops from Fort William Henry, the Indian allies of the French indulge their bloodlust and prey upon the vulnerable retreating soldiers. In the chaos of slaughter, Magua manages to recapture Cora, Alice, and Gamut and to escape with them into the forest.

Three days later, Heyward, Hawkeye, Munro, and the Mohicans discover Magua's trail and begin to pursue the villain. Gamut reappears and explains that Magua has separated his captives, confining Alice to a Huron camp and sending Cora to a Delaware camp. Using deception and a variety of disguises, the group manages to rescue Alice from the Hurons, at which point Heyward confesses his romantic interest in her. At the Delaware village, Magua convinces the tribe that Hawkeye and his companions are their racist enemies. Uncas reveals his exalted heritage to the Delaware sage Tamenund and then demands the release of all his friends but Cora, who he admits belongs to Magua. Magua departs with Cora. A chase and a battle ensue. Magua and his Hurons suffer painful defeat, but a rogue Huron kills Cora. Uncas begins to attack the Huron who killed Cora, but Magua stabs Uncas in the back. Magua tries to leap across a great divide, but he falls short and must cling to a shrub to avoid tumbling off and dying. Hawkeye shoots him, and Magua at last plummets to his death.

Cora and Uncas receive proper burials the next morning amid ritual chants performed by the Delawares. Chingachgook mourns the loss of his son, while Tamenund sorrowfully declares that he has lived to see the last warrior of the noble race of the Mohicans.

Les Miserables

Victor Hugo

The convict Jean Valjean is released from a French prison after serving nineteen years for stealing a loaf of bread and for subsequent attempts to escape from prison. When Valjean arrives at the town of Digne, no one is willing to give him shelter because he is an ex-convict. Desperate, Valjean knocks on the door of M. Myriel, the kindly bishop of Digne. Myriel treats Valjean with kindness, but Valjean repays the bishop by stealing his silverware. When the police arrest Valjean, Myriel covers for him, claiming that the silverware was a gift. The authorities release Valjean and Myriel makes him promise to become an honest man. Eager to fulfill his promise, Valjean masks his identity and enters the town of Montreuil-sur-mer. Under the

assumed name of Madeleine, Valjean invents an ingenious manufacturing process that brings the town prosperity. He eventually becomes the town's mayor.

Fantine, a young woman from Montreuil, lives in Paris. She falls in love with Tholomyès, a wealthy student who gets her pregnant and then abandons her. Fantine returns to her home village with her daughter, Cosette. On the way to Montreuil, however, Fantine realizes that she will never be able to find work if the townspeople know that she has an illegitimate child. In the town of Montfermeil, she meets the Thénardiers, a family that runs the local inn. The Thénardiers agree to look after Cosette as long as Fantine sends them a monthly allowance.

In Montreuil, Fantine finds work in Madeleine's factory. Fantine's coworkers find out about Cosette, however, and Fantine is fired. The Thénardiers demand more money to support Cosette, and Fantine resorts to prostitution to make ends meet. One night, Javert, Montreuil's police chief, arrests Fantine. She is to be sent to prison, but Madeleine intervenes. Fantine has fallen ill, and when she longs to see Cosette, Madeleine promises to send for her. First, however, he must contend with Javert, who has discovered Madeleine's criminal past. Javert tells Madeleine that a man has been accused of being Jean Valjean, and Madeleine confesses his true identity. Javert shows up to arrest Valjean while Valjean is at Fantine's bedside, and Fantine dies from the shock.

After a few years, Valjean escapes from prison and heads to Montfermeil, where he is able to buy Cosette from the Thénardiers. The Thénardiers turn out to be a family of scoundrels who abuse Cosette while spoiling their own two daughters, Eponine and Azelma. Valjean and Cosette move to a run-down part of Paris. Javert discovers their hideout, however, and they are forced to flee. They find refuge in a convent, where Cosette attends school and Valjean works as a gardener.

Marius Pontmercy is a young man who lives with his wealthy grandfather, M. Gillenormand. Because of political differences within the family, Marius has never met his father, Georges Pontmercy. After his father dies, however, Marius learns more about him and comes to admire his father's democratic politics. Angry with his grandfather, Marius moves out of Gillenormand's house and lives as a poor young law student. While in law school, Marius associates with a group of radical students, the Friends of the ABC, who are led by the charismatic Enjolras. One day, Marius sees Cosette at a public park. It is love at first sight, but the protective Valjean does his utmost to prevent Cosette and Marius from ever meeting. Their paths cross once again, however, when Valjean makes a charitable visit to Marius's poor neighbors, the Jondrettes. The Jondrettes are in fact the Thénardiers, who have lost their inn and moved to Paris under an assumed name. After Valjean leaves, Thénardier announces a plan to rob Valjean when he returns. Alarmed, Marius alerts the local police inspector, who turns out to be Javert. The ambush is foiled and the Thénardiers are arrested, but Valjean escapes before Javert can identify him.

Thénardier's daughter Eponine, who is in love with Marius, helps Marius discover Cosette's whereabouts. Marius is finally able to make contact with Cosette, and the two declare their love for each other. Valjean, however, soon shatters their happiness. Worried that he will lose Cosette and unnerved by political unrest in the city, Valjean announces that he and Cosette are moving to England. In desperation, Marius runs to his grandfather, M. Gillenormand, to ask for M. Gillenormand's permission to marry Cosette. Their meeting ends in a bitter argument. When

Marius returns to Cosette, she and Valjean have disappeared. Heartbroken, Marius decides to join his radical student friends, who have started a political uprising. Armed with two pistols, Marius heads for the barricades.

The uprising seems doomed, but Marius and his fellow students nonetheless stand their ground and vow to fight for freedom and democracy. The students discover Javert among their ranks, and, realizing that he is a spy, Enjolras ties him up. As the army launches its first attack against the students, Eponine throws herself in front of a rifle to save Marius's life. As Eponine dies in Marius's arms, she hands him a letter from Cosette. Marius quickly scribbles a reply and orders a boy, Gavroche, to deliver it to Cosette.

Valjean manages to intercept the note and sets out to save the life of the man his daughter loves. Valjean arrives at the barricade and volunteers to execute Javert. When alone with Javert, however, Valjean instead secretly lets him go free. As the army storms the barricade, Valjean grabs the wounded Marius and flees through the sewers. When Valjean emerges hours later, Javert immediately arrests him. Valjean pleads with Javert to let him take the dying Marius to Marius's grandfather. Javert agrees. Javert feels tormented, torn between his duty to his profession and the debt he owes Valjean for saving his life. Ultimately, Javert lets Valjean go and throws himself into the river, where he drowns.

Marius makes a full recovery and is reconciled with Gillenormand, who consents to Marius and Cosette's marriage. Their wedding is a happy one, marred only when Valjean confesses his criminal past to Marius. Alarmed by this revelation and unaware that it was Valjean who saved his life at the barricades, Marius tries to prevent Cosette from having contact with Valjean. Lonely and depressed, Valjean takes to his bed and awaits his death. Marius eventually finds out from Thénardier that Valjean saved Marius's life. Ashamed that he mistrusted Valjean, Marius tells Cosette everything that has happened. Marius and Cosette rush to Valjean's side just in time for a final reconciliation. Happy to be reunited with his adopted daughter, Valjean dies in peace.

Little Women

Louisa May Alcott

Alcott prefaces Little Women with an excerpt from John Bunyan's seventeenth-century work The Pilgrim's Progress, an allegorical novel about leading a Christian life. Alcott's story begins with the four March girls—Meg, Jo, Beth, and Amy—sitting in their living room, lamenting their poverty. The girls decide that they will each buy themselves a present in order to brighten their Christmas. Soon, however, they change their minds and decide that instead of buying presents for themselves, they will buy presents for their mother, Marmee. Marmee comes home with a letter from Mr. March, the girls' father, who is serving as a Union chaplain in the Civil War. The letter inspires the girls to bear their burdens more cheerfully and not to complain about their poverty.

On Christmas morning, the girls wake up to find books, probably copies of The Pilgrim's Progress, under their pillows. Later that day, Marmee encourages them to give away their

breakfast to a poor family, the Hummels. Their elderly neighbor, Mr. Laurence, whom the girls have never met, rewards their charitable activities by sending over a feast. Soon, Meg and Jo are invited to attend a New Year's Party at the home of Meg's wealthy friend, Sally Gardiner. At the party, Jo retreats to an alcove, and there meets Laurie, the boy who lives with Mr. Laurence. While dancing, Meg sprains her ankle. Laurie escorts the sisters home. The Marches regret having to return to their daily routine after the holiday festivities.

Jo visits Laurie when he is sick, and meets his grandfather, Mr. Laurence. She inadvertently insults a painting of Mr. Laurence in front of the man himself. Luckily, Laurie's grandfather admires Jo's spunk, and they become friends. Soon, Mr. Laurence meets all the sisters, and Beth becomes his special favorite. Mr. Laurence gives her his deceased granddaughter's piano.

The girls have various adventures. Amy is caught trading limes at school, and the teacher hits her as punishment. As a result, Mrs. March withdraws her daughter from school. Jo refuses to let Amy go with her to the theater. In retaliation, Amy burns Jo's manuscript, and Jo, in her anger, nearly lets Amy drown while ice-s-kating. Pretty Meg attends her friend Annie Moffat's party and, after allowing the other girls to dress her up in high style, learns that appearances are not everything. While at the party, she hears that people think she intends to marry Laurie for his money.

That year, the Marches form the Pickwick Club, in which they write a family newspaper. In the spring, Jo smuggles Laurie into one of the club meetings, and he becomes a member, presenting his new circle with a postbox. At the beginning of June, the Marches decide to neglect their housework. At the end of a lazy week, Marmee takes a day off too. The girls spoil a dinner, but everyone ends up laughing over it. One day, Laurie has English friends over, and the Marches go on a picnic with them. Later, Jo gets a story published for the first time.

One dark day, the family receives a telegram saying that Mr. March is sick in the hospital in Washington, D.C. Marmee goes to tend to him, and Jo sells her hair to help finance the trip. Chaos ensues in Marmee's wake, for the girls neglect their chores again. Only Beth goes to visit the Hummels, and after one of her visits, she contracts scarlet fever from the Hummel baby. Beth teeters on the brink of death until Marmee returns. Meanwhile, Amy spends time at Aunt March's house in order to escape the disease. Beth recovers, though not completely, and Mr. Brooke, Laurie's tutor, falls in love with Meg, much to Jo's dismay. Mr. Brooke and Meg are engaged by the end of Part One.

Three years pass before Part Two begins. Mr. March is home from the war, and Laurie is nearly done with school. Soon, Meg marries and moves into a new home with Mr. Brooke. One day, Amy decides to have a lunch for her art school classmates, but poor weather ruins the festivities. Jo gets a novel published, but she must cut it down in order to please her publishers. Meanwhile, Meg struggles with the duties of keeping house, and she soon gives birth to twins, Demi and Daisy. Amy gets to go to Paris instead of Jo, who counted on the trip, because their Aunt Carroll prefers Amy's ladylike behavior in a companion.

Jo begins to think that Beth loves Laurie. In order to escape Laurie's affections for her, Jo moves to New York so as to give Beth a chance to win his affections. There Jo meets Professor Bhaer, a

poor German language instructor. Professor Bhaer discourages Jo from writing sensationalist stories, and she takes his advice and finds a simpler writing style. When Jo returns home, Laurie proposes to her, but she turns him down. Beth soon dies.

Amy and Laurie reunite in France, and they fall in love. They marry and return home. Jo begins to hope that Professor Bhaer will come for her. He does, and they marry a year later. Amy and Laurie have a daughter named Beth, who is sickly. Jo inherits Plumfield, Aunt March's house, and decides to turn it into a boarding school for boys. The novel ends with the family happily gathered together, each sister thankful for her blessings and for each other.

Moll Flanders

Daniel Defoe

The full title of *Moll Flanders* gives an apt summary of the plot: "The Fortunes and Misfortunes of the Famous Moll Flanders, Etc. Who was born in Newgate, and during a life of continu'd Variety for Threescore Years, besides her Childhood, was Twelve Year a Whore, five times a Wife (whereof once to her own brother), Twelve Year a Thief, Eight Year a Transported Felon in Virginia, at last grew Rich, liv'd Honest and died a Penitent. Written from her own Memorandums."

Moll Flanders is born to a mother who has been convicted of a felony and who is transported to America soon after her birth. As an infant, Moll lives on public charity, under the care of a kind widow who teaches her manners and needlework. She grows into a beautiful teenager and is seduced at an early age. Abandoned by her first lover, she is compelled to marry his younger brother. He dies after a few years, and she marries a draper who soon flees the country as a fugitive from the law. She marries yet again and moves to America, only to find out that her husband is actually her half-brother. She leaves him in disgust and returns to England, where she becomes the mistress of a man whose wife has gone insane. He renounces his affair with Moll after a religious experience.

Moll's next marriage offer is from a bankerwhose wife has been cheating on him. Moll agrees to marry him if he can obtain a divorce, and meanwhile she travels to the country and marries a rich gentlemanin Lancashire. This man turns out to be a fraud--he is as poor as she is--and they part ways to seek their fortunes separately. Moll returns to marry the banker, who by this time has succeeded in divorcing his wife. He dies soon after, however, and Moll is thrown back upon her own resources once again. She lives in poverty for several years and then begins stealing. She is quite talented at this new "trade" and soon becomes an expert thief and a local legend. Eventually she is caught, imprisoned, and sentenced to death. In prison at Newgate, she reunites with her Lancashire husband, who has also been arrested. They both manage to have their sentences reduced, and they are transported to the colonies, where they begin a new life as plantation owners. In America, Moll rediscovers her brother and her son and claims the

inheritance her mother has left her. Prosperous and repentant, she returns with her husband to England at the age of seventy.

War And Peace

Leo Tolstoy

War and peace opens in the Russian city of St. Petersburg in 1805, as Napoleon's conquest of western Europe is just beginning to stir fears in Russia. Many of the novel's characters are introduced at a society hostess's party, among them Pierre Bezukhov, the socially awkward but likeable illegitimate son of a rich count, and Andrew Bolkonski, the intelligent and ambitious son of a retired military commander. We also meet the sneaky and shallow Kuragin family, including the wily father Vasili, the fortune-hunter son Anatole, and the ravishing daughter Helene. We are introduced to the Rostovs, a noble Moscow family, including the lively daughter Natasha, the quiet cousin Sonya, and the impetuous son Nicholas, who has just joined the army led by the old General Kutuzov.

The Russian troops are mobilized in alliance with the Austrian empire, which is currently resisting Napoleon's onslaught. Both Andrew and Nicholas go to the front. Andrew is wounded at the Battle of Austerlitz, and though he survives, he is long presumed dead. Pierre is made sole heir of his father's fortune and marries Helene Kuragina in a daze. Helene cheats on Pierre, and he challenges her seducer to a duel in which Pierre nearly kills the man.

Andrew's wife, Lise, gives birth to a son just as Andrew arrives home to his estate, much to the shock of his family. Lise dies in childbirth, leaving Andrew's devout sister Mary to raise the son. Meanwhile, Pierre, disillusioned by married life, leaves his wife and becomes involved with the spiritual practice of Freemasonry. He attempts to apply the practice's teachings to his estate management, and share these teachings with his skeptical friend Andrew, who is doing work to help reform the Russian government.

Meanwhile, the Rostov family's fortunes are failing, thanks in part to Nicholas's gambling debts. The Rostovs consider selling their beloved family estate, Otradnoe. Nicholas is encouraged to marry a rich heiress, despite his earlier promise to marry Sonya. Nicholas's army career continues, and he witnesses the great peace between Napoleon and Tsar Alexander. Natasha grows up, attends her first ball, and falls in love with various men before becoming seriously attached to Andrew. Andrew's father objects to the marriage, and requires Andrew to wait a year before wedding Natasha. Natasha reluctantly submits to this demand, and Andrew goes off to travel.

After Andrew departs, his father becomes irritable and cruel toward Mary, who accepts the cruelty with Christian forgiveness. Natasha is attracted to Anatole Kuragin, who confesses his love. She eventually decides that she loves Anatole and plans to elope with him, but the plan fails. Andrew comes home and rejects Natasha for her involvement with Anatole. Pierre consoles Natasha and feels an attraction toward her. Natasha falls ill.

In 1812, Napoleon invades Russia, and Tsar Alexander reluctantly declares war. Andrew returns to active military service. Pierre observes Moscow's response to Napoleon's threat and develops a crazy sense that he has a mission to assassinate Napoleon. The French approach the Bolkonski estate, and Mary and the old Prince Bolkonski (Andrew's father) are advised to leave. The prince dies just as the French troops arrive. Mary, finally forced to leave her estate, finds the local peasants hostile. Nicholas happens to ride up and save Mary. Mary and Nicholas feel the stirrings of romance.

The Russians and French fight a decisive battle at Borodino, where the smaller Russian army inexplicably defeats the French forces, much to Napoleon's dismay. In St. Petersburg, life in the higher social circles continues almost unaffected by the occupation of Moscow. Helene seeks an annulment of her marriage with Anatole in order to marry a foreign prince. Distressed by this news, Pierre becomes deranged and flees his companions, wandering alone through Moscow.

Meanwhile, the Rostovs pack up their belongings, preparing to evacuate, but they abandon their possessions to convey wounded soldiers instead. Natasha's younger brother Petya enters the army. On the way out of the city, the Rostovs take along the wounded Andrew with them. Pierre, still wandering half-crazed in Moscow, sees widespread anarchy, looting, fire, and murder. Still obsessed with his mission of killing Napoleon, he saves a girl from a fire but is apprehended by the French authorities. Pierre witnesses the execution of several of his prison mates, and bonds with a wise peasant named Platon Karataev.

Nicholas's aunt tries to arrange a marriage between Nicholas and Mary, but Nicholas resists, remembering his commitment to Sonya. Mary visits the Rostovs to see the wounded Andrew, and Natasha and Mary grow closer. Andrew forgives Natasha, declaring his love for her before he dies. General Kutuzov leads the Russian troops back toward Moscow, which the French have finally abandoned after their defeat at Borodino. The French force the Russian prisoners of war, including Pierre, to march with them. On the way, Platon falls ill and is shot as a straggler. The Russians follow the retreating French, and small partisan fighting ensues. Petya is shot and killed.

Pierre, after being liberated from the French, falls ill for three months. Upon recovering, he realizes his love for Natasha, which she reciprocates. Pierre and Natasha are married in 1813 and eventually have four children. Natasha grows into a solid, frumpy Russian matron. Nicholas weds Mary, resolving his family's financial problems. He also rebuilds Mary's family's estate, which had been damaged in the war. Despite some tensions, Nicholas and Mary enjoy a happy family life.

The Invisible Man

Ralph Ellison

T he narrator begins telling his story with the claim that he is an "invisible man." His invisibility, he says, is not a physical condition—he is not literally invisible—but is rather the result of the

refusal of others to see him. He says that because of his invisibility, he has been hiding from the world, living underground and stealing electricity from the Monopolated Light & Power Company. He burns 1,369 light bulbs simultaneously and listens to Louis Armstrong's "(What Did I Do to Be So) Black and Blue" on a phonograph. He says that he has gone underground in order to write the story of his life and invisibility.

As a young man, in the late 1920s or early 1930s, the narrator lived in the South. Because he is a gifted public speaker, he is invited to give a speech to a group of important white men in his town. The men reward him with a briefcase containing a scholarship to a prestigious black college, but only after humiliating him by forcing him to fight in a "battle royal" in which he is pitted against other young black men, all blindfolded, in a boxing ring. After the battle royal, the white men force the youths to scramble over an electrified rug in order to snatch at fake gold coins. The narrator has a dream that night in which he imagines that his scholarship is actually a piece of paper reading "To Whom It May Concern . . . Keep This Nigger-Boy Running."

Three years later, the narrator is a student at the college. He is asked to drive a wealthy white trustee of the college, Mr. Norton, around the campus. Norton talks incessantly about his daughter, then shows an undue interest in the narrative of Jim Trueblood, a poor, uneducated black man who impregnated his own daughter. After hearing this story, Norton needs a drink, and the narrator takes him to the Golden Day, a saloon and brothel that normally serves black men. A fight breaks out among a group of mentally imbalanced black veterans at the bar, and Norton passes out during the chaos. He is tended by one of the veterans, who claims to be a doctor and who taunts both Norton and the narrator for their blindness regarding race relations.

Back at the college, the narrator listens to a long, impassioned sermon by the Reverend Homer A. Barbee on the subject of the college's Founder, whom the blind Barbee glorifies with poetic language. After the sermon, the narrator is chastised by the college president, Dr. Bledsoe, who has learned of the narrator's misadventures with Norton at the old slave quarters and the Golden Day. Bledsoe rebukes the narrator, saying that he should have shown the white man an idealized version of black life. He expels the narrator, giving him seven letters of recommendation addressed to the college's white trustees in New York City, and sends him there in search of a job.

The narrator travels to the bright lights and bustle of 1930s Harlem, where he looks unsuccessfully for work. The letters of recommendation are of no help. At last, the narrator goes to the office of one of his letters' addressees, a trustee named Mr. Emerson. There he meets Emerson's son, who opens the letter and tells the narrator that he has been betrayed: the letters from Bledsoe actually portray the narrator as dishonorable and unreliable. The young Emerson helps the narrator to get a low-paying job at the Liberty Paints plant, whose trademark color is "Optic White." The narrator briefly serves as an assistant to Lucius Brockway, the black man who makes this white paint, but Brockway suspects him of joining in union activities and turns on him. The two men fight, neglecting the paint-making; consequently, one of the unattended tanks explodes, and the narrator is knocked unconscious.

The narrator wakes in the paint factory's hospital, having temporarily lost his memory and ability to speak. The white doctors seize the arrival of their unidentified black patient as an opportunity to conduct electric shock experiments. After the narrator recovers his memory and leaves the hospital, he collapses on the street. Some black community members take him to the home of Mary, a kind woman who lets him live with her for free in Harlem and nurtures his sense of black heritage. One day, the narrator witnesses the eviction of an elderly black couple from their Harlem apartment. Standing before the crowd of people gathered before the apartment, he gives

an impassioned speech against the eviction. Brother Jack overhears his speech and offers him a position as a spokesman for the Brotherhood, a political organization that allegedly works to help the socially oppressed. After initially rejecting the offer, the narrator takes the job in order to pay Mary back for her hospitality. But the Brotherhood demands that the narrator take a new name, break with his past, and move to a new apartment. The narrator is inducted into the Brotherhood at a party at the Chthonian Hotel and is placed in charge of advancing the group's goals in Harlem.

After being trained in rhetoric by a white member of the group named Brother Hambro, the narrator goes to his assigned branch in Harlem, where he meets the handsome, intelligent black youth leader Tod Clifton. He also becomes familiar with the black nationalist leader Ras the Exhorter, who opposes the interracial Brotherhood and believes that black Americans should fight for their rights over and against all whites. The narrator delivers speeches and becomes a high-profile figure in the Brotherhood, and he enjoys his work. One day, however, he receives an anonymous note warning him to remember his place as a black man in the Brotherhood. Not long after, the black Brotherhood member Brother Wrestrum accuses the narrator of trying to use the Brotherhood to advance a selfish desire for personal distinction. While a committee of the Brotherhood investigates the charges, the organization moves the narrator to another post, as an advocate of women's rights. After giving a speech one evening, he is seduced by one of the white women at the gathering, who attempts to use him to play out her sexual fantasies about black men.

After a short time, the Brotherhood sends the narrator back to Harlem, where he discovers that Clifton has disappeared. Many other black members have left the group, as much of the Harlem community feels that the Brotherhood has betrayed their interests. The narrator finds Clifton on the street selling dancing "Sambo" dolls—dolls that invoke the stereotype of the lazy and obsequious slave. Clifton apparently does not have a permit to sell his wares on the street. White policemen accost him and, after a scuffle, shoot him dead as the narrator and others look on. On his own initiative, the narrator holds a funeral for Clifton and gives a speech in which he portrays his dead friend as a hero, galvanizing public sentiment in Clifton's favor. The Brotherhood is furious with him for staging the funeral without permission, and Jack harshly castigates him. As Jack rants about the Brotherhood's ideological stance, a glass eye falls from one of his eye sockets. The Brotherhood sends the narrator back to Brother Hambro to learn about the organization's new strategies in Harlem.

The narrator leaves feeling furious and anxious to gain revenge on Jack and the Brotherhood. He arrives in Harlem to find the neighborhood in ever-increased agitation over race relations. Ras confronts him, deploring the Brotherhood's failure to draw on the momentum generated by Clifton's funeral. Ras sends his men to beat up the narrator, and the narrator is forced to disguise himself in dark glasses and a hat. In his dark glasses, many people on the streets mistake him for someone named Rinehart, who seems to be a pimp, bookie, lover, and reverend all at once. At last, the narrator goes to Brother Hambro's apartment, where Hambro tells him that the Brotherhood has chosen not to emphasize Harlem and the black movement. He cynically declares that people are merely tools and that the larger interests of the Brotherhood are more important than any individual. Recalling advice given to him by his grandfather, the narrator determines to undermine the Brotherhood by seeming to go along with them completely. He decides to flatter and seduce a woman close to one of the party leaders in order to obtain secret information about the group.

But the woman he chooses, Sybil, knows nothing about the Brotherhood and attempts to use the narrator to fulfill her fantasy of being raped by a black man. While still with Sybil in his apartment, the narrator receives a call asking him to come to Harlem quickly. The narrator hears the sound of breaking glass, and the line goes dead. He arrives in Harlem to find the neighborhood in the midst of a full-fledged riot, which he learns was incited by Ras. The narrator becomes involved in setting fire to a tenement building. Running from the scene of the crime, he encounters Ras, dressed as an African chieftain. Ras calls for the narrator to be lynched. The narrator flees, only to encounter two policemen, who suspect that his briefcase contains loot from the riots. In his attempt to evade them, the narrator falls down a manhole. The police mock him and draw the cover over the manhole.

The narrator says that he has stayed underground ever since; the end of his story is also the beginning. He states that he finally has realized that he must honor his individual complexity and remain true to his own identity without sacrificing his responsibility to the community. He says that he finally feels ready to emerge from underground.

The Awakening

Kate Chopin

T he Awakening opens in the late 1800s in Grand Isle, a summer holiday resort popular with the wealthy inhabitants of nearby New Orleans. Edna Pontellier is vacationing with her husband, Léonce, and their two sons at the cottages of Madame Lebrun, which house affluent Creoles from the French Quarter. Léonce is kind and loving but preoccupied with his work. His frequent business-related absences mar his domestic life with Edna. Consequently, Edna spends most of her time with her friend Adèle Ratignolle, a married Creole who epitomizes womanly elegance and charm. Through her relationship with Adèle, Edna learns a great deal about freedom of expression. Because Creole women were expected and assumed to be chaste, they could behave in a forthright and unreserved manner. Exposure to such openness liberates Edna from her previously prudish behavior and repressed emotions and desires.

Edna's relationship with Adèle begins Edna's process of "awakening" and self-discovery, which constitutes the focus of the book. The process accelerates as Edna comes to know Robert Lebrun, the elder, single son of Madame Lebrun. Robert is known among the Grand Isle vacationers as a man who chooses one woman each year—often a married woman—to whom he then plays "attendant" all summer long. This summer, he devotes himself to Edna, and the two spend their days together lounging and talking by the shore. Adèle Ratignolle often accompanies them.

At first, the relationship between Robert and Edna is innocent. They mostly bathe in the sea or engage in idle talk. As the summer progresses, however, Edna and Robert grow closer, and Robert's affections and attention inspire in Edna several internal revelations. She feels more alive than ever before, and she starts to paint again as she did in her youth. She also learns to swim and becomes aware of her independence and sexuality. Edna and Robert never openly discuss their love for one another, but the time they spend alone together kindles memories in Edna of the dreams and desires of her youth. She becomes inexplicably depressed at night with her husband and profoundly joyful during her moments of freedom, whether alone or with Robert.

Recognizing how intense the relationship between him and Edna has become, Robert honorably removes himself from Grand Isle to avoid consummating his forbidden love. Edna returns to New Orleans a changed woman.

Back in New Orleans, Edna actively pursues her painting and ignores all of her social responsibilities. Worried about the changing attitude and increasing disobedience of his wife,

Léonce seeks the guidance of the family physician, Doctor Mandelet. A wise and enlightened man, Doctor Mandelet suspects that Edna's transformation is the result of an affair, but he hides his suspicions from Léonce. Instead, Doctor Mandelet suggests that Léonce let Edna's defiance run its course, since attempts to control her would only fuel her rebellion. Léonce heeds the doctor's advice, allowing Edna to remain home alone while he is away on business. With her husband gone and her children away as well, Edna wholly rejects her former lifestyle. She moves into a home of her own and declares herself independent—the possession of no one. Her love for Robert still intense, Edna pursues an affair with the town seducer, Alcée Arobin, who is able to satisfy her sexual needs. Never emotionally attached to Arobin, Edna maintains control throughout their affair, satisfying her animalistic urges but retaining her freedom from male domination.

At this point, the self-sufficient and unconventional old pianist Mademoiselle Reisz adopts Edna as a sort of protégé, warning Edna of the sacrifices required of an artist. Edna is moved by Mademoiselle Reisz's piano playing and visits her often. She is also eager to read the letters from abroad that Robert sends the woman. A woman who devotes her life entirely to her art, Mademoiselle serves as an inspiration and model to Edna, who continues her process of awakening and independence. Mademoiselle Reisz is the only person who knows of Robert and Edna's secret love for one another and she encourages Edna to admit to, and act upon, her feelings.

Unable to stay away, Robert returns to New Orleans, finally expressing openly his feelings for Edna. He admits his love but reminds her that they cannot possibly be together, since she is the wife of another man. Edna explains to him her newly established independence, denying the rights of her husband over her and explaining how she and Robert can live together happily, ignoring everything extraneous to their relationship. But despite his love for Edna, Robert feels unable to enter into the adulterous affair.

When Adèle undergoes a difficult and dangerous childbirth, Edna leaves Robert's arms to go to her friend. She pleads with him to wait for her return. From the time she spends with Edna, Adèle senses that Edna is becoming increasingly distant, and she understands that Edna's relationship with Robert has intensified. She reminds Edna to think of her children and advocates the socially acceptable lifestyle Edna abandoned so long ago. Doctor Mandelet, while walking Edna home from Adèle's, urges her to come see him because he is worried about the outcome of her passionate but confused actions. Already reeling under the weight of Adèle's admonition, Edna begins to perceive herself as having acted selfishly.

Edna returns to her house to find Robert gone, a note of farewell left in his place. Robert's inability to escape the ties of society now prompts Edna's most devastating awakening. Haunted by thoughts of her children and realizing that she would have eventually found even Robert unable to fulfill her desires and dreams, Edna feels an overwhelming sense of solitude. Alone in a world in which she has found no feeling of belonging, she can find only one answer to the inescapable and heartbreaking limitations of society. She returns to Grand Isle, the site of her first moments of emotional, sexual, and intellectual awareness, and, in a final escape, gives herself to the sea. As she swims through the soft, embracing water, she thinks about her freedom from her husband and children, as well as Robert's failure to understand her, Doctor Mandelet's words of wisdom, and Mademoiselle Reisz's courage. The text leaves open the question of whether the suicide constitutes a cowardly surrender or a liberating triumph.

King Lear

William Shakespeare

L ear, the aging king of Britain, decides to step down from the throne and divide his kingdom evenly among his three daughters. First, however, he puts his daughters through a test, asking each to tell him how much she loves him. Goneril and Regan, Lear's older daughters, give their father flattering answers. But Cordelia, Lear's youngest and favorite daughter, remains silent, saying that she has no words to describe how much she loves her father. Lear flies into a rage and disowns Cordelia. The king of France, who has courted Cordelia, says that he still wants to marry her even without her land, and she accompanies him to France without her father's blessing.

Lear quickly learns that he made a bad decision. Goneril and Regan swiftly begin to undermine the little authority that Lear still holds. Unable to believe that his beloved daughters are betraying him, Lear slowly goes insane. He flees his daughters' houses to wander on a heath during a great thunderstorm, accompanied by his Fool and by Kent, a loyal nobleman in disguise.

Meanwhile, an elderly nobleman named Gloucester also experiences family problems. His illegitimate son, Edmund, tricks him into believing that his legitimate son, Edgar, is trying to kill him. Fleeing the manhunt that his father has set for him, Edgar disguises himself as a crazy beggar and calls himself "Poor Tom." Like Lear, he heads out onto the heath.

When the loyal Gloucester realizes that Lear's daughters have turned against their father, he decides to help Lear in spite of the danger. Regan and her husband, Cornwall, discover him helping Lear, accuse him of treason, blind him, and turn him out to wander the countryside. He ends up being led by his disguised son, Edgar, toward the city of Dover, where Lear has also been brought.

In Dover, a French army lands as part of an invasion led by Cordelia in an effort to save her father. Edmund apparently becomes romantically entangled with both Regan and Goneril, whose husband, Albany, is increasingly sympathetic to Lear's cause. Goneril and Edmund conspire to kill Albany.

The despairing Gloucester tries to commit suicide, but Edgar saves him by pulling the strange trick of leading him off an imaginary cliff. Meanwhile, the English troops reach Dover, and the English, led by Edmund, defeat the Cordelia-led French. Lear and Cordelia are captured. In the climactic scene, Edgar duels with and kills Edmund; we learn of the death of Gloucester; Goneril poisons Regan out of jealousy over Edmund and then kills herself when her treachery is revealed to Albany; Edmund's betrayal of Cordelia leads to her needless execution in prison; and Lear finally dies out of grief at Cordelia's passing. Albany, Edgar, and the elderly Kent are left to take care of the country under a cloud of sorrow and regret.

Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man

James Joyce

A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man tells the story of Stephen Dedalus, a boy growing up in Ireland at the end of the nineteenth century, as he gradually decides to cast off all his social, familial, and religious constraints to live a life devoted to the art of writing. As a young boy, Stephen's Catholic faith and Irish nationality heavily influence him. He attends a strict religious

boarding school called Clongowes Wood College. At first, Stephen is lonely and homesick at the school, but as time passes he finds his place among the other boys. He enjoys his visits home, even though family tensions run high after the death of the Irish political leader Charles Stewart Parnell. This sensitive subject becomes the topic of a furious, politically charged argument over the family's Christmas dinner.

Stephen's father, Simon, is inept with money, and the family sinks deeper and deeper into debt. After a summer spent in the company of his Uncle Charles, Stephen learns that the family cannot afford to send him back to Clongowes, and that they will instead move to Dublin. Stephen starts attending a prestigious day school called Belvedere, where he grows to excel as a writer and as an actor in the student theater. His first sexual experience, with a young Dublin prostitute, unleashes a storm of guilt and shame in Stephen, as he tries to reconcile his physical desires with the stern Catholic morality of his surroundings. For a while, he ignores his religious upbringing, throwing himself with debauched abandon into a variety of sins—masturbation, gluttony, and more visits to prostitutes, among others. Then, on a three-day religious retreat, Stephen hears a trio of fiery sermons about sin, judgment, and hell. Deeply shaken, the young man resolves to rededicate himself to a life of Christian piety.

Stephen begins attending Mass every day, becoming a model of Catholic piety, abstinence, and self-denial. His religious devotion is so pronounced that the director of his school asks him to consider entering the priesthood. After briefly considering the offer, Stephen realizes that the austerity of the priestly life is utterly incompatible with his love for sensual beauty. That day, Stephen learns from his sister that the family will be moving, once again for financial reasons. Anxiously awaiting news about his acceptance to the university, Stephen goes for a walk on the beach, where he observes a young girl wading in the tide. He is struck by her beauty, and realizes, in a moment of epiphany, that the love and desire of beauty should not be a source of shame. Stephen resolves to live his life to the fullest, and vows not to be constrained by the boundaries of his family, his nation, and his religion.

Stephen moves on to the university, where he develops a number of strong friendships, and is especially close with a young man named Cranly. In a series of conversations with his companions, Stephen works to formulate his theories about art. While he is dependent on his friends as listeners, he is also determined to create an independent existence, liberated from the expectations of friends and family. He becomes more and more determined to free himself from all limiting pressures, and eventually decides to leave Ireland to escape them. Like his namesake, the mythical Daedalus, Stephen hopes to build himself wings on which he can fly above all obstacles and achieve a life as an artist.

To Kill A Mocking Bird

Harper Lee

Scout Finch lives with her brother, Jem, and their widowed father, Atticus, in the sleepy Alabama town of Maycomb. Maycomb is suffering through the Great Depression, but Atticus is a prominent lawyer and the Finch family is reasonably well off in comparison to the rest of society. One summer, Jem and Scout befriend a boy named Dill, who has come to live in their neighborhood for the summer, and the trio acts out stories together. Eventually, Dill becomes fascinated with the spooky house on their street called the Radley Place. The house is owned by

Mr. Nathan Radley, whose brother, Arthur (nicknamed Boo), has lived there for years without venturing outside.

Scout goes to school for the first time that fall and detests it. She and Jem find gifts apparently left for them in a knothole of a tree on the Radley property. Dill returns the following summer, and he, Scout, and Jem begin to act out the story of Boo Radley. Atticus puts a stop to their antics, urging the children to try to see life from another person's perspective before making judgments. But, on Dill's last night in Maycomb for the summer, the three sneak onto the Radley property, where Nathan Radley shoots at them. Jem loses his pants in the ensuing escape. When he returns for them, he finds them mended and hung over the fence. The next winter, Jem and Scout find more presents in the tree, presumably left by the mysterious Boo. Nathan Radley eventually plugs the knothole with cement. Shortly thereafter, a fire breaks out in another neighbor's house, and during the fire someone slips a blanket on Scout's shoulders as she watches the blaze. Convinced that Boo did it, Jem tells Atticus about the mended pants and the presents.

To the consternation of Maycomb's racist white community, Atticus agrees to defend a black man named Tom Robinson, who has been accused of raping a white woman. Because of Atticus's decision, Jem and Scout are subjected to abuse from other children, even when they celebrate Christmas at the family compound on Finch's Landing. Calpurnia, the Finches' black cook, takes them to the local black church, where the warm and close-knit community largely embraces the children.

Atticus's sister, Alexandra, comes to live with the Finches the next summer. Dill, who is supposed to live with his "new father" in another town, runs away and comes to Maycomb. Tom Robinson's trial begins, and when the accused man is placed in the local jail, a mob gathers to lynch him. Atticus faces the mob down the night before the trial. Jem and Scout, who have sneaked out of the house, soon join him. Scout recognizes one of the men, and her polite questioning about his son shames him into dispersing the mob.

At the trial itself, the children sit in the "colored balcony" with the town's black citizens. Atticus provides clear evidence that the accusers, Mayella Ewell and her father, Bob, are lying: in fact, Mayella propositioned Tom Robinson, was caught by her father, and then accused Tom of rape to cover her shame and guilt. Atticus provides impressive evidence that the marks on Mayella's face are from wounds that her father inflicted; upon discovering her with Tom, he called her a whore and beat her. Yet, despite the significant evidence pointing to Tom's innocence, the all-white jury convicts him. The innocent Tom later tries to escape from prison and is shot to death. In the aftermath of the trial, Jem's faith in justice is badly shaken, and he lapses into despondency and doubt.

Despite the verdict, Bob Ewell feels that Atticus and the judge have made a fool out of him, and he vows revenge. He menaces Tom Robinson's widow, tries to break into the judge's house, and finally attacks Jem and Scout as they walk home from a Halloween party. Boo Radley intervenes, however, saving the children and stabbing Ewell fatally during the struggle. Boo carries the wounded Jem back to Atticus's house, where the sheriff, in order to protect Boo, insists that Ewell tripped over a tree root and fell on his own knife. After sitting with Scout for a while, Boo disappears once more into the Radley house.

Later, Scout feels as though she can finally imagine what life is like for Boo. He has become a human being to her at last. With this realization, Scout embraces her father's advice to practice sympathy and understanding and demonstrates that her experiences with hatred and prejudice will not sully her faith in human goodness.

Treasure Island

Robert Louis Stevenson

Jim Hawkins is a young boy who lives at his parents' inn, the Admiral Benbow, near Bristol, England, in the eighteenth century. An old sea captain named Billy Bones dies in the inn after being presented with a black spot, or official pirate verdict of guilt or judgment. Jim is stirred to action by the spot and its mysterious, accurate portent of Billy's death. Hastily, Jim and his mother unlock Billy's sea chest, finding a logbook and map inside. Hearing steps outside, they leave with the documents before Billy's pursuers ransack the inn.

Jim realizes that the contents he has snatched from the sea chest must be valuable, so he takes one of the documents he has found to some local acquaintances, Dr. Livesey and Squire Trelawney. Excited, they recognize it as a map for a huge treasure that the infamous pirate Captain Flint has buried on a distant island. Trelawney immediately starts planning an expedition. Naïve in his negotiations to outfit his ship, the Hispaniola, Trelawney is tricked into hiring one of Flint's former mates, Long John Silver, and many of Flint's crew. Only the captain, Smollett, is trustworthy. The ship sets sail for Treasure Island with nothing amiss, until Jim overhears Silver's plans for mutiny. Jim tells the captain about Silver and the rest of the rebellious crew.

Landing at the island, Captain Smollett devises a plan to get most of the mutineers off the ship, allowing them leisure time on shore. On a whim, Jim sneaks into the pirates' boat and goes ashore with them. Frightened of the pirates, Jim runs off alone. From a hiding place, he witnesses Silver's murder of a sailor who refuses to join the mutiny. Jim flees deeper into the heart of the island, where he encounters a half-crazed man named Ben Gunn. Ben had once served in Flint's crew but was marooned on the island years earlier.

Meanwhile, Smollett and his men have gone ashore and taken shelter in a stockade the pirates have built. Jim returns to the stockade, bringing Ben with him. Silver visits and attempts a negotiation with the captain, but the captain is wary and refuses to speak to him. The pirates attack the stockade the next day, and the captain is wounded. Eager to take action, Jim follows another whim and deserts his mates, sneaking off to hunt for Ben's handmade boat hidden in the woods.

After finding Ben's boat, Jim sails out to the anchored ship with the intention of cutting it adrift, thereby depriving the pirates of a means of escape. He cuts the rope, but he realizes his small boat has drifted near the pirates' camp and fears he will be discovered. By chance, the pirates do not spot Jim, and he floats around the island until he catches sight of the ship drifting wildly. Struggling aboard, he discovers that one of the watchmen, Israel Hands, has killed the other watchman in a drunken fit. Jim takes control of the ship, but Israel turns against him. Jim is wounded but kills Israel.

Jim returns to the stockade but finds it occupied by the pirates. Silver takes Jim hostage, telling the boy that the captain has given the pirates the treasure map, provisions, and the use of the stockade in exchange for their lives. Jim realizes, however, that Silver is having trouble managing his men, who accuse him of treachery. Silver proposes to Jim that they help each other survive by pretending Jim is a hostage. However, the men present Silver with a black spot and inform him that he has been deposed as their commander.

In a desperate attempt to gain control of his crew, Silver shows them the treasure map to appease them. Silver leads Jim and the men to the treasure site, but they are shocked to find it already excavated and the treasure removed. The men are angered and near mutiny again. At that

moment Dr. Livesey, Ben Gunn, and the others fire on the pirate band, which scatters throughout the island. Jim and Silver flee, and are guided by the others to Ben's cave, where Ben has hidden the treasure, which he had discovered months before.

After spending three days carrying the loot to the ship, the men prepare to set sail for home. There is a debate about the fate of the remaining mutineers. Despite the pirates' submissive pleas, they are left marooned on the island. Silver is allowed to join the voyage, but he sneaks off the ship one night with a portion of the treasure and is never heard from again. The voyage home comes to a close. Eventually, Captain Smollet retires from the sea, and Ben becomes a lodge-keeper. Jim swears off treasure-hunting forever and suffers from nightmares about the sea and gold coins.