

AP Reading List

In addition to the regular curriculum required text(s), students in AP English classes are required to read several books from this list and be prepared to do an assignment and/or an assessment. Unless otherwise stated, the plot summaries provided are from The Library of Congress.

Things Fall Apart by Chinua Achebe

This novel tells the story of Okonkwo, a "strong man" of an Ibo village in Nigeria and his fall from grace. The other plot line is as modern as the first is ancient, and concerns the clash of cultures and the destruction of Okonkwo's world with the arrival of aggressive European missionaries.

The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven by Sherman Alexie

This collection of 24 short stories paints a portrait of life in and around the Spokane Indian reservation, and introduces some of Alexie's most beloved characters, including Thomas Builds-the-Fire, the storyteller who no one seems to listen to, and his compatriot, Victor, the sports hero who turned into a recovering alcoholic.

The House of Spirits, Daughters of Fortune, Portrait in Sepia by Isabel Allende

Daughters of Fortune follows the story of a Chilean woman who searches for her lover in the goldfields of 1840s California. Arriving as a stowaway, Eliza finances her search with various jobs, including playing the piano in a brothel. In *Portrait in Sepia*, Aurora del Valle is raised amid great wealth in Chile by her shrewd, commanding grandmother. But her nights are tormented by a nightmare set in San Francisco's Chinatown. Now, reaching womanhood and thrust into a marriage that quickly leaves her disillusioned, she begins a search for her missing years.

Robber Bride, The Blind Assassin, Oryx and Crake by Margaret Atwood

In *The Robber Bride*, Atwood provocatively suggests that if women are to be equal they must realize that they share with men both the capacity for villainy and the responsibility for moral choice. *The Blind Assassin* begins with, "Ten days after the war ended, my sister drove a car off the bridge." They are spoken by Iris, whose terse account of her sister Laura's death in 1945 is followed by an inquest report proclaiming the death accidental. But just as the reader expects to settle into Laura's story, Atwood introduces a novel-within-a-novel... In *Oryx and Crake*, Atwood introduces us to Snowman, a man who has survived ecological and scientific devastation and finds himself "father" to a genetically manipulated race called the Children of Crake.

The Sweet Hereafter by Russell Banks

High-profile lawyer Mitchell Stephens descends upon a small town after a tragic school bus accident. Promising retribution and a class-action lawsuit, Stephens begins his investigation, in the process unearthing a web of lies and deceit.

Another Country by James Baldwin (not available from B.S.S. library)

Set in Greenwich Village, Harlem, and France, among other locales this is a novel of passions--sexual, racial, political, artistic--depicting men and women, blacks and whites, stripped of their masks of gender and race by love and hatred at the most elemental and sublime. Chapters summary

***Wuthering Heights* by Emily Bronte**

Gypsy child Heathcliff was raised as a wild animal until adopted by a wealthy landowner. He and the daughter of the house, Catherine, soon become inseparable, loving each other like they were one being. However, when as adult, Catherine wishes to enter the society which Heathcliff cannot, the consequences are tragic and far reaching.

Jane Eyre by Charlotte Bronte

As an orphan, Jane's childhood is full of miseries inflicted by cruel relatives and a brutal school. She is determined to forge a better future for herself and a position as governess at Thornfield Hall seems to promise that. But Thornfield is a house full of secrets, its master a passionate, tormented man, and before long Jane faces her greatest struggle in a choice between love and self-respect.

The Beans of Egypt, Maine by Carolyn Chute (not available from BSS library)

This novel chronicles the notorious, unforgettable Bean clan of small town Egypt, Maine-from wild man Reuben, an alcoholic who can't seem to keep himself out of jail; to his cousins, the perpetually pregnant Roberta, and Beal, a man gentle by temperament but violent in defeat who marries his pious neighbor, Earlene Pomerleau before poverty kills him. (Chapters summary)

Lord Jim by Joseph Conrad

A young Englishman branded as a coward seeks personal redemption for an act of selfishness.

Great Expectations by Charles Dickens

After harsh early years, Pip, an orphan growing up in Victorian England, is given the means to become a gentleman by an unknown benefactor and learns that outward appearances can be deceiving.

Crime and Punishment by Fyodor Dostoevsky

A former Russian student murders an old pawnbroker and her sister for money, and then must struggle to live with the guilt that comes as a result of his crimes.

House of Sand and Fog by Andre Dubus III

New to California, opportunity knocks for Iranian immigrant Col. Behrani when the county mistakenly offers for sale a seized house at a bargain price. When the county discovers its error, the drug-addicted woman who owned the house demands its return, but Behrani refuses. Unfortunately for him, the woman's lover is a policeman who takes the law into his hands.

What is the What by Dave Eggers

Valentino Achak Deng was among the thousands of children who had to flee their homes in Sudan in order to escape a life of war and danger. Soon he finds himself in the United States. But with his new home come new obstacles.

Invisible Man by Ralph Ellison

In the course of his wanderings from a Southern Negro college to New York's Harlem, an American black man becomes involved in a series of adventures.

Tom Jones by Henry Fielding

Expelled from Mr. Allworthy's country estate for his wild temper and sexual conquests, the good-hearted foundling Tom Jones loses his money, joins the army, and pursues his beloved across Britain to London. Set in 1749, our hero's actions were as shocking then as they are funny today. (Chapters summary)

Madame Bovary by Gustave Flaubert

The novel follows the life of Emma Bovary, a weak, limited woman and the inevitable moral degeneration of her unhappy marriage to a good-hearted but stupid village doctor.

Everything is Illuminated by Jonathan Safran Foer

With only a yellowed photograph in hand, a young American man journeys to find the woman who saved his grandfather during World War II in a Ukrainian village that was ultimately razed by the Nazis.

Cold Mountain by Charles Frasier (not available from BSS library)

Wounded and fatally disillusioned in the fighting at Petersburg, Confederate soldier Inman decides to walk back to his home in the Blue Ridge mountains to his love Ada. Along the way he encounters slaves and marauders, bounty hunters and witches, both helpful and malign. At the same time, Ada is trying to revive her father's derelict farm in a world where the old certainties have been swept away. (Chapters summary)

A Room with a View by E.M. Forster

While in Italy, Lucy Honeychurch falls in love with George Emerson but is courted by a more suitable man upon her return to England. In the end she must choose between convention and passion.

Memoirs of a Geisha by Arthur Golden

A world where appearances are paramount; where a girl's virginity is auctioned to the highest bidder; where women are trained to beguile the most powerful men; and where love is scorned as illusion.

Snow Falling on Cedars by David Guterson

San Piedro Island, north of Puget Sound, is a place so isolated that no one who lives there can afford to make enemies. But in 1954 a local fisherman is found suspiciously drowned, and a Japanese American named Kabuo Miyamoto is charged with his murder. In the course of the ensuing trial, it becomes clear that what is at stake is more than a man's guilt.

A Raisin in the Sun by Lorraine Hansberry

A play about the hopes and aspirations of a struggling, working-class family living on the South Side of Chicago. The play's title comes from a line in Langston Hughes's poem "Harlem," which warns that a dream deferred might "dry up/like a raisin in the sun." (Chapters summary)

Tess of the D'Urbervilles, Mayor of Casterbridge by Thomas Hardy

In *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, young Tess Durbeyfield attempts to restore her family's fortunes by claiming their connection with the aristocratic d'Urbervilles. But Alec d'Urberville is a rich wastrel who seduces her and makes her life miserable. When Tess meets Angel Clare, she is offered true love and happiness, but her past catches up with her and she faces an agonizing moral choice. In *Mayor of Casterbridge*, Michael Henchard sells his wife and baby daughter on a drunken impulse at a local fair. Eighteen years later his temperament again thwarts his attempts to make amends.

The Blithedale Romance, The Scarlet Letter by Nathaniel Hawthorne

In *The Blithedale Romance* (not available in the BSS Library), a group of Utopians, unhappy with dissolute, mid-19th-century America, takes to the pastoral life; but the members find little satisfaction in the communal life. Instead of changing the world, they pursue self-centered paths that ultimately lead to tragedy. (Chapters summary) *The Scarlet Letter*, tells the story of Hester Prynne, a young woman in seventeenth century Massachusetts, who is condemned by Puritan law to wear a scarlet "A" as the symbol of the sin of adultery that she committed.

The Kite Runner, A Thousand Splendid Suns by Khaled Hosseini

The unforgettable, heartbreaking story of the unlikely friendship between a wealthy Afghan youth and the son of his father's servant. The novel is about the love of reading, relationships between fathers and sons, the price of betrayal, and the possibility of redemption. *A Thousand Splendid Suns* tells the stories of Mariam and Laila, two women who are born a generation apart, but are brought jarringly together by war, by loss and by fate. As they endure the ever escalating dangers around them—in their home as well as in the streets of Kabul—they come to form a bond that makes them both sisters and mother-daughter to each other, and that will ultimately alter the course not just of their own lives but of the next generation.

Their Eyes Were Watching God by Zora Neale Hurston

The story of fair-skinned, fiercely independent Janie Crawford, and her evolving selfhood through three marriages and a life marked by poverty, trials, and purpose.

The Cider House Rules by John Irving

Set in rural Maine in the first half of this century, it tells the story of Dr. Wilbur Larch—obstetrician and director of the orphanage in the town of St. Clouds. It is also the story of his favorite orphan, Homer, who is never adopted.

The Portrait of a Lady by Henry James

This novel depicts the psychological impact of European culture upon an American girl, Isabel Archer, and chronicles her unfortunate marriage.

The Trial by Franz Kafka

Joseph K. is an employee in a bank, a man without particular qualities or abilities. His inconsequence makes doubly strange his arrest by the officer of the court in the large city where K. lives. He tries in vain to discover how he has aroused the suspicion of the court. His honesty is conventional; his sins, with Elsa the waitress, are conventional; and he has no striking or dangerous ambitions. He can only ask questions, and receives no answers that clarify the strange world of courts and court functionaries in which he is compelled to wander. The plight of Joseph K., consumed by guilt and condemned for a crime he does not understand by a court with which he cannot communicate, is a profound and disturbing image of man in the modern world. (Chapters summary)

A Thousand Cranes by Yasunari Kawabata (not available from BSS library)

While attending a traditional tea ceremony in the aftermath of his parents' deaths, the character Kikuji encounters his father's former mistress, Mrs. Ota. At first Kikuji is appalled by her indelicate nature, but it is not long before he succumbs to passion—a passion with tragic and unforeseen consequences, not just for the two lovers, but also for Mrs. Ota's daughter, to whom Kikuji's attachments soon extend. Death, jealousy, and attraction convene around the delicate art of the tea ceremony. (Chapters summary)

One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest by Ken Kesey

The struggle for power between a head nurse and a male patient in a mental institution leads to a climax of hate, violence and death.

The Bean Trees by Barbara Kingsolver

Young, bright Taylor Greer leaves her poverty-stricken life in Kentucky and heads west, picking up an abandoned Native American baby girl whom she names Turtle and finds a new home in Tucson with Mattie, an old woman who takes in Central American refugees.

The Unbearable Lightness of Being by Milan Kundera

A young woman is in love with a successful surgeon, a man torn between his love for her and his incorrigible womanizing. His mistress, a free-spirited artist, lives her life as a series of betrayals--while her other lover, earnest, faithful, and good, stands to lose everything because of his noble qualities.

The Hour I First Believed by Wally Lamb (not available in the BSS library)

When high school teacher Caelum Quirk and his wife, Maureen, a school nurse, move to Littleton, Colorado, they both get jobs at Columbine High School. In April 1999, while Caelum is away, Maureen finds herself in the library at Columbine, cowering in a cabinet and expecting to be killed. Miraculously, she survives, but at a cost: she is unable to recover from the trauma. When Caelum and Maureen flee to an illusion of safety on the Quirk family's Connecticut farm, they discover that the effects of chaos are not easily put right, and further tragedy ensues. (Chapters summary)

Women in Love by D.H. Lawrence

Gudrun and Ursula Brangwen are the two intelligent, incisive, and observant sisters whose temperamental differences spark an ongoing debate regarding their society and their inner lives. The two very different sisters pursue thrilling, torrid affairs, but their search for more mature emotional relationships reveals some startling information about themselves as well as their lovers.

The Fixer by Bernard Malamud

Set in Kiev in 1911 during a period of heightened anti-Semitism, the novel tells the story of Yakov Bok, a Jewish handyman blamed for the brutal murder of a young Russian boy. Bok leaves his village to try his luck in Kiev, and after denying his Jewish identity, finds himself working for a member of the anti-Semitic Black Hundreds Society. When the boy is found nearly drained of blood in a cave, the Black Hundreds accuse the Jews of ritual murder. Arrested and imprisoned, Bok refuses to confess to a crime that he did not commit. (Chapters summary)

One Hundred Years of Solitude by Gabriel Garcia Marquez

The rise and fall, birth and death, of the mythical town of Macondo through the history of the Buendía family.

All the Pretty Horses by Cormac McCarthy

John Grady Cole is the last bewildered survivor of long generations of Texas ranchers. Finding himself cut off from the only life he has ever wanted, he sets out for Mexico with his friend Lacey Rawlins to search for his dreams.

Moby Dick by Herman Melville

“Call me Ishmael.” These three famous words begin one of America’s most epic novels, a tale of one obsessed captain, his doomed crew, and an elusive white whale named Moby-Dick.

The Crucible by Arthur Miller

This play is about the witch-hunts and trials in seventeenth-century Salem, Massachusetts. In the rigid theocracy of Salem, rumors that women are practicing witchcraft galvanize the town's most basic fears and suspicions; and when a young girl accuses Elizabeth Proctor of being a witch, self-righteous church leaders and townspeople insist that Elizabeth be brought to trial. The ruthlessness of the prosecutors and the eagerness of neighbor to testify against neighbor brilliantly illuminate the destructive power of socially sanctioned violence. (Chapters summary)

In the Lake of the Woods by Tim O’Brien

John Wade, is a man in crisis: after spending years building a successful political career, he finds his future derailed during a bid for the U.S. Senate by revelations about his past as a soldier in Vietnam. The election lost by a landslide, John and his wife, Kathy, retreat to a small cabin on the shores of a Minnesota lake--from which Kathy mysteriously disappears.

1984 by George Orwell

Hidden away in the Record Department of the sprawling Ministry of Truth, Winston Smith rewrites the past to suit the needs of the Party. Yet he inwardly rebels against the totalitarian world he lives in, which demands obedience and controls him through the all-seeing telescreens and the watchful eye of Big Brother, symbolic head of the Party.

Antigone by Sophocles

When Antigone, the daughter of Oedipus, chooses to obey the law of the gods rather than an unconscionable command from Creon, ruler of Thebes, she is condemned to death. How the gods take their revenge on Creon provides the gripping denouement to this compelling tragedy. (Chapters summary)

The Help by Kathryn Stockett

Aibileen is a black maid in 1962 Jackson, Mississippi. She’s always taken orders quietly, but lately she's unable to hold her bitterness back. Her friend Minny has never held her tongue but now must somehow keep secrets about her employer that leave her speechless. White socialite Skeeter just graduated college. She's full of ambition, but without a husband, she's considered a failure. Together, these seemingly different women join together to write a tell-all book about work as a black maid in the South, that could forever alter their destinies and the life of a small town. (Chapters summary)

Gulliver’s Travels by Jonathan Swift

The voyages of an Englishman carry him to such strange places as Lilliput, where people are six inches tall; Brobdingnag, a land of giants; and a country ruled by horses. In this scathing satire on the politics and morals of the 18th Century, Swift's condemnation of society and its institutions still resonates today.

Vanity Fair by M. Thackeray

At the center of this panoramic satire of English society during the Napoleonic Wars is one of the most unforgettable characters in nineteenth-century literature: the enthralling Becky Sharp, a charmingly ruthless social climber who is determined to leave behind her humble origins, no matter the cost. Her more gentle friend Amelia, by contrast, only cares for Captain George Osborne, despite his selfishness and her family's disapproval. As both women move within the flamboyant milieu of Regency England, the political turmoil of the era is matched by the scheming Becky's sensational rise—and its unforeseen aftermath.

Rabbit Run by John Updike

The novel's hero, Harry "Rabbit" Angstrom, is a onetime high-school basketball star who on an impulse deserts his wife and son. He is twenty-six years old, a man-child caught in a struggle between instinct and thought, self and society, sexual gratification and family duty, even, in a sense, human hard-heartedness and divine Grace. Though his flight from home traces a zigzag of evasion, he holds to the faith that he is on the right path, an invisible line toward his own salvation as straight as a ruler's edge. (World Cat summary)

Slaughterhouse Five, Bluebeard, Player Piano by Kurt Vonnegut Jr.

Slaughterhouse Five introduces us to Billy Pilgrim, a man who becomes unstuck in time after he is abducted by aliens from the planet Tralfamadore. In a plot-scrambling display of virtuosity, we follow Pilgrim simultaneously through all phases of his life, concentrating on his (and Vonnegut's) shattering experience as an American prisoner of war who witnesses the firebombing of Dresden. *Bluebeard* is a fictional autobiography of Rabo Karabekian, an abstract expressionist artist, who acquired the largest collection of abstract expressionist paintings in private hands. *Player Piano* spins the chilling tale of engineer Paul Proteus, who must find a way to live in a world dominated by a super computer and run completely by machines. Paul's rebellion is vintage Vonnegut--wildly funny, deadly serious, and terrifyingly close to reality.

The Color Purple by Alice Walker

The lives of two sister--Nettie, a missionary in Africa, and Celie, a southern woman married to a man she hates--are revealed in a series of letters exchanged over thirty years.

Mrs. Dalloway by Virginia Woolf

Clarissa Dalloway, a fashionable London hostess, is to give an important party. Through her thoughts on that day and through her memories of the past, her character is gradually revealed. And so are the other personalities who have touched on her life. Their loves and hates, their tragedies and comedies, all are vividly, intimately--and quite uniquely--brought to life.

The Age of Innocence by Edith Wharton

'Real loneliness is living among all these kind people who only ask one to pretend!' When Newland Archer, happily engaged to May Welland, meets his fiancée's cousin Ellen, his entire future is cast into doubt: strong-willed, witty, and entirely unpretentious, Ellen is unlike any woman he has ever met. He is torn between his infatuation for her and his duty to marry May.

A Streetcar Named Desire by Tennessee Williams

This play recounts how the faded and promiscuous Blanche DuBois is pushed over the edge by her sexy and brutal brother-in-law, Stanley Kowalski.