



Most influential novels of the 20th Century.

As voted for by librarians and published in the library journal.

Excellent fiction choices for Divisions and Sixths

Harper Lee. To Kill A Mockingbird

The conscience of a town steeped in prejudice, violence, and hypocrisy is pricked by the stamina and quiet heroism of one man's struggle for justice.

J.D. Salinger. The Catcher In The Rye

Holden, knowing he is to be expelled from school, decides to leave early. He spends three days in New York City and tells the story of what he did and suffered there

J. R. R. Tolkien. The Lord of the Rings

In ancient times the Rings of Power were crafted by the Elven-smiths, and Sauron, the Dark Lord, forged the One Ring, filling it with his own power so that he could rule all others. But the One Ring was taken from him, and though he sought it throughout Middle-earth, it remained lost to him. The Lord of the Rings tells of the great quest undertaken by Frodo and the Fellowship of the Ring.

Margaret Mitchell. Gone with the Wind

A monumental classic considered by many to be not only the greatest love story ever written, but also the greatest Civil War saga.

Toni Morrison. Beloved

Set in rural Ohio several years after the Civil War, this profoundly affecting chronicle of slavery and its aftermath is Toni Morrison's greatest novel, a dazzling achievement, and the most spellbinding reading experience of the decade.

Alice Walker. The Color Purple

This landmark work is Walker's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel that also won the American Book Award and established her as a major voice in modern fiction. The New York Times Book Review hailed its "intense emotional impact", and the San Francisco Chronicle called it "a work to stand beside literature of any time and place".

George Orwell. Nineteen Eighty-Four

To Winston Smith, a young man who works in the Ministry of Truth (Minitru for short), come two people who transform his life completely. One is Julia, whom he meets after she hands him a slip reading, "I love you." The other is O'Brien, who tells him, "We shall meet in the place where there is no darkness." The way in which Winston is betrayed by the one and, against his own desires and instincts, ultimately betrays the other, makes a story of mounting drama and suspense.

George Orwell. Animal Farm

Animal Farm is a devastating satire of the Soviet Union by the man V. S. Pritchett called "the conscience of his generation". A fable about an uprising of farm animals against their human masters, it illustrates how new tyranny replaces old in the wake of revolutions and power corrupts even the noblest of causes.

William Golding. Lord of the Flies

The classic tale of a group of English school boys who are left stranded on an unpopulated island, and who must confront not only the defects of their society but the defects of their own natures.

Joseph Heller. Catch-22

Catch-22 is like no other novel we have ever read. It has its own style, its own rationale, its own extraordinary character. It moves back and forth from hilarity to horror. It is outrageously funny and strangely affecting.

Pearl S. Buck. The Good Earth

This great modern classic depicts life in China at a time before the vast political and social upheavals transformed an essentially agrarian country into a world power. Nobel Prize-winner Pearl S. Buck traces the whole cycle of life--its terrors, its passions, its ambitions, and rewards. Includes biographical and historical information and more.

F. Scott Fitzgerald. The Great Gatsby

Gatsby embodies the naive American notion that it is possible to invent oneself and persuade the world to accept that definition. Gatsby's youthful neighbor, Nick Carraway, fascinated by both the display of enormous wealth and the essential integrity that he perceives in Gatsby's vision, becomes his confidante and accomplice in his plan to recapture the heart of Daisy Buchanan.

Gabriel Garcia Marquez. One Hundred Years of Solitude

A classic of world literature for all time--and probably Marquez's most famous work. "The first piece of literature since the Book of Genesis that should be required reading for the entire human race . . . with more lucidity, wit, wisdom, and poetry than is expected from 100 years of novelists, let alone one man".--Washington Post Book World.

Ray Bradbury. Fahrenheit 451

Fahrenheit 451 is the temperature at which book paper burns. Fahrenheit 451 is a short novel set in the (perhaps near) future when "firemen" burn books forbidden by the totalitarian "brave new world" regime. The hero, according to Mr. Bradbury, is "a book burner who suddenly discovers that books are flesh and blood ideas and cry out silently when put to the torch".

J.R.R. Tolkien. The Hobbit

Join the beginning of the classic fantasy. Bilbo Baggins was a hobbit who wanted to be left in his solitude. But without intending to, he is drawn into a dangerous quest, where, alone and ultimately unaided, he must confront the greatest terror known.

Ken Kesey. One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest

An inmate of a mental institution tries to find the freedom and independence denied him in the outside world.

Margaret Atwood. The Handmaid's Tale

Set in the Republic of Gilead, during the late twentieth century, when declining birth rates caused by the effects of nuclear fallout and the AIDS epidemic result in a new social structure. All young women, who can bear healthy children, are allocated to powerful regime men. This is the story of one of these young women.

Ernest Hemingway. The Old Man and the Sea

Hemingway's triumphant yet tragic story of an old Cuban fisherman and his relentless, agonizing battle with a giant marlin far out in the Gulf Stream combines the simplicity of a fable, the significance of a parable, and the drama of an epic.

Ralph Ellison. Invisible Man

An African-American man's search for success and the American dream leads him out of college to Harlem and a growing sense of personal rejection and social invisibility.

Aldous Huxley. Brave New World A fantasy of the future that sheds a blazing critical light on the present--considered to be Aldous Huxley's most enduring masterpiece.

Erich Maria Remarque. All Quiet on the Western Front

Though a fictional account, it is a timeless document of the devastation and human tragedy of World War I.

Anthony Burgess. A Clockwork Orange Anthony Burgess's modern classic of youthful violence and social redemption, reissued to include the controversial last chapter not previously published in this country, with a new introduction by the author. This disturbing novel creates an alarming futuristic vision of violence, high technology, and authoritarianism. -

Chinua Achebe. Things Fall Apart

Achebe's masterpiece tells the story of Okonkwo, strongman of an Ibo village in Nigeria, as he witnesses the destruction of his culture and the loss of his own place within it. -

Evelyn Waugh. Brideshead Revisited

Waugh tells the story of the Marchmain family. Aristocratic, beautiful and charming, the Marchmains are indeed a symbol of England and her decline in this novel of the upper class of the 1920s and the abdication of responsibility in the 1930s.

Frank Herbert. Dune

Set on the desert planet Arrakis begins the story of a great family's plan to bring to fruition an unattainable dream.

John Steinbeck. Of Mice and Men

While the powerlessness of the laboring class in a recurring theme in this classic work, Steinbeck narrows his focus, creating an intimate portrait of two men facing a world marked by petty tyranny, misunderstanding, jealousy, and callousness--a parable about commitment, loneliness, hope, and loss. -

Robert Graves. I, Claudius

Considered an idiot because of his physical infirmities, Claudius survived the intrigues and poisonings of the reigns of Augustus, Tiberius, and the Mad Caligula to become emperor in 41 A.D. A masterpiece.

Alexander Solzhenitsyn. One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich

A masterpiece of modern Russian fiction, this novel is one of the most significant and outspoken literary documents ever to come out of Soviet Russia. A brutal depiction of life in a Stalinist camp and a moving tribute to man's triumph of will over relentless dehumanization, this is Solzhenitsyn's first novel to win international acclaim. -

Conan Doyle. The Hound of the Baskervilles

The most famous of the Sherlock Holmes stories features the spectral hound of Dartmoor, which, according to an ancient legend, has haunted the Baskerville family for generations. When Sir Charles Baskerville dies suddenly of a heart attack on the grounds of the estate, the locals are convinced the ghost dog is responsible. Holmes is called in.

William Styron. Sophie's Choice

Three stories are told: a young Southerner wants to become a writer; a turbulent love-hate affair between a brilliant Jew and a beautiful Polish woman; and of an awful wound in that woman's past--one that impels both Sophie and Nathan toward destruction .

James Joyce. Ulysse

Leopold Bloom wanders through Dublin, talking, observing, musing -- and always remembering Molly, his passionate, wayward wife. Set in the shadow of Homer's Odyssey, internal thoughts give physical reality extra color and perspective.

Virginia Woolf. To the Lighthouse

A landmark of modern fiction, Virginia Woolf's To the Lighthouse explores the subjective reality of everyday life in the Hebrides for the Ramsay family.

Alan Paton. Cry, the Beloved Country

Paton's deeply moving story of Zulu pastor Stephen Kumalo and his son Absalom, set against the backdrop of a land and people riven by racial inequality and injustice, remains the most famous and important novel in South Africa's history.

E.M. Forster. A Passage to India

A classic account of the clash of cultures in British India after the turn of the century.

Robert Penn Warren. All the King's Men

This classic book is generally regarded as the finest novel ever written on American politics. It describes the career of Willie Stark, a back-country lawyer whose idealism is overcome by his lust for power.

T.H. White. The Once and Future King

The world's greatest fantasy classic is the magical epic of King Arthur and his shining Camelot, of Merlyn and Guinevere, of beasts who talk and men who fly, of wizardry and war. It is the book of all things lost and wonderful and sad. It is the fantasy masterpiece by which all others are judged.

Sylvia Plath. The Bell Jar

This extraordinary work chronicles the crack-up of Esther Greenwood: brilliant, beautiful, enormously talented, successful - but slowly going under, and maybe for the last time.

Boris Pasternak. Doctor Zhivago

Connecting images and episodes describe the great feeling and effect of the Russian Revolution on a variety of characters, but in particular on a sensitive young doctor .

Mario Puzo. The Godfather

The sweeping saga of a family and of its leader, a friendly and reasonable man who just happens to be the deadliest gang leader in the Cosa Nostra.

This list is a selection of the 150 titles listed. See <http://www.hcpl.net/read/most-influential-fiction-20th-century> for more!