

Author	Title	Time Period	Lexile	Description (from Barnes and Noble synopsis)
Angelou, Maya	<i>I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings</i>	1928- 1969	1070	Autobiography covering the childhood of a woman who has been a professional dancer, actress, poet, journalist, and television producer.
Asimov, Isaac	<i>Foundation</i>	Future	830	As the Galactic Empire declines, psychohistorian Hari Seldon and his band of psychobiologists form the Foundation, designed to be the nucleus of an eventual ideal universal ruling corporation.
Baldwin, James	<i>If Beale Street Could Talk</i>	1970s		A story of love in the face of injustice. Told through the eyes of Tish, a nineteen-year-old girl, in love with Fonny, a young sculptor who is the father of her child, Baldwin's story mixes the sweet and the sad. Tish and Fonny have pledged to get married, but Fonny is falsely accused of a terrible crime and imprisoned. Their families set out to clear his name, and as they face an uncertain future, the young lovers experience a kaleidoscope of emotions—affection, despair, and hope. In a love story that evokes the blues, where passion and sadness are inevitably intertwined, Baldwin has created two characters so alive and profoundly realized that they are unforgettably ingrained in the American psyche.

Boyle, T.C.	<i>Tortilla Curtain</i>	1990s	1210	Men and women with brown faces and strong backs who risk everything to cross the Mexican border and invade the American Dream are the Okies of the 1990s. Two of them, Candido and America Rincon, have come to Southern California and are living in a makeshift camp deep in a ravine, fighting off starvation. At the top of Topanga Canyon, Los Angeles liberals Delaney and Kyra Mossbacher lead an ordered sushi-and-recycling existence in a newly gated hilltop community: he a sensitive nature writer, she an obsessive realtor. And from the moment a freak accident brings Candido and Delaney into intimate contact, the two couples and their opposing worlds gradually intersect in what becomes a tragicomedy of error and misunderstanding.
Bradbury, Ray	<i>Fahrenheit 451</i>	Future	890	A book burner in a future fascist state finds out books are a vital part of a culture he never knew. He clandestinely pursues reading, until he is betrayed.
Cisneros, Sandra	<i>Caramelo</i>	1950s		"This book," Eduardo Galeano writes, "is a crowded train, a never-stop round-trip train going and coming back and going again between Mexico and the U.S.A., across the frontiers of land and time: full of voices, full of music, made from memory, making life." Anyone who has ever read a Sandra Cisneros novel knows these large families, with their noisy gatherings, and their weekend feasts of renewal.
Cormier, Robert	<i>Heroes</i>	1940s (WWII)	1050	After joining the army at fifteen and having his face blown away by a grenade in a battle in France, Francis returns home to Frenchtown hoping to find--and kill--the former childhood hero he feels betrayed him.

Crane, Stephen	<i>Maggie, a Girl of the Streets, and Other New York Writings</i>	1890s	<p>Not yet famous for his Civil War masterpiece, <i>The Red Badge of Courage</i>, Stephen Crane was unable to find a publisher for his brilliant <i>Maggie: A Girl of the Streets</i>, finally printing it himself in 1893. Condemned and misunderstood during Crane's lifetime, this starkly realistic story of a pretty child of the Bowery has since been recognized as a landmark work in American fiction. Now Crane's great short novel of life in turn-of-the-century New York is published in its original form, along with four of Crane's best short stories—"The Blue Hotel," "The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky," "The Monster," and "The Open Boat"—stories of such remarkable power and clarity that they stand among the finest short stories ever written by an American.</p>	
Crane, Stephen	<i>The Red Badge of Courage</i>	1860s (Civil War)	900	<p>Presents Stephen Crane's classic novel about Henry Flemming, a young Civil War Union soldier who experiences his first battle and then has to come to terms with his own fears and feelings of cowardice.</p>
Douglass, Frederick	<i>Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: an American Slave</i>	1818-1895	<p>Abolitionist and former slave Frederick Douglass tells his life story, chronicling his experiences with owners and overseers and discussing how slavery affects both slaves and slaveholders.</p>	

Ellison, Ralph	<i>Invisible Man</i>	1930s	950	<i>Invisible Man</i> is a milestone in American literature, a book that has continued to engage readers since its appearance in 1952. A first novel by an unknown writer, it remained on the bestseller list for sixteen weeks, won the National Book Award for fiction, and established Ralph Ellison as one of the key writers of the century. The nameless narrator of the novel describes growing up in a black community in the South, attending a Negro college from which he is expelled, moving to New York and becoming the chief spokesman of the Harlem branch of "the Brotherhood", and retreating amid violence and confusion to the basement lair of the Invisible Man he imagines himself to be.
Gaines, Ernest	<i>A Lesson Before Dying</i>	1940s	750	Set in a small Cajun community in the late 1940s, <i>A Lesson Before Dying</i> is an "enormously moving" ("Los Angeles Times") novel of one man condemned to die for a crime he did not commit and a young man who visits him in his cell. In the end, the two men forge a bond as they both come to understand the simple heroism of resisting--and defying--the expected.
Griffin, John	<i>Black Like Me</i>	1950s	990	In the Deep South of the 1950s, journalist John Howard Griffin decided to cross the color line. Using medication that darkened his skin to deep brown, he exchanged his privileged life as a Southern white man for the disenfranchised world of an unemployed black man. His audacious, still chillingly relevant eyewitness history is a work about race and humanity--that in this new millennium still has something important to say to every American.

Guterson, David	<i>Snow Falling on Cedars</i>	1954 (aftermath of WWII)	1080	On San Pedro, an island of rugged, spectacular beauty in Puget Sound, a Japanese-American fisherman stands trial for murder. Set in 1954 in the shadow of World War II, <i>Snow Falling on Cedars</i> is a beautifully crafted courtroom drama, love story, and war novel, illuminating the psychology of a community, the ambiguities of justice, the racism that persists even between neighbors, and the necessity of individual moral action despite the indifference of nature and circumstance.
Hajdu, David	<i>Positively 4th Street: The Lives and Times of Joan Baez, Bob Dylan, Mimi Baez Farina and Richard Farina</i>	1960s		Confirmed baby boomers will know instantly that this book borrows its title from a 1965 Bob Dylan song. The book covers the same combustible period, a time when Dylan snapped into the lives of other future counterculture heroes. Billy Strayhorn biographer David Hadju threads his narrative through the heady interactions of Dylan, singer Joan Baez, her mysterious bohemian sister, Mimi, and moody novelist Richard Fariña. Around the fringes of this engaging icon bio are Greenwich Village eccentrics and a California scribbler named Tom Pynchon.
Heller, Joseph	<i>Catch 22</i>	1940s (WWII)	1140	Captain Yossarian, a paranoid bomber pilot stationed in the Italian theater during World War II, faces a "catch-22" in this comic novel when he wants to fly fewer combat missions.
Hemingway, Ernest	<i>A Farewell to Arms</i>	1914 -1918 (WW I)	730	An American ambulance officer serving on the Austro-Italian front deserts to join an English nurse after the retreat of Caporetto.

Houston, Jeanne	<i>Farewell to Manzanar</i>	1940s (WWII)	1040	Jeanne Wakatsuki was seven years old in 1942 when her family was uprooted from their home and sent to live at Manzanar internment camp--with 10,000 other Japanese Americans. Along with searchlight towers and armed guards, Manzanar ludicrously featured cheerleaders, Boy Scouts, sock hops, baton twirling lessons and a dance band called the Jive Bombers who would play any popular song except the nation's #1 hit: "Don't Fence Me In." Farewell to Manzanar is the true story of one spirited Japanese-American family's attempt to survive the indignities of forced detention . . . and of a native-born American child who discovered what it was like to grow up behind barbed wire in the United States.
Hughes, Langston	<i>The Ways of White Folk</i>	1930s		In these acrid and poignant stories, Hughes depicted black people colliding--sometimes humorously, more often tragically--with whites in the 1920s and '30s.
Hurston, Zora Neale	<i>Their Eyes Were Watching Gods</i>	early 1900s	1080	Initially published in 1937, this novel about a proud, independent black woman's quest for identity, a journey that takes her through three marriages and back to her roots, has been one of the most widely read and highly acclaimed novels in the canon of African-American literature.

Kerouac, Jack	<i>On the Road</i>	1950s	930	<p>On the Road chronicles Jack Kerouac's years traveling the North American continent with his friend Neal Cassady, "a sideburned hero of the snowy West." As "Sal Paradise" and "Dean Moriarty," the two roam the country in a quest for self-knowledge and experience. Kerouac's love of America, his compassion for humanity, and his sense of language as jazz combine to make <i>On the Road</i> an inspirational work of lasting importance. Kerouac's classic novel of freedom and longing defined what it meant to be "Beat" and has inspired every generation since its initial publication more than forty years ago.</p>
Larsen, Deborah	<i>White</i>	1758-early 1800s		<p>This is the voice of Mary Jemison, who, in 1758, at the age of sixteen, was taken by a Shawnee raiding party from her home near what would become Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. In this intimate reimagining of her life story, Mary endures the brutal scalplings of her parents and siblings and is given to two Seneca sisters who treat her as their own - a symbolic replacement for the brother they lost to the white colonists. Renamed Two-Falling-Voices, she gradually becomes integrated into her new family, learning to assist with the hunt and to cultivate corn. She marries a Delaware warrior, raises a family in her adoptive culture, becomes friends with two former slaves, and eventually, remarkably, fulfills her lifelong dream "to own land bordered by sky, as my mother and father had once purchased woods and fields which were dappled with changing light."</p>

Larson, Erik	<i>Devil in the White City</i>	1893	1170	The bestselling author of <i>Isaac's Storm</i> returns with a gripping tale about two men -- one a creative genius, the other a mass murderer -- who turned the 1893 Chicago World's Fair into their playground. Set against the dazzle of a dream city whose technological marvels presaged the coming century, this real-life drama of good and evil unfolds with all the narrative tension of a fictional thriller.
Martin, Valerie	<i>Property</i>	1828		Valerie Martin's <i>Property</i> delivers an eerily mesmerizing inquiry into slavery's venomous effects on the owner and the owned. The year is 1828, the setting a Louisiana sugar plantation where Manon Gaudet, pretty, bitterly intelligent, and monstrously self-absorbed, seethes under the dominion of her boorish husband. In particular his relationship with her slave Sarah, who is both his victim and his mistress.
Mason, Bobbie Ann	<i>In Country</i>	1980s but about Vietnam War	730	Bobbie Ann Mason's <i>In Country</i> explores the legacy of war from the perspective of Sam Hughes, a teenager whose father died in Vietnam before she was born. In the summer of 1984, Sam, her 35-year-old uncle Emmett -- himself a veteran who may be suffering from exposure to Agent Orange -- and her grandmother set out from Hopewell, Kentucky, on a road trip to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D. C. Growing up in an era where video games and television reruns of 'M*A*S*H' are more "real" than the entries in her father's military journal or her uncle's tormented memories, Sam must come to her own terms with the war's lasting effect on her family and her small community.

McCarthy, Cormac	<i>The Road</i>	postapocalyptic	670	<p>A father and his son walk alone through burned America. Nothing moves in the ravaged landscape save the ash on the wind. It is cold enough to crack stones, and when the snow falls it is gray. The sky is dark. Their destination is the coast, although they don't know what, if anything, awaits them there. They have nothing; just a pistol to defend themselves against the lawless bands that stalk the road, the clothes they are wearing, a cart of scavenged food—and each other.</p>
O' Brien, Tim	<i>The Things They Carried</i>	Vietnam 1961-75	880	<p><i>The Things They Carried</i> depicts the men of Alpha Company: Jimmy Cross, Henry Dobbins, Rat Kiley, Mitchell Sanders, Norman Bowker, Kiowa, and of course, the character Tim O'Brien who has survived his tour in Vietnam to become a father and writer at the age of forty-three. They battle the enemy (or maybe more the idea of the enemy), and occasionally each other. In their relationships we see their isolation and loneliness, their rage and fear. They miss their families, their girlfriends and buddies; they miss the lives they left back home. Yet they find sympathy and kindness for strangers (the old man who leads them unscathed through the mine field, the girl who grieves while she dances), and love for each other, because in Vietnam they are the only family they have. We hear the voices of the men and build images upon their dialogue. The way they tell stories about others, we hear them telling stories about themselves.</p>

Pipher, Mary	<i>Reviving Ophelia</i>	1990s	900	<p>This is the groundbreaking work that poses one of the most provocative questions of a generation: Why are American adolescent girls falling prey to depression, eating disorders, suicide attempts, and dangerously low self-esteem? Dr. Pipher posits that it's America's sexist, look-obsessed "girl-poisoning" culture—one in which girls are constantly struggling to find their true selves. In <i>Reviving Ophelia</i>, these girls' uncensored voices are heard from the front lines of adolescence. Personal and painfully honest, this is a compassionate call to arms, offering strategies with which to revive these Ophelias' lost senses of self.</p>
Rizzuto, Rahna Reiko	<i>Why She Left Us</i>	1940s -1990s		<p>The story weaves in and out of the personal tragedies and political persecution of three generations of a Japanese American family and exposes the complex, often destructive bonds of love and honor that tie a family together. At the center of the story is Emi Okada, a young girl who finds herself pregnant and alone on the eve of World War II. She gives up her firstborn, Eric, for adoption, but her mother finds the boy and brings him home, intent on raising him as part of the Okada family. This crucial event becomes a turning point in the story as it dramatically alters the lives of Emi's parents, siblings, and, later her children. Betrayals and secrets tear apart a family that is already struggling with assimilation, intergenerational conflict, and war. Narrated in turn by Emi's two children, Eric and Mariko, her mother, Kaori, and her brother Jack, <i>Why She Left Us</i> crisscrosses the century - from Japanese picture brides and migrant farm workers to internment of Japanese Americans in the Colorado desert to contemporary Los Angeles and Hawaii, where Emi's two children have settled as adults. When fifty years after the war, Mariko applies for reparations from the American government for the family's losses during their internment, she stumbles</p>

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Rodriguez, Luis J.	<i>Always Running</i>	1954- 1994	830	The author recounts his growing up in poverty in Los Angeles, his encounters with racism in school and on the streets, and his struggle to overcome prejudice, drugs, and violence.
Roth, Phillip	<i>American Pastoral</i>	1960s		Symbolic of turbulent times of the 1960s, the explosion of a bomb in his own bucolic backyard sweeps away the innocence of Swede Levov, along with everything industriously created by his family over three generations in America.
Russo, Richard	<i>Empire Falls</i>	End of the 20th century		Richard Russo's most ambitious novel is also his most gracefully told. Sweeping in its social scope but also achingly personal and beautifully detailed, <i>Empire Falls</i> is a subtle drama about the plight of the working class in a decaying Northeast mill town. After Gary Fisketjon edited and published Russo's powerful first novel, <i>Mohawk</i> , in 1986, he eagerly awaited the day he would have the opportunity to work with Russo again. He got his wish 15 years later, and Fisketjon, vice president and editor-at-large of Knopf, had this to say about it: "Empire Falls reveals our worst and best instincts and transfigures both our most appalling nightmares and our simplest hopes, with all the vision, grace, and humanity of epic storytelling."

Shandler, Sara	<i>Ophelia Speaks</i>	1990s	790	poignant collection of original pieces selected from more than eighthundred contributions, <i>Ophelia Speaks</i> culls writings from the hearts of girls nationwide, of various races, religions, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Ranging in age from twelve to eighteen, the voices here offer a provocative and piercingly real view on issues public and private, from body image to boys, politics to parents, school to sex. Framing each chapter are Shandler's own personal reflections, offering both the comfort of a trusted friend and an honest perspective from within the whirlwind of adolescence.
Silko, Leslie	<i>Storyteller</i>	1960s		Storytelling is an integral part of Native American tradition. It goes back hundreds of years, and spans the continent from ocean to ocean. It was the means by which tribes and nations communicated from generation to generation their feats, legends, and religious beliefs. These stories had a magical quality; they were both real and wondrous, and they had the power to bring the people together as nothing else did.
Sinclair, Upton	<i>The Jungle</i>	early 1900s	1170	Upton Sinclair’s muckraking masterpiece <i>The Jungle</i> centers on Jurgis Rudkus, a Lithuanian immigrant working in Chicago’s infamous Packingtown. Instead of finding the American Dream, Rudkus and his family inhabit a brutal, soul-crushing urban jungle dominated by greedy bosses, pitiless con-men, and corrupt politicians.

Smith, Betty	<i>A Tree Grows in Brooklyn</i>	1910- 1920s	810	<p>The beloved American classic about a young girl's coming-of-age at the turn of the century, Betty Smith's <i>A Tree Grows in Brooklyn</i> is a poignant and moving tale filled with compassion and cruelty, laughter and heartache, crowded with life and people and incident. The story of young, sensitive, and idealistic Francie Nolan and her bittersweet formative years in the slums of Williamsburg has enchanted and inspired millions of readers for more than sixty years. By turns overwhelming, sublime, heartbreaking, and uplifting, the daily experiences of the unforgettable Nolans are raw with honesty and tenderly threaded with family connectedness -- in a work of literary art that brilliantly captures a unique time and place as well as incredibly rich moments of universal experience.</p>
Steinbeck, John	<i>The Grapes of Wrath</i>	1930s	680	<p>Although it follows the movement of thousands of men and women and the transformation of an entire nation, <i>The Grapes of Wrath</i> is also the story of one Oklahoma farm family, the Joads, who are driven off their homestead and forced to travel west to the promised land of California. Out of their trials and their repeated collisions against the hard realities of an America divided into Haves and Have-Nots, Steinbeck created a drama that is intensely human yet majestic in its scale and moral vision, elemental yet plainspoken, tragic but ultimately stirring in its insistence on human dignity.</p>

Stockett, Kathryn	<i>The Help</i>	1960s		Twenty-two-year-old Skeeter has just returned home after graduating from Ole Miss. Aibileen is a wise, regal black maid raising her seventeenth white child. Minny, Aibileen's best friend, can cook like nobody's business but can't mind her tongue. It is 1962, and these three ordinary women are about to take one extraordinary step that forever changes a town and the way women --mothers, daughters, caregivers, friends -- view one another.
Tan, Amy	<i>The Joy Luck Club</i>	1949-1989	930	In 1949 four Chinese women began meeting in San Francisco to play mah jong. They called their gathering the Joy Luck Club. Forty years later they look back and remember.
Vonnegut, Kurt	<i>Cat's Cradle</i>	2000 (as perceived in the 60s)	790	In the year 2000, a young man discovers ice-nine, which can set off a chain reaction more deadly than a nuclear bomb, and discovers a new prophet whose teachings sweep the world
Vonnegut, Kurt	<i>Slaughterhouse-five, or, The Children's Crusade : a Duty-Dance with Death</i>	1940s (WWII)	850	A fourth-generation German-American is tortured by his memories of the firebombing of Dresden in 1944 which he witnessed while a prisoner of war.
Wharton, Edith	<i>Age of Innocence</i>	1870s	1170	Winner of the 1921 Pulitzer Prize, <i>The Age of Innocence</i> is Edith Wharton's masterful portrait of desire and betrayal during the sumptuous Golden Age of Old New York, a time when society people "dreaded scandal more than disease." This is Newland Archer's world as he prepares to marry the beautiful butconventional May Welland. But when the mysterious Countess Ellen Olenska returns to New York after a disastrous marriage, Archer falls deeply in love with her. Torn between duty and passion, Archer struggles to make a decision that will either courageously define his life—or mercilessly destroy it.

White, William Lindsay	<i>They Were Expendable</i>	1940s (WWII)	<p>A national bestseller when it was originally published in 1942 and the subject of a 1945 John Ford film featuring John Wayne, <i>They Were Expendable</i> offers an account of Motor Torpedo Boat Squadron Three's heroic actions during the disastrous Philippine campaign early in World War II. The author uses an unusual and effective format to tell the story: an interview with the four young survivors whose names are forever linked with the tragedy - John Bulkeley, Robert Kelly, Anthony Akers, and George Cox. Deeply moving, it describes Squadron Three's brave exploits, from the first appearance of Japanese planes over Manila Bay to its calamitous end, including a thrilling account of Gen. Douglas MacArthur's escape from Bataan.</p>
Wolfe, Tom	<i>The Electric Kool-aid Acid Test</i>	1960s	<p>A portrait of the novelist Ken Kesey and the West Coast "Merry Pranksters" during a several year pursuit of the LSD experience and development of psychedelia.</p>
Wolfe, Tom	<i>The Right Stuff</i>	late 1940s - 1960s	<p>1110 <i>The Right Stuff</i> is Tom Wolfe's deft account of a cast of heroes, introduced to America with the explosion of space exploration in the romantic heyday of the 20th century and encapsulated in Neal Armstrong's "one giant step for mankind." Beginning with the first experiments with manned space flight in the 1940s, remembering the feats of Chuck Yeager and the breaking of the sound barrier, and focusing in on the brave pilots of the Mercury Project, Wolfe's ability to marry historical fact with dramatic intensity is nowhere more evident than in <i>The Right Stuff</i>.</p>

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Wouk, Herman	<i>The Caine Mutiny</i>	1940s (WWII)	910	This book is the account of a well-to-do man who serves on a minesweeper during World War Two, describing the events on the Navy ship Caine and what ultimately led the first mate, Lieutenant Maryk, a man with little schooling or experience, to take command of the vessel from Captain Queeg and the subsequent court-martial of Maryk.
Yates, Richard	<i>Revolutionary Road</i>	1950s		From the moment of its publication in 1961, <i>Revolutionary Road</i> was hailed as a masterpiece of realistic fiction and as the most evocative portrayal of the opulent desolation of the American suburbs. It's the story of Frank and April Wheeler, a bright, beautiful, and talented couple who have lived on the assumption that greatness is only just around the corner. With heartbreaking compassion and remorseless clarity, Richard Yates shows how Frank and April mortgage their spiritual birthright, betraying not only each other, but their best selves.
Yeziarska, Anzia	<i>The Bread Givers</i>	1920s		This masterwork of American immigrant literature is set in the 1920s on the Lower East Side of Manhattan and tells the story of Sara Smolinsky, the youngest daughter of an Orthodox rabbi, who rebels against her father's rigid conception of Jewish womanhood. Sarah's struggle towards independence and self-fulfillment resonates with a passion all can share.