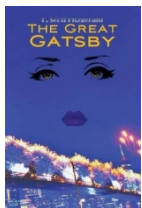


Upper School

20th & 21st Century Novels



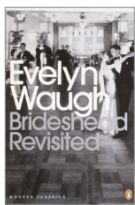
The Great Gatsby F Scott Fitzgerald

Kathleen Parkinson places this brilliant and bitter satire on the moral failure of the Jazz Age firmly in the context of Scott Fitzgerald's life and times. She explores the intricate patterns of the novel, its chronology, locations, imagery and use of colour, and how these contribute to a seamless interplay of social comedy and symbolic landscape. She devotes a perceptive chapter to Fitzgerald's controversial portrayal of women and goes on to discuss how the central characters, Gatsby and Nick Carraway, embody and confront the dualism inherent in the American dream.



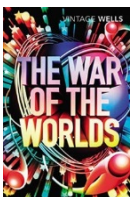
Brighton Rock Graham Green

Pinkie, a boy gangster in the pre-war Brighton underworld, is a Catholic dedicated to evil and damnation. In a dark setting of double-crossing and razor slashes, his ambitions and hatreds are horribly fulfilled...until Ida determines to convict him for murder.



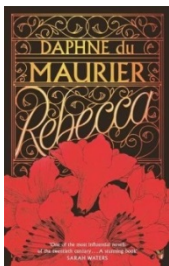
Brideshead Revisited – Evelyn Waugh

It is one of the greatest love stories ever written. We may not mention Ryder and Flyte in the same breath as Romeo and Juliet, Tristan and Isolde, or Dido and Aeneas, but as a study in humanity (in my humble opinion) they exceed them all. The sheer beauty of Waugh's prose which is, at times, scarcely believable (see 'A blow, expected, repeated, falling on a bruise') is coupled with the outright hilarity of many passages (see the Belgian who feels as if it is his duty to oppose the lower classes everywhere).



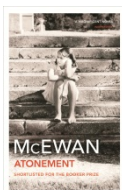
The War of the Worlds – H G Wells

A classic science fiction tale of a Martian invasion of Earth. Having already destroyed London, it seems that no-one can stop the intellectually superior Martians from taking over the whole planet.



Rebecca – Daphne Du Maurier

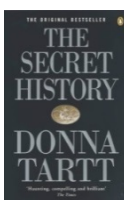
Last night I dreamt I went to Manderley again . . . The novel begins in Monte Carlo, where our heroine is swept off her feet by the dashing widower Maxim de Winter and his sudden proposal of marriage. Orphaned and working as a lady's maid, she can barely believe her luck. It is only when they arrive at his massive country estate that she realises how large a shadow his late wife will cast over their lives - presenting her with a lingering evil that threatens to destroy their marriage from beyond the grave.



Atonement - Ian McEwan

On the hottest day of the summer of 1935, thirteen-year-old Briony Tallis sees her sister Cecilia strip off her clothes and plunge into the fountain in the garden of their country house. Watching her too is Robbie Turner who, like Cecilia, has

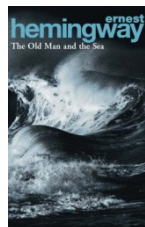
recently come down from Cambridge. By the end of that day, the lives of all three will have been changed for ever, as Briony commits a crime for which she will spend the rest of her life trying to atone.



The Secret History – Donna Tartt

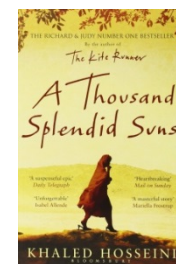
Under the influence of their charismatic classics professor, a group of clever, eccentric misfits at an elite New England college discover a way of thinking and living that is a world away from the humdrum existence of their

contemporaries. But when they go beyond the boundaries of normal morality their lives are changed profoundly and for ever.



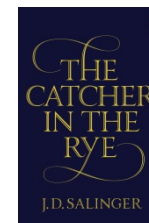
The Old Man and the Sea – Ernest Hemingway

The old man has gone 84 days without catching a fish, everything about him is old except his eyes, they are the colour of the sea. He finally catches a fish, but this is no ordinary fish, nor is his fierce and determined response.



A Thousand Splendid Suns- Khaled Hosseini

Mariam is only fifteen when she is sent to Kabul to marry Rasheed. Nearly two decades later, a friendship grows between Mariam and a local teenager, Laila, as strong as the ties between mother and daughter. When the Taliban take over, life becomes a desperate struggle against starvation, brutality and fear. Yet love can move a person to act in unexpected ways, and lead them to overcome the most daunting obstacles with a startling heroism



Catcher in the Rye – J.D. Salinger

Two days in the life of sixteen-year-old Holden Caulfield; a slightly unbalanced but sophisticated adolescent with a strong sense of the unfairness of life.



The Book Thief – Markus Zusak

HERE IS A SMALL FACT - YOU ARE GOING TO DIE -1939. Nazi Germany. The country is holding its breath. Death has never been busier. Liesel, a nine-year-old girl, is living with a foster family on Himmel Street. Her parents have been taken away to a concentration camp. Liesel steals books. This is her story and the story of the inhabitants of her street when the bombs begin to fall.



The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories – Angela Carter

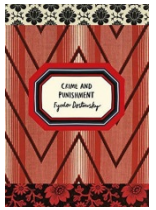
From familiar fairy tales and legends - Red Riding Hood, Bluebeard, Puss in Boots, Beauty and the Beast, vampires and werewolves - Angela Carter has created an absorbing collection of dark, sensual, fantastic stories.

Upper School Classics



Emma – Jane Austen

The wanton havoc wrought by Emma in the life of Mrs Chalfont, the narrator, is not the only proof of her ruthlessness; she plays a part, too, in the sufferings of the abandoned child, Martina. The affection which grows between Mrs Chalfont and Martina out of their mutual distress illumines this story, and Emma herself, with her inexplicable motives, her incomprehensible anger and her darkness of soul, develops into a character of whom Charlotte Bronte would have been proud.



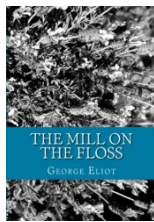
Crime and Punishment

This classic, begun as a novel concerned with the psychology of a crime and the process of guilt, surpasses itself to take on the tragic force of myth.



Hard Times – Charles Dickens

It is the story of the family of Thomas Gradgrind in the imaginary Coketown, an industrial city inspired by Preston. Gradgrind is a man obsessed with misguided 'Utilitarian' values that make him trust facts, statistics and practicality more than emotion and is based upon James Mill (the Utilitarian leader). He directs his own children, Louisa and Tom, in this same way: enforcing an artless existence upon them. The cynical James Harthouse arrives and attempts to seduce her but she is inspired by the experience to escape her constricted life and her imagination takes over. Her father protects his daughter from her husband. Not everything is cleared up, though, and Tom steals from the bank and dishonestly tries to shift the blame. He does so successfully for a time but eventually gets found out and must leave the country.



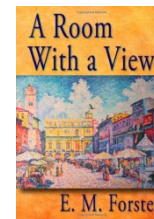
Mill on the Floss George Eliot

Based on George Eliot's own experiences of provincial life, is a masterpiece of ambiguity in which moral choice is subjected to the hypocrisy of the Victorian age. As the headstrong Maggie Tulliver grows into womanhood, the deep love which she has for her brother Tom turns into conflict, because she cannot reconcile his bourgeois standards with her own lively intelligence. Maggie is unable to adapt to her community or break free from it, and the result, on more than one level, is tragedy. For over 150 years, this book is still hailed by many as one of the best novels of all time



The Three Musketeers – Alexandre Dumas

The Three Musketeers is based on historical fact. The story - dramatic, stirring, and romantic - of d'Artagnan, Athos, Porthos and Aramis and their fight to preserve the honour of their Queen against the machinations of 'Milady' remains, deservedly, as popular today as it was then.



A Room with a View – E M Forster

The first part, which takes place in Italy, centres round a group of people staying at the Pension Bertolini in Florence. The typical behaviour of the English abroad is observed with Mr Forster's shrewd eye and the result is, among other things, a first-rate piece of social comedy.



Moby Dick - Herman Melville

Moby Dick is the story of Captain Ahab's quest to avenge the whale that 'reaped' his leg. The quest is an obsession and the novel is a diabolical study of how a man becomes a fanatic. But it is also a hymn to democracy. Bent as the crew is on Ahab's appalling crusade, it is equally the image of a co-operative community at work: all hands dependent on all hands, each individual responsible for the security of each.



Catch 22 – Joseph Heller

Explosive, subversive, wild and funny, 50 years on the novel's strength is undiminished. Set in the closing months of World War II, this is the story of a bombardier named Yossarian who is frantic and furious because thousands of people he has never met are trying to kill him. His real problem is not the enemy - it is his own army which keeps increasing the number of missions the men must fly to complete their service. If Yossarian makes any attempts to excuse himself from the perilous missions then he is caught in Catch-22: if he flies he is crazy, and doesn't have to; but if he doesn't want to he must be sane and has to. That's some catch...



Heart of Darkness – Joseph Conrad

Travelling upriver to the heart of the African continent, he gradually becomes obsessed by this enigmatic, wraith-like figure. Marlow's discovery of how Kurtz has gained his position of power over the local people involves him in a radical questioning, not only of his own nature and values, but also those of western civilisation. The inspiration for Francis Ford Coppola's Oscar-winning film Apocalypse Now, Heart of Darkness is a quintessentially modernist work exploring the limits of human experience and the nightmarish realities of imperialism.

Anna Karenina - Leo Tolstoy

Anna Karenina is one of the most loved and memorable heroines of literature. Her overwhelming charm dominates a novel of unparalleled richness and density. Tolstoy considered this book to be his first real attempt at a novel form, and it addresses the very nature of society at all levels - of destiny, death, human relationships and the irreconcilable contradictions of existence. It ends tragically, and there is much that evokes despair, yet set beside this is an abounding joy in life's many ephemeral pleasures, and a profusion of comic relief.

