

Honors American Literature Summer Reading List

*Some of these texts may include controversial, sexual, or violent elements. You may or may not be willing to expose yourself to these materials, and your parents need to be part of your decision. For this reason, parental approval is required **before** you start reading.*

Agee, James

A Death in the Family

Story of loss and heartbreak felt when a young father dies.

Anaya, Rudolfo

Bless Me, Ultima

Antonio Marez is six years old when Ultima comes to stay with his family in New Mexico. She is a curandera, one who cures with herbs and magic. Under her wise wing, Tony will test the bonds that tie him to his people, and discover himself in the pagan past, in his father's wisdom, and in his mother's Catholicism. And at each life turn there is Ultima, who delivered Tony into the world-and will nurture the birth of his soul.

Anderson, Sherwood

Winesburg, Ohio

A collection of short stories lays bare the life of a small town in the Midwest.

Baldwin, James

Go Tell It on the Mountain

Semi-autobiographical novel about a 14-year-old black youth's religious conversion.

Bellamy, Edward

Looking Backward: 2000-1887

Written in 1887 about a young man who travels in time to a utopian year 2000, where economic security and a healthy moral environment have reduced crime.

Bellow, Saul

Seize the Day

A son grapples with his love and hate for an unworthy father.

Bellow, Saul

The Rain King

The novel examines the midlife crisis of Eugene Henderson, an unhappy millionaire. The story concerns Henderson's search for meaning. A larger-than-life 55-year-old who has accumulated money, position, and a large family, he nonetheless feels unfulfilled. He makes a spiritual journey to Africa, where he draws emotional sustenance from experiences with African tribes. Deciding that his true destiny is as a healer, Henderson returns home, planning to enter medical school.

Bradbury, Ray

Fahrenheit 451

Reading is a crime and firemen burn books in this futuristic society.

Bradbury, Ray

Something Wicked This Way Comes

A masterpiece of modern Gothic literature, *Something Wicked This Way Comes* is the memorable story of two boys, James Nightshade and William Halloway, and the evil that grips their small Midwestern town with the arrival of a "dark carnival" one Autumn midnight. How these two innocents, both age 13, save the souls of the town (as well as their own), makes for compelling reading on timeless themes. What would *you* do if your secret wishes could be granted by the mysterious ringmaster Mr. Dark? Bradbury excels in revealing the dark side that exists in us all, teaching us ultimately to celebrate the shadows rather than fear them.

Brown, Dee

Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee

This extraordinary book changed the way Americans think about the original inhabitants of their country. It begins with the Long Walk of the Navajos in 1860 and ends 30 years later with the massacre of Sioux men, women, and children at Wounded Knee in South Dakota.

Cather, Willa

My Antonia

Immigrant pioneers strive to adapt to the Nebraska prairies.

Clark, Walter Van Tilburg

The Ox-Bow Incident

When a group of citizens discovers one of their members has been murdered by cattle rustlers, they form an illegal posse, pursue the murderers, and lynch them.

Cooper, James Fenimore

The Deerslayer

A tribute to the noble pioneer spirit in conflict with encroaching society. Natty Bumppo is an idealistic youth raised among the Indians but he has yet to meet the test. In a tale of violent action, the harsh realities of tribal warfare force him to kill his first foe and face torture at the stake.

Cooper, James Fenimore

The Last of the Mohicans

The classic portrait of a man of moral courage who severs all connections with a society whose values he can no longer accept. A brave woodsman, Natty Bumppo, and his loyal Mohican friends become embroiled in the bloody battle of the French and Indian War.

Crane, Stephen

The Red Badge of Courage

Crane's portrayal of young men fighting in the Civil War. The horrors of war are realistically portrayed in this masterpiece.

Dorris, Michael

A Yellow Raft in Blue Water

Three generations of Native American women recount their searches for identity and love.

Dreiser, Theodore

Sister Carrie

A simple country girl moves to the big city in the early 1900s and learns how to play the "big city game"

Dreiser, Theodore

An American Tragedy

Corruption and destruction of one man who forfeits his life in desperate pursuit of success. The author based his realistic and vivid study on the actual case of Chester Gilete, who murdered Grace Brown at the Big Moose Lake in the Adirondacks in July 1906.

Eugenides, Jeffrey

Middlesex

The breathtaking story of Calliope Stephanides and three generations of the Greek-American Stephanides family who travel from a tiny village overlooking Mount Olympus in Asia Minor to Prohibition-era Detroit, witnessing its glory days as the Motor City, and the race riots of 1967, before they move out to the tree-lined streets of suburban Grosse Pointe, Michigan. To understand why Calliope is not like other girls, she has to uncover a guilty family secret and the astonishing genetic history that turns Callie into Cal, one of the most audacious and wondrous narrators in contemporary fiction.

Faulkner, William

Absalom, Absalom!

The story of Thomas Sutpen, an enigmatic stranger who came to Jefferson in the early 1830s to wrest his mansion out of the muddy bottoms of the north Mississippi wilderness. He was a man, Faulkner said, "who wanted sons and the sons destroyed him."

Faulkner, William

As I Lay Dying

In the story, the members of the Bundren family must take the body of Addie, matriarch of the family, to the town where Addie wanted to be buried. Along the way, we listen to each of the members on the macabre pilgrimage, while Faulkner heaps upon them various flavors of disaster.

Faulkner, William

Intruder in the Dust

A classic Faulkner novel which explores the lives of a family of characters in the South. An aging black who has long refused to adopt the black's traditionally servile attitude is wrongfully accused of murdering a white man.

Faulkner, William

Light in August

A novel about hopeful perseverance in the face of mortality, features some of Faulkner's most memorable characters: guileless, dauntless Lena Grove, in search of the father of her unborn child; Reverend Gail Hightower, who is plagued by visions of Confederate horsemen; and Joe Christmas, a desperate, enigmatic drifter consumed by his mixed ancestry.

Faulkner, William

The Sound and the Fury

The tragedy of the Compson family, featuring some of the most memorable characters in literature: beautiful, rebellious Caddy; the manchild Benjy; haunted, neurotic Quentin; Jason, the brutal cynic; and Dilsey, their black servant. Their lives fragmented and harrowed by history and legacy, the character's voices and actions mesh to create what is arguably Faulkner's masterpiece and one of the greatest novels of the twentieth century.

Frazier, Charles

Cold Mountain

Cold Mountain is an extraordinary novel about a soldier's perilous journey back to his beloved at the end of the Civil War. At once a magnificent love story and a harrowing account of one man's long walk home.

Gaines, Ernest

A Lesson Before Dying

The story of two African American men struggling to attain manhood in a prejudiced society, the tale is set in Bayonne, Louisiana in the late 1940s. It concerns Jefferson, a mentally slow, barely literate young man, who, though an innocent bystander to a shootout between a white store owner and two black robbers, is convicted of murder, and the sophisticated, educated man who comes to his aid.

Gaines, Ernest

Gathering of Old Men

This is a powerful depiction of racial tensions arising over the death of a Cajun farmer at the hands of a black man. A sheriff is summoned to a sugarcane plantation, where he finds one young white woman, about 18 old black men, and one dead Cajun farmer.

Gaines, Ernest

The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman

In her 100 years, Miss Jane Pittman experiences it all, from slavery to the civil rights movement.

Grisham, John

A Painted House

Here there are hardscrabble farmers instead, and dirt-poor itinerant workers and a seven-year-old boy who grows up fast in a story as rich in conflict and incident as any previous Grisham and as nuanced as his very best.

Hawthorne, Nathaniel

The Scarlet Letter

An adulterous Puritan woman keeps secret the identity of the father of her illegitimate child.

Heller, Joseph

Catch-22

A broad comedy about a WWII bombardier based in Italy and his efforts to avoid bombing missions.

Hemingway, Ernest

The Sun Also Rises

The story of a group of American and English patriots living in Paris and their excursion to Pamplona. It captures the angst of the post-World War I generation, known as the Lost Generation, and centers around the flamboyant Lady Brett Ashley and the hapless Jake Barnes. In an age of moral bankruptcy, spiritual dissolution, unrealized love and vanishing illusions, this is the Lost Generation.

Irving, John

A Prayer for Owen Meany

In the summer of 1953, two eleven-year-old boys—best friends—are playing in a Little League baseball game in Gravesend, New Hampshire. One of the boys hits a foul ball and kills the other boy's mother. The boy who hits the ball doesn't believe in accidents; Owen Meany believes he is God's instrument. What happens to Owen, after that 1953 foul ball, is extraordinary and terrifying.

James, Henry

Portrait of a Lady

When Isabel Archer, a beautiful, spirited American, is brought to Europe by her wealthy Aunt Touchett, it is expected that she will soon marry. But Isabel, resolved to determine her own fate, does not hesitate to turn down two eligible suitors.

James, Henry

The Turn of the Screw

When a young lady goes to a big country house to teach two beautiful children, strange things start to happen and a terrible story of ghosts and danger begins.

Kerouac, Jack

On the Road

Poetic, open and raw, Kerouac's prose about the "beat generation of the 1950s" lays out a cross-country adventure as experienced by Sal Paradise, an autobiographical character. A writer holed up in a room at his aunt's house, Paradise gets inspired by Dean Moriarty (a character based on Kerouac's friend Neal Cassady) to hit the road and see America.

Kesey, Ken

One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest

A novel about a power struggle between the head nurse and one of the male patients in a mental institution.

Kidd, Sue Monk

The Secret Life of Bees

14-year-old Lily Owen, neglected by her father and isolated on their Georgia peach farm, spends hours imagining a blissful infancy when she was loved and nurtured by her mother, Deborah, whom she barely remembers.

Kingston, Maxine Hong

The Woman Warrior

What is it like to grow up a girl in a family who values boys? How do family secrets affect a young girl? Here is an account of growing up female and Chinese American. "Woman Warrior" is a partly fictional work about Maxine Hong Kingston's girlhood as it was affected by the beliefs of her family. She is a California-born author, educated at U.C. Berkeley, and long time resident as a schoolteacher in Hawaii.

Knowles, John

A Separate Peace

The volatile world of male adolescence provides the backdrop for John Knowles' engrossing tale of love, hate, war, and peace. Sharing a room at Devon, an exclusive New England prep school, in the summer prior to World War II, Gene and Phineas form a complex bond of friendship that draws out both the best and worst characteristics of each boy and leads ultimately to violence, a confession, and the betrayal of trust.

Lewis, Sinclair

Arrowsmith

The book follows the life of Martin Arrowsmith, a rather ordinary fellow who gets his first taste of medicine at 14 as an assistant to the drunken physician in his home town. It is Leora Tozer who makes Martin's life extraordinary. With vitality and love, she urges him beyond the confines of the mundane to risk answering his true calling as a scientist and researcher.

Lewis, Sinclair

Babbitt

Tale of a conniving, prosperous real estate man, George Follansbee Babbitt. He is unimaginative, self-important, and hopelessly middle class. He is dissatisfied and tries to alter the pattern of his life by flirting with liberalism and by entering a liaison with an attractive widow.

Lewis, Sinclair

Main Street

A young doctor's wife tries to change the ugliness, dullness and ignorance which prevail in Gopher Prairie, Minn.

London, Jack

Call of the Wild

Buck is a loyal pet dog until cruel men make him a pawn in their search for Klondike gold.

Malamud, Bernard

The Natural

What happens when you tell everyone you want to be the greatest baseball player that ever lived? Roy Hobbs, the protagonist of *The Natural*, makes the mistake of pronouncing aloud his dream: to be the best there ever was. Such hubris, of course, invites divine intervention, but the brilliance of Bernard Malamud's novel is the second chance it offers its hero, elevating him--and his story--into the realm of myth.

Mason, Bobbie Anne

In Country

Sam, 17, is obsessed with the Vietnam War and the effect it has had on her life losing a father she never knew and now living with Uncle Emmett, who seems to be suffering from the effects of Agent Orange. In her own forthright way, she tries to sort out why and how Vietnam has altered the lives of the vets of Hopewell, Kentucky. A harshly realistic, well-written look at the Vietnam War as well as the story of a young woman maturing.

McCarthy, Cormac

All the Pretty Horses

The novel tells of John Grady Cole, a sixteen year old cowboy who grew up on his grandfather's ranch in San Angelo West Texas.

McCarthy, Cormac

No Country for Old Men

A mesmerizing modern-day western. In 1980 southwest Texas, Llewelyn Moss, hunting antelope near the Rio Grande, stumbles across several dead men, a bunch of heroin and \$2.4 million in cash. The bulk of the novel is a gripping man-on-the-run sequence relayed in terse, masterful prose as Moss, who's taken the money, tries to evade Wells, an ex-Special Forces agent employed by a powerful cartel, and Chigurh, an icy psychopathic murderer armed with a cattle gun and a dangerous philosophy of justice.

McCullers, Carson

The Member of the Wedding

A young southern girl is determined to be the third party on a honeymoon, despite all the advice against it from friends and family.

McMurtry, Larry

Lonesome Dove

Cowboys herding cattle on a great trail-drive, seems like the very stuff of clichéd myth, but McMurtry bravely tackles the task of creating meaningful literature out of it. At first the novel seems the kind of anti-mythic, anti-heroic story one might expect: the main protagonists are a drunken and inarticulate pair of former Texas Rangers turned horse rustlers. Yet when the trail begins, the story picks up an energy and a drive that makes heroes of these men. Their mission may be historically insignificant, or pointless--McMurtry is smart enough to address both possibilities--but there is an undoubted valor in their lives.

Melville, Herman

Moby Dick

A complex novel about a mad sea captain's pursuit of the White Whale.

Melville, Herman

Billy Budd

A handsome young sailor is unjustly accused of plotting mutiny in this timeless tale of the sea.

Mitchell, Margaret

Gone With the Wind

The sweeping story of tangled passions and the rare courage of a group of people in Atlanta during the time of Civil War that brought those cinematic scenes to life.

Morrison, Toni

Sula

The lifelong friendship of two women becomes strained when one causes the other's husband to abandon her.

Morrison, Toni

Beloved

A dense, complex story that yields up its secrets one by one. As Toni Morrison takes us deeper into Sethe's history and her memories, the horrifying circumstances of her baby's death start to make terrible sense. And as past meets present in the shape of a mysterious young woman about the same age as Sethe's daughter would have been, the narrative builds inexorably to its powerful, painful conclusion. *Beloved* may well be the defining novel of slavery in America, the one that all others will be measured by.

Morrison, Toni

Song of Solomon

A literary masterpiece about four generations of black life in America. It is a world we enter through the present, through Macon Dead Jr., son of the richest black family in a Midwestern town. We enter on the day of his birth and see Macon growing up in his father's money-haunted, death-haunted house with his silent sisters and strangely, passive mother.

Norris, Frank

The Octopus

Based on an actual, bloody dispute between a wheat farmer and the Southern Pacific Railroad in 1880, *The Octopus* is a Stunning novel of the waning days of the frontier West. To the tough-minded and self-reliant farmers, the monopolistic, land-grabbing railroad represented everything they despised: consolidation, organization, conformity. But Norris idealizes no one in this epic depiction of the volatile situation, for the farmers themselves ruthlessly exploited the land, and in their hunger for larger holdings they resorted to the same tactics used by the railroad: subversion, coercion, and outright violence.

O'Brien, Tim

Things They Carried

The Things They Carried 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. Ultimately, *The Things They Carried* and its myriad protagonists call to order the courage, determination, and luck we all need to survive.

O'Connor, Flannery

A Good Man is Hard to Find

Social awareness, the grotesque, and the need for faith characterize these stories of the contemporary South.

O'Connor, Flannery

Wise Blood

After serving a stint in the army, Hazel Motes finds himself adrift, alone, and rent by spiritual confusion. *Wise Blood* is a savage satire of America's secular, commercial culture, as well as the humanism it holds so dear.

Parks, Gordon

The Learning Tree

A fictional study of a black family in a small Kansas town in the 1920s.

Picoult, Jodi

Salem Falls

A handsome stranger comes to the sleepy New England town of Salem Falls in hopes of burying his past. Once a teacher at a girls' prep school, Jack St. Bride was destroyed when a student's crush sparked a powder keg of accusation. Now, washing dishes for Addie Peabody at the Do-Or-Diner, he slips quietly into his new routine, and Addie finds this unassuming man fitting easily inside her heart. But amid the rustic calm of Salem Falls, a quartet of teenage girls harbor dark secrets -- and they maliciously target Jack with a shattering allegation. Now, at the center of a modern-day witch hunt, Jack is forced once again to proclaim his innocence to a town searching for answers, to a justice system where truth becomes a slippery concept written in shades of gray, and to the woman who has come to love him.

Plath, Sylvia

The Bell Jar

The heartbreaking story of a talented young woman's descent into madness.

Rand, Ayn

The Fountainhead

Can one man dare to be different? This is the story of the struggle of genius architect Howard Roark-- said to be based on Frank Lloyd Wright--as he confronts conformist mediocrity.

Rees, Celia

Witch Child

Enter the world of Mary Newbury, where being different can cost a person her life. Hidden until now in the pages of her secret diary, fourteen-year-old Mary's story begins as she flees the English witch-hunts to settle in an American colony. How long can she hide her true nature from the Puritans? How long can she keep running?

Robinson, Marilynne

Gilead

Ames is 77 years old in 1956, in failing health, with a much younger wife and six-year-old son; as a preacher in the small Iowa town where he spent his entire life, he has produced volumes and volumes of sermons and prayers, "[t]rying to say what was true." But it is in this mesmerizing account—in the form of a letter to his young son, who he imagines reading it when he is grown—that his meditations on creation and existence are fully illumined.

Rolvaag, O.E.

Giants in the Earth

What was it like to be a pioneer settling untamed territory in America? This is the classic story of a Norwegian pioneer family's struggle with the land and the elements of the Dakota territory as they try to make a new life in America.

Russo, Richard

Empire Falls

Miles Roby has been slinging burgers at the Empire Grill for 20 years, a job that cost him his college education and much of his self-respect. What keeps him there? It could be his bright, sensitive daughter, Tick, who needs all his help surviving the local high school. Or maybe it's Janine, Miles's soon-to-be ex-wife, who's taken up with a noxiously vain health-club proprietor. Or perhaps it's the imperious Francine Whiting, who owns everything in town—and seems to believe that "everything" includes Miles himself. Funny and graceful, this book delves deep into the blue-collar heart of America.

Shaara, Michael

Killer Angels

This novel reveals more about the Battle of Gettysburg than any piece of learned nonfiction on the same subject. Michael Shaara's account of the three most important days of the Civil War features deft characterizations of all of the main actors, including Lee, Longstreet, Pickett, Buford, and Hancock.

Silko, Leslie Marmon

Ceremony

Tayo, a World War II veteran of mixed ancestry, returns to the Laguna Pueblo Reservation. He is deeply scarred by his experience as a prisoner of the Japanese and further wounded by the rejection he encounters from his people. Only by immersing himself in the Indian past can he begin to regain the peace that was taken from him.

Sinclair, Upton

The Jungle

The deplorable conditions of the Chicago stockyards are exposed in this turn-of-the-century novel.

Smiley, Jane

A Thousand Acres

Aging Larry Cook announces his intention to turn over his 1,000-acre farm--one of the largest in Zebulon County, Iowa--to his three daughters, Caroline, Ginny and Rose. A man of harsh sensibilities, he carves Caroline out of the deal because she has the nerve to be less than enthusiastic about her father's generosity. While Larry Cook deteriorates into a pathetic drunk, his daughters are left to cope with the often grim realities of life on a family farm--from battering husbands to cutthroat lenders.

Steinbeck, John

East of Eden

It is a symbolic recreation of the biblical story of Cain and Abel woven into a history of California's Salinas Valley. Spanning the period between the American Civil War and the end of World War I, the novel highlights the conflicts of two generations of brothers; the first being the kind, gentle Adam Trask and his wild brother Charles. Adam eventually marries a beautiful but evil woman; she betrays him, joining Charles on the very night of their wedding.

Steinbeck, John

The Grapes of Wrath

The desperate flight of tenant farmers from Oklahoma during the Depression.

Stone, Irving

Love is Eternal

In Irving Stone's historical novel about Mary Todd, the future Mrs. Lincoln confides to her cousin Ann that she might marry a Springfield, Illinois, lawyer because he has a promising political future and might someday be president.

Stowe, Harriet Beecher

Uncle Tom's Cabin

The classic tale that awakened a nation about the slave system.

Tan, Amy

The Bonesetter's Daughter

Two packets of papers written in Chinese calligraphy fall into the hands of Ruth Young. One bundle is titled *Things I Know Are True* and the other, *Things I Must Not Forget*. The author? That would be the protagonist's mother, LuLing, who has been diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease. In these documents the elderly matriarch, born in China in 1916, has set down a record of her birth and family history, determined to keep the facts from vanishing as her mind deteriorates.

Tan, Amy

The Joy Luck Club

After her mother's death, a young Chinese-American woman learns of her mother's tragic early life in China.

Tyler, Anne

Accidental Tourist

Macon Leary, a travel writer who hates to travel, is about to embark on a surprising journey. Grounded by loneliness, comfort, and a somewhat odd domestic life, Macon encounters "love" in the unlikely shape of a fuzzy-haired dog-obedience trainer.

Updike, John

Rabbit, Run

A frank treatment of a former high school basketball star's failure to deal with the adult world. On impulse, he deserts his wife and at 26 years old struggles to take responsibility for his life.

Vonnegut, Kurt

Cat's Cradle

Humorous and satirical, this fine example of science fiction is filled with scientists and G-men and even ordinary folks caught up in the game. These assorted characters chase each other around in search of the world's most important and dangerous substance, a new form of ice that freezes at room temperature.

Walls, Jeannette

The Glass Castle

How do you make a sad memory into art? The Glass Castle is the memoir of Jeannette Walls, a look into a deeply dysfunctional family. When her father was sober, he was brilliant and charming, teaching his children physics, geology, and how to embrace life fearlessly. But when he drank, he was dishonest and destructive. Her mother was a free spirit who hated homemaking and didn't want the responsibility of raising a family.

Walker, Alice

The Color Purple

A young woman sees herself as property until another woman teaches her to value herself.

Wroblewski, David

The Story of Edgar Sawtelle

A modern take on *Hamlet* set in rural Wisconsin in which the young hero, born mute, communicates with people, dogs, and the occasional ghost through his own mix of sign and body language.

Warren, Robert

All the King's Men

Set in the 1930s, it traces the rise and fall of demagogue Willie Talos, a fictional Southern politician who resembles the real-life Huey "Kingfish" Long of Louisiana. Talos begins his career as an idealistic man of the people, but he soon becomes corrupted by success, caught between dreams of service and a lust for power.

Welch, James

Fools Crow

How was the Indian nation changed forever? The year is 1870. A portentous dream seems to overshadow the Lone Eaters clan of the Blackfeet Indians in the post-Civil War years. The slow invasion of the Napikwans, or whites, is inevitable and coincidental, however. As we follow White Man's Dog (later renamed Fools Crow), we see how some of his people try to follow the Napikwan ways, others rebel against them, and many ignore them.

West, Nathaniel

Miss Lonelyhearts

Set in New York during the Depression and probably West's most powerful work, *Miss Lonelyhearts* concerns a nameless man assigned to produce a newspaper advice column — but as time passes he begins to break under the endless misery of those who write in, begging him for advice. Unable to find answers, and with his shaky Christianity ridiculed to razor-edged shards by his poisonous editor, he tumbles into alcoholism and a madness fueled by his own spiritual emptiness.

Wharton, Edith

The Age of Innocence

This is the elegant portrayal of desire and betrayal in Old New York. With vivid power, the author evokes a time of gas lit streets, formal dances held in ballrooms of stately brownstones, and society people "who dreaded scandal more than disease."

Wharton, Edith

Ethan Frome

Set in the bleak, barren winter landscape of New England, it is the tragic tale of a simple man, bound to the demands of his farm and his tyrannical, sickly wife, Zeena, and driven by his star-crossed love for Zeena's young cousin, Mattie Silver.

Wideman, John Edgar

Philadelphia Fire

From "one of America's premier writers of fiction" (New York Times) comes this novel inspired by the 1985 police bombing of a West Philadelphia row house owned by the back-to-nature, Afrocentric cult known as Move. The bombing killed eleven people and started a fire that destroyed sixty other houses. At the center of the story is Cudjoe, a writer and exile who returns to his old neighborhood after spending a decade fleeing from his past, and his search for the lone survivor of the fire a young boy who was seen running from the flames. An impassioned, brutally honest journey through the despair and horror of life in urban America, "Philadelphia Fire isn't a book you read so much as one you breathe" (San Francisco Chronicle).

Wolfe, Thomas

Look Homeward, Angel

A novel depicting the coming of age of Eugene Gant and his passion to experience life.

Wolfe, Thomas

You Can't Go Home Again

George Webber has written a successful novel about his family and hometown. When he returns to that town he is shaken by the force of the outrage and hatred that greets him. Family and friends feel naked and exposed by the truths they have seen in his book, and their fury drives him from his home. He begins a search for his own identity that takes him to New York and a hectic social whirl; to Paris with an uninhibited group of expatriates; to Berlin, lying cold and sinister under Hitler's shadow. At last Webber returns to America and rediscovers it with love, sorrow, and hope.

Wright, Richard

Native Son

Bigger Thomas is doomed, trapped in a downward spiral that will lead to arrest, prison, or death, driven by despair, frustration, poverty, and incomprehension. As a young black man in the Chicago of the '30s, he has no way out of the walls of poverty and racism that surround him, and after he murders a young white woman in a moment of panic, these walls begin to close in. There is no help for him--not from his hapless family; not from liberal do-gooders or from his well-meaning yet naive friend Jan; certainly not from the police, prosecutors, or judges. Bigger is debased, aggressive, dangerous, and a violent criminal. As such, he has no claim upon our compassion or sympathy. And yet...

Descriptions are from book jackets, Publisher's Weekly, Amazon.com, and Library Review