The summer reading list for AP English students will take a form different than that of previous years. Instead of reading several single texts, students are asked to

1. Read George Orwell’s *1984*
   
2. Read Jonathan Swift’s short satire “A Modest Proposal”:
   [http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1080/1080-h/1080-h.htm](http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1080/1080-h/1080-h.htm)
   
3. Read and view ONE of the “units” of study listed below.

This will ready students for working on the compare/contrast essay, which is the focus of senior writing at Overlake. In the course of the first semester students will be required to take a reading quiz on *1984* and write an essay comparing and contrasting the works listed in the additional unit they choose below, so students should annotate their books and take extensive notes on their reading and viewing. If the student chooses (*optional*), the readings may also provide one of the two texts for the research paper which is based on a theme or problem (not on an author) in world literature (not American literature) and due in February 2016. Students who want to know more about the research paper before making their summer reading choices should contact Marian at [msugano@overlake.org](mailto:msugano@overlake.org). Students who already have a research paper topic in mind and want to construct their own units should also contact Marian before they begin reading.

**STUDENTS: SEE BELOW AT THE END OF THE LIST FOR REVIEWS/DESCRIPTIONS OF THE MAJOR NOVELS/PLAYS FROM AMAZON.COM or PUBLISHER’S WEEKLY**

**REQUIRED:**

1) Read George Orwell’s novel *1984* (first published 1948). The version we will be using in class to discuss this novel is the Signet Classic version ISBN 0-451-52493-4. In addition to *1984*, please also view:
• Either: James McTeigue’s film *V for Vendetta* (R-2005) OR
• François Truffaut’s *Fahrenheit 451* (1966)

2) read Jonathan Swift’s short satire “A Modest Proposal”:
   [http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1080/1080-h/1080-h.htm](http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1080/1080-h/1080-h.htm)

**ALSO REQUIRED:** Choose ONE UNIT and read/view the works as suggested:

1. **Unit on South Africa:**
   • Read ONE of the following three novels for this unit: Alan Paton’s *Cry the Beloved Country* (1948), J.M. Coetzee’s *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980), Zakes Mda’s *The Heart of Redness* (2002)
   • View ONE of the following films: Richard Attenborough’s *Cry Freedom* (PG-1987) or Ian Gabriel’s *Forgiveness* (2004) (both available in the Overlake Library)

![A Thousand Splendid Suns](image1) ![Cry the Beloved Country](image2) ![The Heart of Redness](image3)

2. **Unit on Women’s Issues:**
   • Read Khaled Hosseini’s novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007)

![A Thousand Splendid Suns](image4)

3. **Unit on dystopias and totalitarianism**
   • Read Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World* (1932)
   • See Andrew Niccol’s film *Gattaca* (PG-13-1997) AND/OR
   • Read Kurt Vonnegut’s short story “Harrison Bergeron” available online at [http://instruct.westvalley.edu/lafave/hb.html](http://instruct.westvalley.edu/lafave/hb.html)
4. **Unit on Jane Austen’s *Emma***
   - Read Jane Austen’s novel *Emma* (1816)
   - See Amy Heckerling’s film *Clueless* (PG-13-1995)

5. **Unit on the Dominican Republic**
   - Read Junot Díaz’s *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (2007)
   - Read the book OR see the film (2001) entitled *In the Time of the Butterflies* (Julia Alvarez 1994)
   - Please note: *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* is a brilliant and daring, definitely R-rated novel, so this is not for readers who are faint at heart.

6. **Unit on the problem of Identity**
   - Read Chuck Palahniuk’s *Fight Club* (What I said above about Oscar Wao is also true of *Fight Club*; the seniors who wrote their research papers on this last year did a great job and really enjoyed this book, but it is an adult book)
   - OR

7. **Unit on the search for meaning and spirituality**
   - Read Paul Coelho’s *The Alchemist*
• Read Hermann Hesse’s *Siddhartha*

8. **Unit on Modern Adaptations of the story of Cain and Abel:**
   Read any two of the following novels: John Steinbeck’s *East of Eden*, Miguel de Unamuno’s *Abel Sánchez*, Guy de Maupassant’s *Pierre et Jean*, Ana María Matute’s *The Celebration in the Northwest*, Jeffrey Archer's *Kane and Abel*.

9. **Unit on a Modern retelling of Classic Literature: Rewriting the Odyssey from a feminist viewpoint:**
   - Read Homer’s *The Odyssey*
   - Margaret Atwood’s *Penelope*

10. **Unit on LGBT literature and questions of sexual identity:**
    Read any two of the following novels (You are welcome to make substitutions once you have consulted with Marian)
    - Jeffrey Eugenides’s *Middlesex*
    - Manuel Puig’s *Kiss of the Spiderwoman*
    - Rita Mae Brown’s *Rubyfruit Jungle*
    - Virginia Woolf’s *Orlando*
    - John Irving’s *In One Person*

FROM AMAZON.COM AND PUBLISHER’S WEEKLY:
SOME REVIEWS/DESCRIPTIONS OF THE NOVELS/PLAYS TO HELP YOU MAKE YOUR CHOICE:

George Orwell’s *1984*:
Amazon.com Review
Among the seminal texts of the 20th century, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is a rare work that grows more haunting as its futuristic purgatory becomes more real. Published in 1949, the book offers political satirist George Orwell's nightmare vision of a totalitarian, bureaucratic world and one poor stiff's attempt to find individuality. The brilliance of the novel is Orwell's prescience of modern life—the ubiquity of television, the distortion of the language—and his ability to construct such a thorough version of hell. Required reading for students since it was published, it ranks among the most terrifying novels ever written. --*This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.*

Review
Novel by George Orwell, published in 1949 as a warning about the menaces of totalitarianism. The novel is set in an imaginary future world that is dominated by three perpetually warring totalitarian police states. The book's hero, Winston Smith, is a minor party functionary in one of these states. His longing for truth and decency leads him to secretly rebel against the government. Smith has a love affair with a like-minded woman, but they are both arrested by the Thought Police. The ensuing imprisonment, torture, and reeducation of Smith are intended not merely to break him physically or make him submit but to root out his independent mental existence and his spiritual dignity. Orwell's warning of the dangers of totalitarianism made a deep impression on his contemporaries and upon subsequent
readers, and the book's title and many of its coinages, such as NEWSPEAK, became bywords for modern political abuses. -- The Merriam-Webster Encyclopedia of Literature -- This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Alan Paton's *Cry the Beloved Country*

*Cry, the Beloved Country* is a beautifully told and profoundly compassionate story of the Zulu pastor Stephen Kumalo and his son Absalom, set in the troubled and changing South Africa of the 1940s. The book is written with such keen empathy and understanding that to read it is to share fully in the gravity of the characters' situations. It both touches your heart deeply and inspires a renewed faith in the dignity of mankind. *Cry, the Beloved Country* is a classic tale, passionately African, timeless and universal, and beyond all, selfless.

**Coetzee's Waiting for the Barbarians**

From Publishers Weekly

As a writer, Coetzee is a literary cascade, with a steady output of fiction and criticism (literary and social) over the last two decades. This latest book, his first novel in five years, is a searing evocation of post-apartheid South Africa; it earned him an unprecedented second Booker Prize. An uninspired teacher and twice divorced, David Lurie is a 52-year-old poetry scholar-cum-"adjunct professor of communications" at Cape Technical University. Spooked by the flicker of twilight in his life trajectory, he sees himself as an aged Lothario soon to be "shuddered over" by the pretty girls he has so often wooed; he is disappointed in and unengaged by the academy he now serves by rote; and he cannot locate the notes for his opera, Byron in Italy, in which he has placed so much reluctant hope. He is, even at his best, a man of "moderated bliss." So when he seduces Melanie Isaacs, a lithe student from his poetry elective ("She does not resist. All she does is avert herself"), he believes her to represent the final object of his desire, his last act of Lush, Romantic desperation. And then he is found out. This not uncommon outrage earns him a dismissal and censure from the university committee he refuses to cooperate with in hopes of saving his job. He immediately shoves off for Salem in the Eastern Cape where his daughter, Lucy, manages a dog kennel and works her smallholding, harvesting a modest crop. Here David hopes to cleanse himself with time-honored toil. But his new life in the country offers scarce refuge. Instead, he is flummoxed to discover an unfamiliar Lucy-principled, land-devoted, with a heroic resignation to the social and political developments of modern South Africa. He also memorably encounters Petrus, Lucy's ambitious colored neighbor and sometime assistant. Petrus embodies the shifting, tangled vicissitudes of a new national schematic, and forces David to relate to the broad segment of society previously shrouded by the mists of his self-absorption. But a violent attack on the estate irrevocably alters how the book's central figure perceives many things: his daughter and her bewildering (to him) courage, the rights of South Africa's grossly aggrieved majority, the souls of the damaged dogs he helps put down at the local Animal Welfare League and even the character of Lord Byron's mistress and the heroine of his operatic "chamber-play." But this is no tale of hard-earned, satisfying transformation. It is, rather, a paean to willfulness, an aria on the theme of secca, or the drying up of "the source of everything." In Coetzee's tale, not a single note is false; every sentence is perfectly calibrated and essential. Every passage questions the arbitrary division between the "major and minor" and the long-accepted injustices propped up by nothing so much as time. The book somehow manages to speak of little but interiority and still insinuate peripheries of things it doesn't touch. Somber and crystalline, it "has the right mix of timeless and decay." It is about the harsh cleansing of humiliation and the regretfulness of knowing things: "I lack the lyrical. I manage love too well. Even when I burn I don't sing, if you understand me." To perceive is to understand in this beautifully spare, necessary novel. First serial to the New Yorker. (Nov.) FYI: Viking accelerated the pub date after the Booker Prize was announced on
Mda's Heart of Redness
From Publishers Weekly
In Mda's richly suggestive novel, a Westernized African, Camagu, becomes embroiled in a village dispute that has its roots in the 19th century. The war between the amaXhosa and the British in South Africa (known to Westerners as the Zulu Wars) was interrupted by a strange, messianic interlude in which the amaXhosa followed the self-destructive commands of the prophet Nongqawuse and were split between followers of Nongqawuse (Believers) and their opponents (Unbelievers). In the village of Qolorha-by-Sea in the late 20th century, the Believers still flourish. They put the onus for the distressing failure of Nongqawuse's visions on the Unbelievers' unbelief. The chief Believer is Zim; his rival, the chief Unbeliever, is Bhonco. The white store owner, Dalton, whose ancestor killed Zim and Bhonco's forefather, Xikixa, is on the Believers' side in the village's current controversy over whether or not to allow a casino in the village. The Believers oppose the changes they foresee coming to the village's traditions. The Unbelievers want economic development. Camagu originally comes to Qolorha looking for a woman whose memory haunts him. He ends up being associated with the cold, beautiful Xoliswa Ximiya, Bhonco's daughter, whose scorn for tradition eventually drives her from the village. Secretly, however, Camagu lusts for Qukezwa, the squat but sexy daughter of Zim. Mda's sympathies are with the Believers, but his eminent fairness forbids mere didacticism, and his joy in the back and forth of village politics beautifully communicates itself to the reader through poetic language enlivened by humor and irony.

Hosseini's A Thousand Splendid Suns
From Publishers Weekly
Starred Review. Afghan-American novelist Hosseini follows up his bestselling The Kite Runner with another searing epic of Afghanistan in turmoil. The story covers three decades of anti-Soviet jihad, civil war and Taliban tyranny through the lives of two women. Mariam is the scorned illegitimate daughter of a wealthy businessman, forced at age 15 into marrying the 40-year-old Rasheed, who grows increasingly brutal as she fails to produce a child. Eighteen later, Rasheed takes another wife, 14-year-old Laila, a smart and spirited girl whose only other options, after her parents are killed by rocket fire, are prostitution or starvation. Against a backdrop of unending war, Mariam and Laila become allies in an asymmetrical battle with Rasheed, whose violent misogyny—"There was no cursing, no screaming, no pleading, no surprised yelps, only the systematic business of beating and being beaten"—is endorsed by custom and law. Hosseini gives a forceful but nuanced portrait of a patriarchal despotism where women are agonizingly dependent on fathers, husbands and especially sons, the bearing of male children being their sole path to social status. His tale is a powerful, harrowing depiction of Afghanistan, but also a lyrical evocation of the lives and enduring hopes of its resilient characters. (May)

From Enotes:
Aldous Huxley's Brave New World
Written in 1931 and published the following year, Aldous Huxley's Brave New World is a dystopian—or anti-utopian—novel. In it, the author questions the values of 1931 London, using satire and irony to portray a futuristic world in which many of the contemporary trends in British and American society have been taken to extremes. Though he was already a best-selling author, Huxley achieved
international acclaim with this now-classic novel. Because *Brave New World* is a novel of ideas, the characters and plot are secondary, even simplistic. The novel is best appreciated as an ironic commentary on contemporary values.

The story is set in a London six hundred years in the future. People all around the world are part of a totalitarian state, free from war, hatred, poverty, disease, and pain. They enjoy leisure time, material wealth, and physical pleasures. However, in order to maintain such a smoothly running society, the ten people in charge of the world, the Controllers, eliminate most forms of freedom and twist around many traditionally held human values. Standardization and progress are valued above all else. These Controllers create human beings in factories, using technology to make ninety-six people from the same fertilized egg and to condition them for their future lives. Children are raised together and subjected to mind control through sleep teaching to further condition them. As adults, people are content to fulfill their destinies as part of five social classes, from the intelligent Alphas, who run the factories, to the mentally challenged Epsilons, who do the most menial jobs. All spend their free time indulging in harmless and mindless entertainment and sports activities. When the Savage, a man from the uncontrolled area of the world (an Indian reservation in New Mexico) comes to London, he questions the society and ultimately has to choose between conformity and death.

Jane Austen’s *Emma*:

Amazon.com Review

Of all Jane Austen's heroines, Emma Woodhouse is the most flawed, the most infuriating, and, in the end, the most endearing. *Pride and Prejudice*’s Lizzie Bennet has more wit and sparkle; Catherine Morland in *Northanger Abbey* more imagination; and *Sense and Sensibility*’s Elinor Dashwood certainly more sense--but Emma is lovable precisely because she is so imperfect. Austen only completed six novels in her lifetime, of which five feature young women whose chances for making a good marriage depend greatly on financial issues, and whose prospects if they fail are rather grim. *Emma* is the exception: "Emma Woodhouse, handsome, clever, and rich, with a comfortable home and happy disposition seemed to unite some of the best blessings of existence; and had lived nearly twenty-one years in the world with very little to distress or vex her." One may be tempted to wonder what Austen could possibly find to say about so fortunate a character. The answer is, quite a lot. For Emma, raised to think well of herself, has *such* a high opinion of her own worth that it blinds her to the opinions of others. The story revolves around a comedy of errors: Emma befriends Harriet Smith, a young woman of unknown parentage, and attempts to remake her in her own image. Ignoring the gaping difference in their respective fortunes and stations in life, Emma convinces herself and her friend that Harriet should look as high as Emma herself might for a husband--and she zeroes in on an ambitious vicar as the perfect match. At the same time, she reads too much into a flirtation with Frank Churchill, the newly arrived son of family friends, and thoughtlessly starts a rumor about poor but beautiful Jane Fairfax, the beloved niece of two genteelly impoverished elderly ladies in the village. As Emma's fantastically misguided schemes threaten to surge out of control, the voice of reason is provided by Mr. Knightly, the Woodhouse’s longtime friend and neighbor. Though Austen herself described Emma as "a heroine whom no one but myself will much like," she endowed her creation with enough charm to see her through her most egregious behavior, and the saving grace of being able to learn from her mistakes. By the end of the novel Harriet, Frank, and Jane are all properly accounted for, Emma is wiser (though certainly not sadder), and the reader has had the satisfaction of enjoying Jane Austen at the height of her powers. --Alix Wilber --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

Amazon.com Review
Junot Diaz: The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao

Amazon Best of the Month, September 2007: It's been 11 years since Junot Díaz's critically acclaimed story collection, Drown, landed on bookshelves and from page one of his debut novel, The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao, any worries of a sophomore jinx disappear. The titular Oscar is a 300-pound-plus "lovesick ghetto nerd" with zero game (except for Dungeons & Dragons) who cranks out pages of fantasy fiction with the hopes of becoming a Dominican J.R.R. Tolkien. The book is also the story of a multi-generational family curse that courses through the book, leaving troubles and tragedy in its wake. This was the most dynamic, entertaining, and achingly heartfelt novel I've read in a long time. My head is still buzzing with the memory of dozens of killer passages that I dog-eared throughout the book. The rope-a-dope narrative is funny, hip, tragic, soulful, and bursting with desire. Make some room for Oscar Wao on your bookshelf--you won't be disappointed. --Brad Thomas Parsons

Signature Reviewed by Matthew Sharpe: A reader might at first be surprised by how many chapters of a book entitled The Brief and Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao are devoted not to its sci-fi--and--fantasy-gobbling nerd-hero but to his sister, his mother and his grandfather. However, Junot Díaz's dark and exuberant first novel makes a compelling case for the multiperspectival view of a life, wherein an individual cannot be known or understood in isolation from the history of his family and his nation. Oscar being a first-generation Dominican-American, the nation in question is really two nations. And Dominicans in this novel being explicitly of mixed Taíno, African and Spanish descent, the very ideas of nationhood and nationality are thoughtfully, subtly complicated. The various nationalities and generations are subtended by the recurring motif of fukú, the Curse and Doom of the New World, whose midwife and... victim was a historical personage Diaz will only call the Admiral, in deference to the belief that uttering his name brings bad luck (hint: he arrived in the New World in 1492 and his initials are CC). By the prologue's end, it's clear that this story of one poor guy's cursed life will also be the story of how 500 years of historical and familial bad luck shape the destiny of its fat, sad, smart, lovable and short-lived protagonist. The book's pervasive sense of doom is offset by a rich and playful prose that embodies its theme of multiple nations, cultures and languages, often shifting in a single sentence from English to Spanish, from Victorian formality to Negropolitan vernacular, from Homeric epithet to dirty bilingual insult. Even the presumed reader shape-shifts in the estimation of its in-your-face narrator, who addresses us variously as folks, you folks, conspiracy-minded-fools, Negro, Nigger and plataneros. So while Diaz assumes in his reader the same considerable degree of multicultural erudition he himself possesses—offering no gloss on his many un-italicized Spanish words and expressions (thus beautifully dramatizing how linguistic borders, like national ones, are porous), or on his plethora of genre and canonical literary allusions—he does helpfully footnote aspects of Dominican history, especially those concerning the bloody 30-year reign of President Rafael Leónidas Trujillo...Matthew Sharpe is the author of the novels Jamestown and The Sleeping Father. He teaches at Wesleyan University.

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From Publishers Weekly

Palahniuk's Fight Club

Featuring soap made from human fat, waiters at high-class restaurants who do unmentionable things to soup and an underground organization dedicated to inflicting a violent anarchy upon the land, Palahniuk's apocalyptic first novel is clearly not for the faint of heart. The unnamed (and extremely unreliable) narrator, who makes his living investigating accidents for a car company in order to assess their liability, is combating insomnia and a general sense of anomie by attending a steady series of support-group meetings for the grievously ill, at one of which (testicular cancer) he meets a young woman named Marla. She and the narrator get into a love triangle of sorts with Tyler Durden, a
mysterious and gleefully destructive young man with whom the narrator starts a fight club, a secret society that offers young professionals the chance to beat one another to a bloody pulp. Mayhem ensues, beginning with the narrator's condo exploding and culminating with a terrorist attack on the world's tallest building. Writing in an ironic deadpan and including something to offend everyone, Palahniuk is a risky writer who takes chances galore, especially with a particularly bizarre plot twist he throws in late in the book. Caustic, outrageous, bleakly funny, violent and always unsettling, Palahniuk's utterly original creation will make even the most jaded reader sit up and take notice. Movie rights to Fox 2000.

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**Paul Coelho's The Alchemist**

From Publishers Weekly

This inspirational fable by Brazilian author and translator Coelho has been a runaway bestseller throughout Latin America and seems poised to achieve the same prominence here. The charming tale of Santiago, a shepherd boy, who dreams of seeing the world, is compelling in its own right, but gains resonance through the many lessons Santiago learns during his adventures. He journeys from Spain to Morocco in search of worldly success, and eventually to Egypt, where a fateful encounter with an alchemist brings him at last to self-understanding and spiritual enlightenment. The story has the comic charm, dramatic tension and psychological intensity of a fairy tale, but it's full of specific wisdom as well, about becoming self-empowered, overcoming depression, and believing in dreams. The cumulative effect is like hearing a wonderful bedtime story from an inspirational psychiatrist. Comparisons to The Little Prince are appropriate; this is a sweetly exotic tale for young and old alike.

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**Hesse's Siddhartha**

Amazon.com Review

In the shade of a banyan tree, a grizzled ferryman sits listening to the river. Some say he's a sage. He was once a wandering shramana and, briefly, like thousands of others, he followed Gotama the Buddha, enraptured by his sermons. But this man, Siddhartha, was not a follower of any but his own soul. Born the son of a Brahmin, Siddhartha was blessed in appearance, intelligence, and charisma. In order to find meaning in life, he discarded his promising future for the life of a wandering ascetic. Still, true happiness evaded him. Then a life of pleasure and titillation merely eroded away his spiritual gains until he was just like all the other "child people," dragged around by his desires. Like Hermann Hesse's other creations of struggling young men, *Siddhartha* has a good dose of European angst and stubborn individualism. His final epiphany challenges both the Buddhist and the Hindu ideals of enlightenment. Neither a practitioner nor a devotee, neither meditating nor reciting, Siddhartha comes to blend in with the world, resonating with the rhythms of nature, bending the reader's ear down to hear answers from the river. -- Brian Bruya --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

Blurbs for Lib Guides AP English:

Description online on Amazon:

**Walker's The Color Purple**

Celia is a poor black woman whose letters tell the story of 20 years of her life, beginning at age 14 when she is being abused and raped by her father and attempting to protect her sister from the same fate, and continuing over the course of her marriage to "Mister," a brutal man who terrorizes her. Celia
eventually learns that her abusive husband has been keeping her sister's letters from her and the rage she feels, combined with an example of love and independence provided by her close friend Shug, pushes her finally toward an awakening of her creative and loving self.

Alvarez’s *Time of the Butterflies*

Description online on Amazon:

It is November 25, 1960, and three beautiful sisters have been found near their wrecked Jeep at the bottom of a 150-foot cliff on the north coast of the Dominican Republic. The official state newspaper reports their deaths as accidental. It does not mention that a fourth sister lives. Nor does it explain that the sisters were among the leading opponents of Gen. Rafael Leonidas Trujillo’s dictatorship. It doesn’t have to. Everybody knows of Las Mariposas—“The Butterflies.” In this extraordinary novel, the voices of all four sisters—Minerva, Patria, María Teresa, and the survivor, Dedé—speak across the decades to tell their own stories, from hair ribbons and secret crushes to gunrunning and prison torture, and to describe the everyday horrors of life under Trujillo’s rule. Through the art and magic of Julia Alvarez’s imagination, the martyred Butterflies live again in this novel of courage and love, and the human cost of political oppression.

Steinbeck’s *East of Eden*

Description online on Amazon:

A masterpiece of Biblical scope, and the magnum opus of one of America’s most enduring authors

In his journal, Nobel Prize winner John Steinbeck called *East of Eden* "the first book," and indeed it has the primordial power and simplicity of myth. Set in the rich farmland of California's Salinas Valley, this sprawling and often brutal novel follows the intertwined destinies of two families—the Trasks and the Hamiltons—whose generations helplessly reenact the fall of Adam and Eve and the poisonous rivalry of Cain and Abel. The masterpiece of Steinbeck’s later years, *East of Eden* is a work in which Steinbeck created his most mesmerizing characters and explored his most enduring themes: the mystery of identity, the inexplicability of love, and the murderous consequences of love’s absence. Marian’s note: Many students have called this book their favorite. It features one of the most fascinating and evil characters in all of literature: Cathy Ames.

Unamuno’s *Abel Sanchez*

Description online on Amazon:

Abel Sanchez (1917), subtitled “A Story of Passion,” is a recreation of the biblical story of Cain and Abel. It tells the story of the relationship between two friends: Abel Monegro and Joaquin Sanchez. It all starts with Joaquin (Cain) trying to understand the uncontrollable jealousy he felt toward his friend Abel; a feeling Joaquin could trace to when they were infants. When Abel marries Helen, the woman Joaquin was in love with, the most violent and dark feelings are stirred within Joaquin’s soul. The main theme of the novel is ‘envy.’ In this primitive emotion —envy— Unamuno sees not only the malady of individuals,
but that of his own country: Spain. In addition, some sub-themes are interlaced and treated: love, hatred, sacrifice, faith, and the ancient quarrel of the sciences versus the arts.

Maupassant’s *Pierre and Jean*

Description online on Amazon:

The fraternal love that Pierre Roland feels for his younger brother Jean has always been tinged with jealousy. But when a lawyer arrives at the house of their parents, to declare that an old family friend has bequeathed his entire fortune to Jean, this envy rapidly becomes an all-consuming force. Despising himself for the hate that he feels, Pierre roams the seaport of Le Havre alone, desperate to come to terms with his brother’s success. As he walks through the streets, however, one thought dominates his mind. Why was he not left a share of the friend’s estate? Vivid, ironical and emotionally profound, "Pierre and Jean" is considered Maupassant's greatest novel - an intensely personal story of suspicion, jealousy and family love.

Matute’s *Celebration in the Northwest*

Description online on Amazon:

A tragic tale of hatred between two half-brothers, *Celebration in the Northwest* (Fiesta al Noroeste) is a gripping novel by Ana María Matute, one of twentieth-century Spain’s most important writers. At the center of the novel are confessions that the protagonist, Juan Medinao, makes to a local priest in the fictional Castilian town of Artámila. Those confessions reveal the volatile mixture of attraction and repulsion between Juan and his half-brother, Pablo. In describing the troubled bond between these characters, Matute creates a harrowing, modern enactment of the Biblical tale of Cain and Abel. *Celebration in the Northwest* is remarkable for its evocative prose, its riveting plot, and its portrayal of a character overcome by bitterness, envy, rage, and alienation.

*Archer’s Kane and Abel*

Description online on Amazon:

William Lowell Kane and Abel Rosnovski, one the son of a Boston millionaire, the other a penniless Polish immigrant. Two men, born on the same day, on opposite sides of the world, their paths destined to cross in their ruthless struggle to build a fortune. An unputdownable story, spanning sixty years, of two powerful men linked by an all-consuming hatred, brought together by fate to save—and finally destroy—each other.

Ellison’s *Invisible Man*
*Invisible Man* 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. The book is a passionate and witty tour de force of style, strongly influenced by T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, Joyce, and Dostoevsky.

Dostoevsky’s *Notes from Underground*:

Dostoevsky’s most revolutionary novel, *Notes from Underground* marks the dividing line between nineteenth- and twentieth-century fiction, and between the visions of self each century embodied. One of the most remarkable characters in literature, the unnamed narrator is a former official who has defiantly withdrawn into an underground existence. In full retreat from society, he scrawls a passionate, obsessive, self-contradictory narrative that serves as a devastating attack on social utopianism and an assertion of man’s essentially irrational nature.

Homer’s *The Odyssey*:

Description online on Amazon: This is for Fagles’s translation but Marian also recommends Lattimore’s translation:

Robert Fagles, winner of the PEN/Ralph Manheim Medal for Translation and a 1996 Academy Award in Literature from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, presents us with Homer’s best-loved and most accessible poem in a stunning modern-verse translation. "Sing to me of the man, Muse, the man of twists and turns driven time and again off course, once he had plundered the hallowed heights of Troy." So begins Robert Fagles’ magnificent translation of the *Odyssey*, which Jasper Griffin in the *New York Times Book Review* hails as "a distinguished achievement." If the *Iliad* is the world’s greatest war epic, the *Odyssey* is literature’s grandest evocation of an everyman’s journey through life. Odysseus’ reliance on his wit and williness for survival in his encounters with divine and natural forces during his ten-year voyage home to Ithaca after the Trojan War is at once a timeless human story and an individual test of moral endurance. In the myths and legends retold here, Fagles has captured the energy and poetry of Homer’s original in a bold, contemporary idiom, and given us an *Odyssey* to read aloud, to savor, and to treasure for its sheer lyrical mastery. Renowned classicist Bernard Knox’s superb introduction and textual commentary provide insightful background information for the general reader and scholar alike, intensifying the strength of Fagles’s translation. This is an *Odyssey* to delight both the classicist and the general reader, to captivate a new generation of Homer’s students.

*Atwood’s The Penelopiad*
Description online on Amazon:

Margaret Atwood returns with a shrewd, funny, and insightful retelling of the myth of Odysseus from the point of view of Penelope. Describing her own remarkable vision, the author writes in the foreword, “I’ve chosen to give the telling of the story to Penelope and to the twelve hanged maids. The maids form a chanting and singing Chorus, which focuses on two questions that must pose themselves after any close reading of the *Odyssey*: What led to the hanging of the maids, and what was Penelope really up to? The story as told in the *Odyssey* doesn’t hold water: there are too many inconsistencies. I’ve always been haunted by the hanged maids and, in *The Penelopiad*, so is Penelope herself.” One of the high points of literary fiction in 2005, this critically acclaimed story found a vast audience and is finally available in paperback.

Eugenides’s *Middlesex*

Description online on Amazon:

"I was born twice: first, as a baby girl, on a remarkably smogless Detroit day of January 1960; and then again, as a teenage boy, in an emergency room near Petoskey, Michigan, in August of 1974... My birth certificate lists my name as Calliope Helen Stephanides. My most recent driver's license...records my first name simply as Cal." So begins 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. Lyrical and thrilling, *Middlesex* is an exhilarating reinvention of the American epic. *Middlesex* is the winner of the 2003 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction.

Puig’s *Kiss of the Spiderwoman*

Description online on Amazon:

Sometimes they talk all night long. In the still darkness of their cell, Molina re-weaves the glittering and fragile stories of the film he loves, and the cynical Valentin listens. Valentin believes in the just cause which makes all suffering bearable; Molina believes in the magic of love which makes all else endurable. Each has always been alone, and always - especially now - in danger of betrayal. But in cell 7 each surrenders to the other something of himself that he has never surrendered before.

Brown’s *Rubyfruit Jungle*

Description online on Amazon:

*Rubyfruit Jungle* is the first milestone novel in the extraordinary career of one of this country’s most distinctive writers. Bawdy and moving, the ultimate word-of-mouth bestseller, *Rubyfruit Jungle* is about growing up a lesbian in America – and living happily ever after. Born a bastard, Molly Bolt is adopted by a dirt-poor Southern couple who want something better for their daughter. Molly plays doctor with the
boys, beats up Leroy the tub and loses her virginity to her girlfriend in sixth grade. As she grows to realize she’s different, Molly decides not to apologize for that. In no time she mesmerizes the head cheerleader of Ft. Lauderdale High and captivates a gorgeous bourbon-guzzling heiress. But the world is not tolerant. Booted out of college for moral turpitude, an unrepentant, penniless Molly takes New York by storm, sending not a few female hearts aflutter with her startling beauty, crackling wit and fierce determination to become the greatest filmmaker that ever lived. Critically acclaimed when first published, *Rubyfruit Jungle* has only grown in reputation as it has reached new generations of readers who respond to its feisty and inspiring heroine.

Woolf’s *Orlando*

Description online on Amazon:

*Orlando* is a historical fantasy in which the eponymous hero remains alive for over three centuries, but ages physically just 36 years. Over this huge span of time, Orlando has many strange adventures, chief among them being his sex-change from a man to a woman. Woolf uses this bizarre and intriguing notion to examine many aspects of human existence: the difference between fact and imagination; the utility of poetry and art; how humans conform to whatever civilization of group they find themselves in; and (a central theme of the book) the gender roles which society imposes so unjustly upon men and women, when - in Woolf’s view - the two sexes have in reality very similar dreams and aspirations.

Irving’s *In One Person*

Description online on Amazon:

A *New York Times* bestselling novel of desire, secrecy, and sexual identity, *In One Person* is a story of unfulfilled love—tormented, funny, and affecting—and an impassioned embrace of our sexual differences. Billy, the bisexual narrator and main character of *In One Person*, tells the tragicomic story (lasting more than half a century) of his life as a "sexual suspect," a phrase first used by John Irving in 1978 in his landmark novel of "terminal cases," *The World According to Garp*. *In One Person* is a poignant tribute to Billy’s friends and lovers—a theatrical cast of characters who defy category and convention. Not least, *In One Person* is an intimate and unforgettable portrait of the solitariness of a bisexual man who is dedicated to making himself "worthwhile."