



Sussex County Public Schools



"I have a passion for teaching kids to become readers, to become comfortable with a book, not daunted. Books shouldn't be daunting,

they should be funny, exciting and wonderful; and learning to be a reader gives a terrific advantage." – Roald Dahl

Recommended Readings for Sussex Central High School

Below is a compilation of what is deemed classical literature by SCHS' English Department and the Reading Specialist. Teachers are required to read at least one literary work from the list per semester. Those readings should be chosen at the end of the school year so that they are incorporated into pacing guides for the following year. New classroom sets of novels will only be purchased every 3 years.

Their Eyes Were Watching God - Zora Neale Hurston

A Raisin in the Sun - Lorraine Hansberry

Moby-Dick; or, the Whale - Herman Melville

The Red Badge of Courage - Stephen Crane

I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings - Maya Angelou

The Adventures of Tom Sawyer - Mark Twain

The Taming of the Shrew - William Shakespeare

Death of a Salesman - Arthur Miller

A Midsummer Night's Dream (No Fear Shakespeare) - Sparknotes

Othello - William Shakespeare

The Canterbury Tales - Geoffrey Chaucer

Beowulf

A Tale of Two Cities - Charles Dickens

Frankenstein - Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley

The Outsiders - S.E. Hinton (Goodreads Author)

The Crucible - Arthur Miller

The Giver - Lois Lowry (Goodreads Author)

Fahrenheit 451 - Ray Bradbury

Pride and Prejudice - Jane Austen

The Diary of a Young Girl - Anne Frank
The Odyssey - Homer
The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn - Mark Twain
The Scarlet Letter - Nathaniel Hawthorne
Of Mice and Men - John Steinbeck
Hamlet - William Shakespeare
Animal Farm - George Orwell
Macbeth - William Shakespeare
The Great Gatsby - F. Scott Fitzgerald
Romeo and Juliet - William Shakespeare
To Kill a Mockingbird - Harper Lee
A Tree Grows in Brooklyn - Betty Smith
The Catcher In The Rye - J.D. Salinger
Beloved - Toni Morrison
One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest - Ken Kesey
As I Lay Dying - William Faulkner
Native Son - Richard Wright
Lord of the Flies - William Golding
Antigone - Sophocles
Catch-22 - Joseph Heller
Roll Of Thunder, Hear My Cry - Mildred D. Taylor
The Bluest Eye - Toni Morrison

Synopsis of Texts

Their Eyes Were Watching God RL.11-12.9

- Author: Zora Neale Hurston

A coming-of-age tome set in early 1900s Florida, "Their Eyes Were Watching God" tackles a multitude of issues: racism, sexism, segregation, poverty, and gender roles. Initially overlooked upon its release, Hurston's best-known work is now considered a modern-American masterpiece, thanks to work done in Black studies programs in the 1970s.

A Raisin in the Sun (Non-prose)

- Author: Lorraine Hansberry

The story follows the Youngers, a working-class Black family living on the South Side of Chicago who move to an all-white neighborhood during a time of desegregation. In 1959, Lorraine Hansberry became the first Black playwright to get a play produced on Broadway. The title of the play comes from "Dream Deferred," a poem by Langston Hughes.

Moby-Dick; or, the Whale 1150L

- Author: Herman Melville

Moby-Dick; or, The Whale is a novel by Herman Melville, in which Ishmael narrates the monomaniacal quest of Ahab, captain of the whaler Pequod, for revenge on the albino sperm whale Moby Dick, which on a previous voyage destroyed Ahab's ship and severed his leg at the knee. Although the novel was a commercial failure and out of print at the time of the author's death in 1891, its reputation grew immensely during the twentieth century. D. H. Lawrence called it "one of the strangest and most wonderful books in the world," and "the greatest book of the sea ever written." Moby-Dick is considered a Great American Novel and an outstanding work of the Romantic period in America and the American Renaissance. "Call me Ishmael" is one of world literature's most famous opening sentences. The product of a year and a half of writing, the book is dedicated to Nathaniel Hawthorne, "in token of my admiration for his genius," and draws on Melville's experience at sea, on his reading in whaling literature, and on literary inspirations such as Shakespeare and the Bible. The detailed and realistic descriptions of whale hunting and of extracting whale oil, as well as life aboard ship among a culturally diverse crew, are mixed with exploration of class and social status, good and evil, and the existence of God. In addition to narrative prose, Melville uses styles and literary devices ranging from songs, poetry, and catalogs to Shakespearean stage directions, soliloquies, and asides.

The Red Badge of Courage 680L

- Author: Stephen Crane

In "The Red Badge of Courage," Henry Fleming enlists in the Union Army, enticed by visions of glory. When the reality of war and battle set in, Fleming retreats in fear. In the end, he faces his cowardice and rises to leadership. This American war novel was published in 1895 and is so authentic that it's easy to believe the author—who was born after the Civil War ended—was himself a veteran.

I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings 1010L

- Author: Maya Angelou

Maya Angelou, who was raped by her mother's boyfriend when she was 8, writes about her experience with sexual assault and racism while growing up in the Jim Crow South in "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings." The autobiography, which Angelou wrote at the urging of her friend and fellow writer James Baldwin, was one of the first written by a Black woman to reach a wide general audience.

The Adventures of Tom Sawyer 950L

- Author: Mark Twain

"The Adventures of Tom Sawyer" takes place in the fictional town of St. Petersburg, Missouri, during the 1840s. Tom Sawyer and his friend Huck Finn witness a murder by Joe. After the boys stay silent, the wrong man is accused of the crime. When they flee, the whole town presumes them dead and the boys end up attending their own funerals. Mark Twain's portrayal of Sawyer and Finn challenges the idyllic American view of childhood, instead of showing children as fallible human beings with imperfections like anyone else.

The Taming of the Shrew 1050L

- Author: William Shakespeare

This five-act comedy tells the story of the courtship of the headstrong Katharine and the money-grubbing Petruchio, who is determined to subdue Katharine and make her his wife. After the wedding, Petruchio drags his new wife through the mud to their new home in the country. He proceeds to starve and deprive her of sleep to make his new bride submissive. The play, one of Shakespeare's most popular, has been both criticized for its abusive and misogynistic attitude toward women and praised as a challenging view of how women are supposed to behave.

Death of a Salesman 1320L

- Author: Arthur Miller

Arthur Miller introduces readers to an aging Willy Loman, a traveling salesman nearing the end of his career. Loman decides he's tired of driving for work and asks for an office job in New York City, believing he is vital to the company. His boss ends up firing him. Loman is

also faced with the fact that his son, Biff, has not turned into the success Loman had hoped for. In the end, Loman commits suicide so his son can have the insurance money to jumpstart a better life. After his death, only Loman's family attends his funeral. "Death of a Salesman" won the 1949 Pulitzer Prize in Drama.

A Midsummer Night's Dream 1160L

Theseus, Duke of Athens, after conquering the warrior Amazons in battle, is in turn conquered by the charms of their queen, Hippolyta, and they are now planning to marry. To speed the time until their wedding night, he orders amusements to be staged. In a spirit of loyalty, Bottom the weaver and other tradesmen decide to prepare a play for the duke and his bride.

Othello 1160L

- Author: William Shakespeare

Shakespeare wrote "Othello" in the early 17th century. The play tells the tragic story of Othello—a Moor and general in the Venetian army, and Iago—a traitorous low-ranking officer. Shakespeare tackles themes of racism, betrayal, and jealousy. While he refers to Othello as "Black," Shakespeare most likely meant he was darker-skinned than most Englishmen at the time and not necessarily of African descent.

The Canterbury Tales 1270L

- Author: Geoffrey Chaucer

"The Canterbury Tales," written by Geoffrey Chaucer in the 14th century, was one of the first major works of English literature. The story follows a group of pilgrims who tell tales during their journey from London to Canterbury Cathedral. The cast of characters—including a carpenter, cook, and knight, among others—paint a varied picture of 14th-century society. The stories inspired the modern film "A Knight's Tale," starring Heath Ledger as a poor knight, and Paul Bettany as Chaucer.

Beowulf 1090L

- Author: Unknown

"Beowulf" is an epic poem—an original manuscript copy is housed in the British Library—of 3,000 lines. It was written in Old English somewhere between 700 and 1000 A.D., and tells the story of Beowulf, a nobleman, and warrior in Sweden who is sent to Denmark to fight a swamp monster called Grendel.

A Tale of Two Cities 1130L

- Author: Charles Dickens

"A Tale of Two Cities," famously starts out: "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times..." Set in the late 1700s, Charles Dickens vividly writes about the time leading up to and during the French Revolution. The historical novel describes death and despair, but also touches on themes of redemption.

Frankenstein 1170L

- Author: Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley

Mary Shelley wrote "Frankenstein," considered the formative horror text and one of the greatest horror novels of all time, when she was only 19. The story was published in 1818 and introduced readers to Dr. Victor Frankenstein, a scientist who brings to life a creature he assembled from discarded corpse parts. Although Dr. Frankenstein is horrified by his creation and abandons it, the creature manages to educate itself and then seeks revenge on his creator. The novel explores humanity's desire for innovation and the fear of change it brings.

The Outsiders 750L

- Author: S.E. Hinton (Goodreads Author)

S.E. Hinton introduced readers to 14-year-old Ponyboy Curtis in "The Outsiders," a novel she wrote when she was 15. The plot centers around two rival gangs: the lower-class Greasers and the well-off Socials. It touches on themes of teen angst, including the frustrations young people have when they can't rely on adults to change things, while also not knowing how to fix things themselves. Hinton's publishers encouraged her to publish under her initials because they didn't think the public would respect a book about teenage boys by someone with a feminine name.

The Crucible 1320L

- Author: Arthur Miller

This 1953 play is a dramatized version of the Salem witch trials of the late 1600s. In the novel, a group of young girls are dancing in the forest. When they're caught, they fake illness and shift blame to avoid punishment. Their lies set off witchcraft accusations throughout the town. Arthur Miller wrote "The Crucible" as a protest to the actions of Sen. Joseph McCarthy, who set up a committee to investigate and prosecute the Communists he thought had infiltrated the U.S. government. It won the 1953 Tony Award for Best Play.

The Giver 760L

- Author: Lois Lowry (Goodreads Author)

This 1993 young adult dystopian novel tells of a society that values similarity and not individuality. People are discouraged from being different and are given jobs that will best serve the community. Those who don't like their role are "released," which means they are forced to leave society. One person is assigned the role of the Giver, and tasked with holding onto memories. Young Jonas becomes the new Giver. With his new memories, his awareness grows and he begins to question life. The movie adaptation of the book was released in 2014.

Fahrenheit 451 890L

- Author: Ray Bradbury

Ray Bradbury describes a futuristic world where books are banned and burned. Guy Montag, one fireman tasked with extinguishing the books, begins to question the practice. When Bradbury wrote the classic in the 1950s, television sets were becoming ubiquitous in American households. The theme of the book was a warning about how mass media could interfere with people's ability or desire to think critically, a theme that many think resonates with the social media-obsessed world of today.

Pride and Prejudice 1190L

- Author: Jane Austen

Published in 1813, "Pride and Prejudice" was Jane Austen's second novel. The story follows the will-they-won't-they relationship between the wealthy Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth Bennett, who comes from meager means. Throughout the chapters, both change for the better as they fall in love. The book has inspired at least more than a dozen movie and television adaptations.

The Diary of a Young Girl 1080L

- Author: Anne Frank

In 1944, a young Anne Frank recorded her thoughts and feelings as she and other Jewish citizens hid from the German Nazis during World War II. The coming-of-age diary, which chronicles Frank's time hiding in the Secret Annex while she became a young woman, has been translated into 70 languages. While she and most of her family were killed, her father survived and helped publish her work, making it possible for millions to learn her story.

The Odyssey 1050L

- Author: Homer

"The Odyssey," a Greek epic poem, follows Odysseus as he travels back to the island of Ithaca after fighting in the war at Troy—something addressed in Homer's poem, "The Iliad." When he returns home, he and his son, Telemachus, kill all the men who are trying to marry

Odysseus's wife, Penelope. In the end, Athena, the goddess of wisdom, victory, and war, intervenes. Like many Greek myths, it focuses on themes of love, courage, and revenge.

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn 990L

- Author: Mark Twain

Huckleberry Finn is the main character in this follow-up novel to "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer." The book explores themes of racism as Huck Finn floats down the Mississippi River with a man escaping slavery. Like Huck, Twain changed his childhood views and rejected slavery as an institution.

The Scarlet Letter 1280L

- Author: Nathaniel Hawthorne

Nathaniel Hawthorne published "The Scarlet Letter" in 1850. In the novel, which is based on historical events, readers follow the story of Hester Prynne, a woman who is forced to wear a red "A" on her clothes after she conceives a child out of wedlock. She bears the punishment alone when she refuses to name the baby's father. Her character marked one of the first where a strong woman was the protagonist. Hawthorne also touches on themes of hypocrisy, shame, guilt, and love.

Of Mice and Men 630L

- Author: John Steinbeck

"Of Mice and Men" tells the story of George and his simple-minded friend, Lennie. The two have to get new jobs on a ranch because of some trouble in Lennie's past. The novel, set during the Great Depression, tackles topics of poverty, sexism, and racism.

Hamlet

- Author: William Shakespeare

Hamlet, the prince of Denmark, becomes vengeful after attending his father's funeral, only to find his mother has remarried his uncle, Claudius. The stepfather crowns himself king, a role that should have gone to Hamlet. The prince finds out his father was murdered, after which he kills the new king. Ambiguity runs through the play and the character of Hamlet, with his visions of ghosts up for interpretation—are they real, or a figment of the troubled man's imagination? The tragedy, which launched the famous line "to be, or not to be," shines a light on some of the worst traits of humanity. Some consider the play Shakespeare's greatest work.

Animal Farm 1170L

- Author: George Orwell

A group of farm animals organizes a revolt after they realize their master, Mr. Jones, is mistreating them and offering them nothing in return for their work. When they challenge the leadership, they are disciplined for speaking out. This classic isn't about animal rights. It is a larger critique on Soviet Communism. Orwell wrote it as an attack against Stalinism in Russia.

Macbeth

- Author: William Shakespeare

Another Shakespeare classic, "Macbeth" portrays the weakness of humanity. The character of Macbeth receives a prophecy that he will one day become king of Scotland. His unchecked ambition ends in murder; Macbeth kills King Duncan to steal the throne for himself. It shows the destructive influence of political ambition and pursuing power for its own sake.

The Great Gatsby 1010L

- Author: F. Scott Fitzgerald

Nick Carraway, a Midwest transplant and Yale graduate, moves to West Egg, Long Island. Carraway enters a world of extravagance when he becomes entangled with millionaire Jay Gatsby and socialite Daisy Buchanan. The novel is viewed as a cautionary tale about achieving the American dream of wealth and excess.

Romeo and Juliet

- Author: William Shakespeare

Two star-crossed lovers meet and perish in this tragedy. Juliet, a Capulet, falls in love with Romeo, a Montague. Because their families are rivals, they are forbidden to marry. They secretly wed before misfortune leads to their deaths. Losing their children inspires a peace among the families. Some critics claim the play's childish view of love hasn't stood the test of time, but others think the story is multilayered and deserves its classic status.

To Kill a Mockingbird RL.9-10.3

- Author: Harper Lee

Harper Lee's first novel, which was published in 1960, tackles issues of racial and social injustice in the South. Set in Alabama, it introduces readers to Atticus Finch, a lawyer who defends a Black man accused of raping a white woman. The point-of-view comes from Atticus's daughter, Scout, while Boo Radley, their reclusive neighbor, adds another dimension to this classic story of racism and childhood. Lee's work won her a Pulitzer Prize and the Presidential Medal of Freedom. Because of some racial language, the book has been challenged in many schools throughout America.

A Tree Grows in Brooklyn 810L

-Betty Smith

Young Francie Nolan, having inherited both her father's romantic and her mother's practical nature, struggles to survive and thrive growing up in the slums of Brooklyn in the early twentieth century.

The Catcher In The Rye 790L

-J.D. Salinger

With the author's recent passing, the classic novel about young Holden Caulfield's disillusionment with the adult world and its "phoniness" will only rise in popularity--and controversy, since it is a favorite target of censors, who often cite profanity and sexual references in their efforts to ban the book.

Beloved 870L

-Toni Morrison

Sethe, an escaped slave living in post-Civil War Ohio with her daughter and mother-in-law, is persistently haunted by the ghost of her dead baby girl.

One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest 1110L

-Ken Kesey

McMurphy, a criminal who feigns insanity, is admitted to a mental hospital where he challenges the autocratic authority of the head nurse.

As I Lay Dying 870L

-William Faulkner

Recounts the Bundren family's odyssey across the Mississippi countryside to bury Addie, their wife and mother, through the eyes of each of the family members

Native Son 700L

-Richard Wright

Right from the start, Bigger Thomas had been headed for jail. It could have been for assault or petty larceny; by chance, it was for murder and rape. Native Son tells the story of this young black man caught in a downward spiral after he kills a young white woman in a brief moment of panic. Set in Chicago in the 1930s, Wright's powerful novel is an unsparing reflection on the poverty and feelings of hopelessness experienced by people in inner cities across the country.

Lord of the Flies 770L

-William Golding

At the dawn of the next world war, a plane crashes on an uncharted island, stranding a group of schoolboys. At first, with no adult supervision, their freedom is something to celebrate; this far from civilization the boys can do anything they want. Anything. They attempt to forge their own society, failing, however, in the face of terror, sin and evil. And as order collapses, as strange howls echo in the night, as terror begins its reign, the hope of adventure seems as far from reality as the hope of being rescued. Labeled a parable, an allegory, a myth, a morality tale, a parody, a political treatise, even a vision of the apocalypse, *Lord of the Flies* is perhaps our most memorable novel about “the end of innocence, the darkness of man’s heart.”

Antigone 1090

-Sophocles

The curse placed on Oedipus lingers and haunts a younger generation in this new and brilliant translation of Sophocles' classic drama. The daughter of Oedipus and Jocasta, Antigone is an unconventional heroine who pits her beliefs against the King of Thebes in a bloody test of wills that leaves few unharmed. Emotions fly as she challenges the king for the right to bury her own brother. Determined but doomed, Antigone shows her inner strength throughout the play.

Antigone raises issues of law and morality that are just as relevant today as they were more than two thousand years ago. Whether this is your first reading or your twentieth, Antigone will The story of Pecola Breedlove profiles an eleven-year-old African American girl growing up in an America that values blue-eyed blondes and the tragedy that results from her longing to be accepted. The story of Pecola Breedlove profiles an eleven-year-old African American girl growing up in an America that values blue-eyed blondes and the tragedy that results from her longing to be accepted. story of Pecola Breedlove profiles an eleven-year-old African American girl growing up in an America that values blue-eyed blondes and the tragedy that results from her longing to be accepted. you as few pieces of literature can.

To make this quintessential Greek drama more accessible to the modern reader, this Prestwick House Literary Touchstone Edition includes a glossary of difficult terms, a list of vocabulary words, and convenient sidebar notes. By providing these, it is our intention that readers will The The story of Pecola Breedlove profiles an eleven-year-old African American girl growing up in an America that values blue-eyed blondes and the tragedy that results from her longing to be accepted. The story of Pecola Breedlove profiles an eleven-year-old African American girl growing up in an America that values blue-eyed blondes and the tragedy that results from her longing to be accepted. story of Pecola Breedlove profiles an eleven-year-old African American girl growing up in an America that

values blue-eyed blondes and the tragedy that results from her longing to be accepted. more fully enjoy the beauty, wisdom, and intent of the play.

Catch-22 1140

-Joseph Heller

Set in Italy during World War II, this is the story of the incomparable, malingering bombardier, Yossarian, a hero who is furious because thousands of people he has never met are trying to kill him. But 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. Yet if Yossarian makes any attempt to excuse himself from the perilous missions he's assigned, he'll be in violation of Catch-22, a hilariously sinister bureaucratic rule: a man is considered insane if he willingly continues to fly dangerous combat missions, but if he makes a formal request to be removed from duty, he is proven sane and therefore ineligible to be relieved.

Roll Of Thunder, Hear My Cry 920

-Mildred D. Taylor

Facing a year of night riders and burnings, Cassie and her family continue their struggle to keep their land and hold onto what rightfully belongs to them, despite the difficult battles they must continue to endure. Winner of the Newbery Medal.

The Bluest Eye 920

-Toni Morrison

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