

# Big Read Title List

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## **The Adventures of Tom Sawyer (1876) by Mark Twain (1835-1910)**

Humor, trouble, and adventure follow Tom Sawyer everywhere—from the banks of the Mississippi to the brink of death and back in Mark Twain's first full novel.

## **The Age of Innocence (1920) by Edith Wharton (1862-1937)**

In 1870s New York, Newland Archer and his fiancée seem the perfect match. But when the alluring Countess Ellen Olenska returns home from Europe, Newland must make the most important decision of his life.

## **The Beautiful Thing That Heaven Bears by Dinaw Mengestu (1978 - )**

Told in a haunting and powerful first-person narration, this deeply affecting and unforgettable debut novel helps readers discover what it means to lose a family and a country – and what it takes to create a new home.

## **Bless Me Ultima (1972) by Rodolfo Anaya (1937 - )**

One of the most respected works of Chicano literature, Rudolfo Anaya tells the story of Antonio Luna Márez, a young boy who grapples with faith, identity, and death as he comes of age in New Mexico.

## **The Bridge of San Luis Rey (1927) and Our Town (1938) by Thornton Wilder (1897-1975)**

Thornton Wilder is the only writer to have won Pulitzer Prizes for both fiction and drama. His novel *The Bridge of San Luis Rey* and his play *Our Town* ask us to examine how we live our precarious, precious lives, whether in small-town America, eighteenth-century Peru, or anywhere else.

## **The Call of the Wild (1903) by Jack London (1876-1916)**

The hero of *The Call of the Wild* is Buck, a St. Bernard/Scotch Shepherd dog. Abducted from his comfortable home as a pet in Northern California and sold as a sled dog, a St. Bernard/Scotch Shepherd dog named Buck learns to obey through "the law of club and fang."

## **The Death of Ivan Ilyich (1886) by Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910)**

Struck down by disease at forty-five, Ivan Ilyich discovers a horrifying truth: He has not lived a meaningful life.

## **Fahrenheit 451 (1953) by Ray Bradbury (1920 - )**

In a gripping story both disturbing and poetic, Ray Bradbury took the materials of pulp fiction and transformed them into a visionary parable of a society gone awry, in which firemen burn books and the state suppresses learning.

## **A Farewell to Arms (1929) by Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961)**

The tragic love story between an American ambulance driver, Lieutenant Frederic Henry, and his English nurse, Catherine Barkley, takes place in Italy and Switzerland. The final chapter is one of the most famous, and heartbreaking, conclusions in modern literature.

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### **The Grapes of Wrath (1939) by John Steinbeck (1902-1968)**

A Dust Bowl saga of the Joad family's rough passage to California and the rougher treatment they find there, John Steinbeck's novel is tragedy and comedy, story and allegory, editorial and epic.

### **The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter (1940) by Carson McCullers (1917-1967)**

A teenage outcast, a drunken socialist, a black doctor, and a sad café owner confess their secrets to a deaf-mute, in Carson McCullers's dramatic story of poverty and racism in a 1930s Georgia mill town.

### **Housekeeping (1981) by Marilynne Robinson (1943 - )**

When Ruth and her sister Lucille are abandoned in the isolated Idaho town of Fingerbone, their lives become intertwined with the legacy of loss that haunts the Foster family.

### **In the Time of the Butterflies (1994) by Julia Alvarez (1950 - )**

Julia Alvarez's popular novel is a fictional account influenced by the real lives of the Mirabal sisters, who grew up in the Dominican Republic and were involved in the rebellion against dictator Rafael Trujillo from 1930-1961.

### **Into the Beautiful North (2009) by Luis Albert Urrea (1955 - )**

In his third novel, Urrea transcends the "us against them" discourse of immigration and writes with compassion, complexity, and humor about the people and places caught up in the border wars.

### **The Joy Luck Club (1989) by Amy Tan (1952 - )**

In sixteen interwoven stories, Amy Tan's characters—four Chinese immigrant mothers and their American-raised daughters—struggle to connect despite the ghosts and secrets of the past.

### **A Lesson Before Dying (1993) by Ernest J Gaines (1933 - )**

A frustrated schoolteacher in 1940s Louisiana tries to give a condemned man back his dignity before he dies.

### **Love Medicine (1984) by Louise Erdrich (1954 - )**

Through the interwoven lives of generations of Kashpaws and Lamartines in North Dakota, this novel-in-stories about passion, family, and the importance of cultural identity examines the struggle to balance Native American tradition with the modern world.

### **The Maltese Falcon (1930) by Dashiell Hammett (1894 - 1961)**

Detective Sam Spade becomes embroiled with a mysterious client, avenges the death of his partner, and chases a priceless treasure in this classic American private-eye novel.

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## **The Namesake (2003) by Jhumpa Lahiri (1967 - )**

Straddling two generations, two cultures, and with two first names, American-born of Bengali parentage bearing a Russian writer's surname Gogol moves through life with a sense he never quite fits in.

## **Old School (2003) by Tobias Wolff (1945 - )**

At a New England prep school where keeping up appearances is everything, Tobias Wolff's youthful narrator learns the painful difference between truth and fiction.

## **The Shawl (1989) by Cynthia Ozick (1928 - )**

Still traumatized by her past suffering in a Nazi concentration camp during World War II, Rosa struggles to reclaim at least a portion of the life stolen from her while clinging tenaciously to a mother's dreams for what her child might have become.

## **Sun, Stone & Shadows: 20 Great Mexican Short Stories (2008) Jorge Hernandez, editor**

This anthology presents a superb selection of the finest Mexican short stories ever written, and offers a glimpse into a diverse and fascinating culture. Authors include Juan Rulfo, Octavio Paz, Rosario Castellanos, and Carlos Fuentes.

## **The Thief and the Dogs (1961) by Naguib Mahfouz (1911-2006)**

Spanning the wealthy suburbs and crowded slums of Cairo, this thrilling crime story combines stream-of-consciousness technique with the hard-boiled style of detective fiction to create a harrowing account of crime and punishment.

## **To Kill a Mockingbird (1962) by Harper Lee (1926 - )**

For many young people, this funny and humane novel about Scout Finch, her brother, Jem, and their father, Atticus, becomes their first big read, the grown-up story against which all later books will be measured.

## **Washington Square (1880) by Henry James (1843 - 1916)**

The timeless story of a young girl's desire to please both her disapproving father and the man she loves.

## **While the Emperor Was Divine by Julie Otsuka (1962 - )**

In five concise chapters, Otsuka tells the story of a Japanese American family forced to live in an internment camp in Utah during World War II from five points of view.

## **The Wizard of Earthsea (1968) by Ursula LeGuin (1929 - )**

The first book of Ursula K. Le Guin's two Earthsea trilogies is a coming-of-age fantasy adventure about a young boy with magical talents and a hunger for greater knowledge and power.

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### **The Poetry of Emily Dickinson by Emily Dickinson (1830-1886)**

The reclusive poet from Amherst, Massachusetts, wrote nearly 1800 poems, although fewer than a dozen were published in her lifetime. After her death, the enormity of her accomplishments were discovered and celebrated, and she has become known as one of America's foremost poets.

### **The Poetry of Robinson Jeffers by Robinson Jeffers (1887-1962)**

Jeffers was an American poet known for his work about the central California coast. Most of his poetry was written in classic narrative and epic form, but today he is also known for his short verse and is considered an icon of the environmental movement.

### **The Poetry of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-1882)**

The most popular American poet of the nineteenth century, Longfellow helped create the songs and stories that gave a new nation its identity.