

Books You Should Read Before Graduating from High School

19 Varieties of Gazelle: Poems of the Middle East by Naomi Shihab Nye

Another world, another culture -- poems that personalize the conflicts and people, deepening understanding of the impact of September 11th.

1984 by George Orwell

The year is 1984; the scene is London, largest population center of Airstrip One. In a grim city and a terrifying country, where Big Brother is always watching and the Thought Police can practically read your mind, Winston is a man in grave danger for the simple reason that his memory still functions. He knows the Party's official image of the world is a fluid fiction. He knows the Party controls the people by feeding them lies and narrowing their imaginations through a process of bewilderment and brutalization that alienates each individual from his fellows and deprives him of every liberating human pursuit from reasoned inquiry to sexual passion. Drawn into a forbidden love affair, Winston finds the courage to join a secret revolutionary organization called The Brotherhood, dedicated to the destruction of the Party. Together with his beloved Julia, he hazards his life in a deadly match against the powers that be.

90 Minutes in Heaven: A True Story of Life and Death by Don Piper & Cecil Murphy

Baptist minister Piper tells of experiencing heaven for the 90 minutes he was pronounced dead at the scene of a car accident. After miraculously coming back to life and working through a long and painful recovery, friends and family finally convinced him to share his remarkable story.

ACT

Provides an overview of the ACT exam, and features subject reviews for English, mathematics, reading, and science; and provides test-taking strategies, three practice exams, a diagnostic test, and advice on preparing for the essay portion of the exam.

ACT 36: Aiming for the Perfect Score

Contains strategies, subject reviews, and practice tests designed to help students get high scores on the ACT college entrance examination.

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn by Mark Twain

A mischievous youth encounters a runaway slave and together they travel down the Mississippi in search of adventure.

The Adventures of Tom Sawyer by Mark Twain

Follow Tom Sawyer and his friend, Huck Finn, as they witness a murder and a funeral, indulge in strange magic, and organize ingenious escapes from Aunt Polly. Whether at a fire, a revival meeting, a murder or a treasure hunt, Tom fills the air with fun and suspense.

After by Amy Efaw

Devon Davenport is a straight-A student and prominent player on her school's soccer team, but when she is linked to an abandoned baby found in the trash she is accused of attempted murder.

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Alice in Wonderland by Lewis Carroll

The Mad Hatter, the Ugly Duchess, the Mock Turtle, the Queen of Hearts, the Cheshire Cat—characters each more eccentric than the last, and that could only have come from Lewis Carroll, the master of sublime nonsense. In these two brilliant burlesques he created two of the most famous and fantastic novels of all time that not only stirred our imagination but revolutionized literature.

All Quiet on the Western Front by Erich Maria Remarque

Paul Baumer enlisted with his classmates in the German army of World War I. Youthful, enthusiastic, they become soldiers. But despite what they have learned, they break into pieces under the first bombardment in the trenches. And as horrible war plods on year after year, Paul holds fast to a single vow: to fight against the principles of hate that meaninglessly pits young men of the same generation but different uniforms against each other—if only he can come out of the war alive.

Angels and Demons by Dan Brown

World-renowned Harvard symbologist Robert Langdon is summoned to a Swiss research facility to analyze a mysterious symbol seared into the chest of a murder victim, where he discovers evidence of the resurgence of an ancient brotherhood with a vendetta against the Catholic Church.

Animal Farm by George Orwell

A satire in fable form expressed through the animals of Manor Farm.

AP English Language and Composition

A guide to preparing for the Advanced Placement exam in English language and composition, featuring an overview of the test, a diagnostic exam, test-taking strategies, and five practice tests with answers.

Ape House : A Novel by Sara Gruen

Isabel Duncan, a scientist at the Great Ape Language Lab, embarks on an adventure with reporter John Thigpen to rescue a family of bonobos that escaped from her lab and have been cast on a reality television program.

Atlas Shrugged by Ayn Rand

The astounding story of a man who said that he would stop the motor of the world—and did. Tremendous in scope, breathtaking in its suspense, it is a mystery, not about the murder of a man's body, but about the murder—and rebirth—of man's spirit.

Barron's AP Biology

A guide to taking the advanced placement exam in biology that provides one diagnostic and two full-length tests with explained answers, subject and laboratory reviews, and tips on writing essays.

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Barron's AP English Literature and Composition

A guide to preparing for the Advanced Placement exam in English literature and composition, featuring an overview of the test, sample student essays, reviews of poetry, fiction, and drama, and practice and diagnostic tests with explained answers.

Barron's AP Statistics

A preparation guide for the Advanced Placement exam in statistics that provides an overview of key topics, sample questions, test-taking strategies, one diagnostic test, and five full-length practice exams.

Barron's AP World History

A guide to preparing to take the Advanced Placement World History exam that provides two full-length practice tests with explained answers, test-taking strategies, subject reviews, and a suggested study time line

Bastard out of Carolina by Dorothy Allison

Bone confronts illegitimacy, poverty, the troubled marriage of her mother and stepfather, and the stigma of being considered “white trash” as she comes of age in South Carolina.

The Bean Trees by Barbara Kingsolver

Taylor Greer leaves Kentucky and heads west to find a new life. When a baby is abandoned in her car, she learns that responsibilities and independence are not mutually exclusive in this story of family and community.

The Bell Jar: A Novel by Sylvia Plath

Plath was an excellent poet but is known to many for this largely autobiographical novel. Tells the story of a gifted young woman's mental breakdown beginning during a summer internship as a junior editor at a magazine in New York City in the early 1950s. The real Plath committed suicide in 1963 and left behind this scathingly sad, honest and perfectly-written book, which remains one of the best-told tales of a woman's descent into insanity.

Beloved by Toni Morrison

Staring unflinchingly into the abyss of slavery, this spellbinding novel transforms history into a story as powerful as Exodus and as intimate as a lullaby. Sethe, its protagonist, was born a slave and escaped to Ohio, but eighteen years later she is still not free. She has too many memories of Sweet Home, the beautiful farm where so many hideous things happened. And Sethe's new home is haunted by the ghost of her baby, who died nameless and whose tombstone is engraved with a single word: Beloved

Black Like Me by John Howard Griffin

The author, a white man, recounts his experiences when he darkened his skin and traveled through the South as a black man.

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The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind: Creating Currents of Electricity and Hope by William Kamkwamba
The author details how he ignored naysayers and was able to bring electricity and running water to his Malawian village when he built a makeshift windmill out of scrap metal and spare parts.

Brave New World by Aldous Huxley

A satire describing a scientific and industrialized Utopian world.

The Brothers Karamazov by Fyodor Dostoevsky

This brilliant work by one of Russia's foremost novelists teems with greed, passion, depravity, and complex moral issues. Three brothers, involved in the brutal murder of their despicable father, find their lives irrevocably altered as they are driven by intense, uncontrollable emotions of rage and revenge.

Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee by Alexander Dee Brown

Traces the white man's conquest of the Indians of the American West, emphasizing major Indian Wars.

Caramelo by Sandra Cisneros

LaLa learns the stories of her Awful Grandmother and weaves them into a colorful family history. The "caramelo," a striped shawl begun by her Great-Grandmother, symbolizes their traditions.

Catch 22 by Joseph Heller

Set on a tiny Mediterranean island during World War II, this comic novel recounts the amazing adventures of the 256th bombing squadron and its lead bombardier, Captain Yossarian.

The Catcher in the Rye by J. D. Salinger

Holden narrates the story of a couple of days in his sixteen-year-old life, just after he's been expelled from prep school, in a slang that sounds edgy even today and keeps this novel on banned book lists. His constant wry observations about what he encounters, from teachers to phonies (the two of course are not mutually exclusive) capture the essence of the eternal teenage experience of alienation.

Charlie & the Chocolate Factory by Roald Dahl

For the first time in a decade, Willy Wonka, the reclusive and eccentric chocolate maker, is opening his doors to the public--well, five members of the public to be exact. The lucky five who find a Golden Ticket in their Wonka chocolate bars will receive a private tour of the factory, given by Mr. Wonka himself. For young Charlie Bucket, this is a dream come true.

Chinese Cinderella: The True Story of an Unwanted Daughter by Adeline Mah

Wu Mei, also called Adeline, is the Fifth Younger Sister of her family, and the one who bears the blame for all their bad fortune. In her inspirational tale of survival in 1940's China, she triumphs against all odds.

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A Clockwork Orange by Anthony Burgess

Set in a dismal dystopia, it is the first-person account of a juvenile delinquent who undergoes state-sponsored psychological rehabilitation for his aberrant behavior. The novel satirizes extreme political systems that are based on opposing models of the perfectibility or incorrigibility of humanity.

A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court by Mark Twain

The hit on the head that sent protagonist Hank Morgan back through 13 centuries did not affect his natural resourcefulness. Using his knowledge of an upcoming eclipse, Hank escapes a death sentence, and secures an important position at court. Gradually, he introduces 19th century technology so the clever Morgan soon has an easy life. That does not stop him from making disparaging, tongue-in-cheek remarks about the inequalities and imperfections of life in Camelot.

Cracking the SAT

A study guide for the SAT exam, providing test-taking strategies, reviews of test subjects, exercises and drills, and three full-length practice exams. Includes additional lessons and drills online for book-buyers only.

Crash Course for the SAT

A ten-step last-minute study guide for the SAT that covers the essential concepts and test-taking techniques and provides practice drills and vocabulary.

The Crazy Makers: How the Food Industry is Destroying our Brains and Harming our Children by Carol N. Simontacchi.

Why have depression rates soared in the post-WWII era? Why does one in four adults have a mental health crisis in any given year? According to Simontacchi, a clinical nutritionist (*Your Fat Is Not Your Fault*), the cause is a diet that consists of processed food deficient in crucial nutrients. Turning her attention first to the eating patterns of pregnant women, Simontacchi finds a connection between prenatal nutritional deficiencies (in fatty acids and B complex vitamins, among others) and "hidden" defects, which show up not at birth but later, as poor memory and the inability to concentrate.

The DaVinci Code by Dan Brown

A murder in the silent after-hour halls of the Louvre museum reveals a sinister plot to uncover a secret that has been protected by a clandestine society since the days of Christ. The victim is a high-ranking agent of this ancient society who, in the moments before his death, manages to leave gruesome clues at the scene that only his granddaughter, noted cryptographer Sophie Neveu, and Robert Langdon, a famed symbologist, can untangle. The duo becomes both suspects and detectives searching for not only Neveu's grandfather's murderer but also the stunning secret of the ages he was charged to protect.

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Criminals : A Novel by Margot Livesey

A young banker finds a baby abandoned in a bus station men's room while on a trip to visit his troubled sister, not realizing how the child will change his life and the lives of others involved.

Deadline by Chris Crutcher

Given the medical diagnosis of one year to live, high school senior Ben Wolf decides to fulfill his greatest fantasies, ponders his life's purpose and legacy, and converses through dreams with a spiritual guide known as "Hey-Soos."

The Diary of a Young Girl by Anne Frank

The diary of a thirteen-year-old Jewish girl who died in a concentration camp

The Dream: Martin Luther King Jr. and the Speech That Inspired a Nation by Drew D. Hansen

This great humanitarian and leader did indeed have a dream, and it has resonated through the years to expand all of our hopes for a future built on tolerance.

Fahrenheit 451 by Ray Bradbury

Guy Montag is a book-burning fireman undergoing a crisis of faith. His wife spends all day with her television "family," imploring Montag to work harder so that they can afford a fourth TV wall. Their dull, empty life sharply contrasts with that of his next-door neighbor Clarisse, a young girl thrilled by the ideas in books, and more interested in what she can see in the world around her than in the mindless chatter of the tube. When Clarisse disappears mysteriously, Montag is moved to make some changes, and starts hiding books in his home. Eventually, his wife turns him in, and he must answer the call to burn his secret cache of books. After fleeing to avoid arrest, Montag winds up joining an outlaw band of scholars who keep the contents of books in their heads, waiting for the time society will once again need the wisdom of literature.

The Farming of Bones by Edwidge Danticat

A Caribbean holocaust story, when nationalist madness and ethnic hatred turn island neighbors into executioners. Amid the rumors of terror, Annabelle and Sebastien hold on to love, to dignity—and struggle to survive.

Feed by M.T. Anderson

In this society your brain cyber feed provides an endless stream of information, entertainment and advertising. When Violet's feed is disrupted, she's cast adrift and everyone is forced to examine the power of the feed in his/her life.

Fires in the Mirror: Crown Heights and Other Identities by Anna Deveare Smith

A dramatic look at the Crown Heights riots and race in the United States through the voices of 23 fascinating and unique characters, based on interviews with real people.

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First They Killed My Father: A Daughter of Cambodia Remembers by Loung Ung

The perils of life under the brutal Pol Pot regime change a young woman's life forever, as she and her family finds themselves fugitives of war, without even their names to remind them of what they lost.

Forgotten Fire by Adam Bagdasarian

Based on a true story from the Armenian Holocaust, this is an eloquent, touching and heart-wrenching portrait of pain and triumph during a time of tragedy.

Frankenstein by Mary Shelley

In a series of letters, Robert Walton, the captain of a ship bound for the North Pole, recounts to his sister back in England the progress of his dangerous mission. Successful early on, the mission is soon interrupted by seas full of impassable ice. Trapped, Walton encounters Victor Frankenstein, who has been traveling by dog-drawn sledge across the ice and is weakened by the cold. Walton takes him aboard ship, helps nurse him back to health, and hears the fantastic tale of the monster that Frankenstein created.

Give Me a Break: How I Exposed Hucksters, Cheats, and Scam Artists and Became the Scourge of the Liberal Media by John Stossel

John Stossel looks back at thirty years as a consumer reporter, and discusses how his image changed after he switched his focus from scrutinizing business practices and products to exposing the sometimes foolish, wasteful, and unscrupulous actions of government and public interest groups.

The Grapes of Wrath by John Steinbeck

The story of a farm family's Depression-era journey from the Dustbowl of Oklahoma to the California migrant labor camps in search of a better life.

A Gracious Plenty by Sheri Reynolds

What happens to us when we die? Finch Nobles, a cemetery keeper with horrible burn scars, talks to the dead, and helps them examine what keeps them tied to the earth.

Great Expectations by Charles Dickens

An unknown person has provided money for the education of a poor English boy in eighteenth-century England.

The Great Gatsby by F. Scott Fitzgerald

The moral depravity of the upper class in the 1920s is personified. Jay Gatsby spends his entire life trying to win the heart of a woman he knew years ago, only to meet his demise. If you didn't read this in high school, get on with it already.

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Gulliver's Travels by Jonathan Swift

Shipwrecked castaway Lemuel Gulliver's encounters with the petty, diminutive Lilliputians, the crude giants of Brobdingnag, the abstracted scientists of Laputa, the philosophical Houyhnhnms, and the brutish Yahoos give him new, bitter insights into human behavior.

Half Brother by Kenneth Oppel

In 1973, when a renowned Canadian behavioral psychologist pursues his latest research project--an experiment to determine whether chimpanzees can acquire advanced language skills--he brings home a baby chimp named Zan and asks his thirteen-year-old son to treat Zan like a little brother.

Have a Little Faith by Mitch Albom.

Having been asked to write a eulogy for an elderly rabbi, begins a relationship with the man in order to get to know him better, and, in the process, also becomes involved with the plight of a local pastor whose church is falling down around him, leading Mitch to better understand the importance of faith.

The Help by Kathryn Stockett

Four peerless actors render an array of sharply defined black and white characters in the nascent years of the civil rights movement. They each handle a variety of Southern accents with aplomb and draw out the daily humiliation and pain the maids are subject to, as well as their abiding affection for their white charges. The actors handle the narration and dialogue so well that no character is ever stereotyped, the humor is always delightful, and the listener is led through the multilayered stories of maids and mistresses. The novel is a superb intertwining of personal and political history in Jackson, Miss., in the early 1960s, but this reading gives it a deeper and fuller power.

High Fidelity by Nick Hornby

Record store owner Rob Fleming has just been dumped by his girlfriend, Laura. A perpetual list-maker, Rob sets out to talk to his all-time top-five most painful break-ups to see where it all went wrong. You may have seen the movie; the book is better.

The Hobbit by J. R. R. Tolkein

The adventure of Bilbo Baggins, a hobbit, in a land inhabited by dwarfs, elves, goblins, dragons, and humans. He sets off to recover a stolen treasure from a dragon hidden in the Lonely Mountain.

How to Read Literature Like a Professor: A Lively and Entertaining Guide to Reading Between the Lines by Thomas Foster

Every author leaves clues to lead readers deeper into the inner meanings of their writings. Learn how to follow literary breadcrumbs in any story.

I am J by

J, who feels that he is a boy who was mistakenly born a girl, hides who he is from his family and the world, but after he loses his best, J decides to stop hiding, whatever the cost.

Books You Should Read Before Graduating from High School

I Am the Darker Brother: An Anthology of Modern Poems by African Americans

Poems on aspects of race or racial problems by well-known African-American poets, including Countee Cullen, Richard Wright, and Maya Angelou.

I Was Jane Austen's Best Friend by Cora Harrison

In a series of journal entries, Jenny Cooper describes her stay with cousin Jane Austen in the 1790s, and her entrance into Jane's world of beautiful dresses, dances, secrets, gossip, and romance.

In the Time of Butterflies by Julia Alvarez

The four Mirabel sisters were called the Mariposas, or butterflies. Dede, the only survivor, tells the story of courage that helps liberate the Dominican Republic from the dictator Trujillo.

Jane Eyre by Charlotte Bronte

Having grown up an orphan in the home of her cruel aunt and at a harsh charity school, Jane Eyre becomes an independent and spirited survivor—qualities that serve her well as governess at Thornfield Hall. But when she finds love with her sardonic employer, Rochester, the discovery of his terrible secret forces her to make a choice. Should she stay with him whatever the consequences or follow her convictions, even if it means leaving her beloved?

Look Me in the Eye: My Life with Asperger's by John Elder Robison.

John Robison recounts his struggles to fit in and communicate with others as he grew up, describing why he had so many problems relating to others and why he often turned to machines for comfort, rather than people, and explains how his life was changed when he was diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome at age forty.

John Adams by David McCullough

He was a man of his times who transcended his times, and one of the least understood of the Founding Fathers.

Jumping off Swings by Johanna Knowles

Tells, from four points of view, the ramifications of a pregnancy resulting from a "one-time thing" between Ellie, who feels loved when boys touch her, and Josh, an eager virgin with a troubled home life.

To Kill A Mockingbird by Harper Lee

This is a heartwarming, semi-autobiographical coming of age novel that tackles the issues of racism and stereotyping through the eyes of the protagonist, a young girl named Scout whose father, Atticus Finch, is the defending attorney in a controversial court case in the 1940's.

The Kite Runner by Khaled Hosseini

Follows the story of Amir, the privileged son of a wealthy businessman in Kabul, and Hassan, the son of Amir's father's servant. As children in the relatively stable Afghanistan of the early 1970s, the boys are inseparable. They spend idyllic days running kites and telling stories of mystical places

Books You Should Read Before Graduating from High School

and powerful warriors until an unspeakable event changes the nature of their relationship forever, and eventually cements their bond in ways neither boy could have ever predicted.

Life is Funny by E.R. Frank

Growing up in New York can be agonizing, humorous, and always a challenge for the teens who tell their stories.

Lindbergh by Scott A. Berg

Daring, mysterious, and one of the 20th century's first superstars—who was the man behind the myth and how did his historic flight across the Atlantic remake the world?

Little Women by Louisa May Alcott

Chronicles the joys and sorrows of the four March sisters as they grow into young women in nineteenth-century New England.

Lord of the Flies by William Golding

A group of boys stranded on an island after a plane crash have to survive on their wits. In spite of the efforts of a few leaders to form an organized society, the boys revert to savagery, complete with primitive rites and ritual murder.

Lord of the Rings by J.R.R. Tolkien

Frodo the hobbit and a band of warriors from the different kingdoms set out to destroy the Ring of Power before the evil Sauron grasps control.

Lolita by Vladimir Nabokov

A well-to-do middle aged man falls for a 12-year-old girl. Scandal! But though the topic is controversial, "Lolita" remains a classic novel about morality.

A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier by Ishmael Beah

This absorbing account by a young man who, as a boy of 12, gets swept up in Sierra Leone's civil war goes beyond even the best journalistic efforts in revealing the life and mind of a child abducted into the horrors of warfare.

Lucky by Alice Sebold

"You save yourself or you remain unsaved." With these words, Sebold recounts the brutal rape that she was "lucky" to survive. Tragedy and hope combine as she makes her way through a survivor's maze of emotions.

Master the SAT

Presents study tools for the SAT, including subject reviews, essay tips, personalized study plans, hundreds of drills and exercises, a full-length diagnostic test, and six full-length practice tests with explained answers.

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Med School Confidential: A Complete Guide to the Medical School Experience, by Students, for Students by Robert H. Miller.

A group of just-graduated medical students serve as mentors in a guide to surviving medical school, addressing issues unique to six components of the medical school process, from assessing readiness to serving an internship

The Metamorphosis by Kafka

The Metamorphosis, first published in 1915, is the most famous of Kafka's works, along with The Trial and The Castle. The story begins when a traveling salesman, Gregor Samsa, wakes up to find himself transformed into a giant insect. Curiously, his condition does not arouse surprise in his family, who merely despise it as an impending burden.

Midnight's Children by Salman Rushdie

With a mix of poetry and prose, narrator Saleem tells a story of India and its citizens when it gains independence. Saleem is literally falling apart. He tells readers, "I mean quite simply that I have begun to crack all over like an old jug

Moby Dick by Herman Melville

Captain Ahab's determination to find and kill the greatest white whale becomes an obsession driving him to disaster.

Monster by Walter Dean Myers

Steve Harmon is accused of being an accomplice to murder. He creates a screenplay of his wrenching experiences at the crime scene, in jail, and on trial.

Native Son by Richard A. Wright

It is regarded as a classic, but "Native Son" is more than just a good read.

Old Man and the Sea by Ernest Hemingway

An old fisherman battles the sea and sharks to bring home the giant marlin he caught.

Oliver Twist by Charles Dickens

The story of a boy from an English workhouse who runs away only to fall into the hands of a young band of thieves who train him to be a pickpocket. Oliver is tossed between the forces of good and evil, dragged down by the underclass he is born into as he struggles toward the rays of hope he spots among the gentlemen and ladies of regular London.

On the Road by Jack Kerouac

Sal Paradise, one of Kerouac's alter egos, is encouraged by Dean Moriarty to take off and experience life on the road.

Books You Should Read Before Graduating from High School

One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest by Ken Kesey

A compelling story set in an Oregon asylum, this novel depicts how people cope with being institutionalized. The narrator, a schizophrenic American Indian called "Chief" Bromden, describes the antics of a cheerfully rebellious man named Randle Patrick McMurphy, who has been sent to this mental hospital from a workfarm prison.

Persepolis by Marjane Satrapi

Growing up in Iran wasn't all that bad, or all that different, except that Marjane wanted to be a prophet when she grew up. Dramatic black-and-white illustrations tell her story.

Postcards from No Man's Land by Aidan Chambers

Seventeen is an age of self-discovery, and Jacob has gone to Amsterdam to explore his life. His quest strangely parallels discoveries about his grandfather's life there during World War II.

Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen

Austen paints the picture of a 1800s English society battle of the sexes.

Push by Jacqueline Woodson

Precious Jones is a survivor. She had her father's baby at 12 and now, at 16, she is pregnant by him again. But an alternative school, a dedicated teacher, and classmates who understand help her fight back.

Robinson Crusoe by Daniel Defoe

A journal of the year of the plague.

Room : A Novel by Emily Donohue

Five-year-old Jack has spent his life living in an eleven-by-eleven foot space his mother calls Room and while Jack uses his imagination to create wondrous fantasies to entertain himself, his mother dreads the day her son begins to question why they must remain in Room and tries to find a way to escape.

A River Runs Through It by Norman Maclean

A book about fly fishing might not appeal to everyone, but that activity proves to be a metaphor for family, religion and life in this autobiographical novella.

Roots by Alex Haley

A black American traces his family's origins back to the African who was brought to America as a slave in 1767.

A Rose that Grew from Concrete by Tupac Shakur

Written when Tupac was 19 and not yet a star, these poems bring emotion, power and passion to the experience of becoming yourself.

Books You Should Read Before Graduating from High School

World War Z: An Oral History of the Zombie War by Max Brooks

Chronicles the fictitious "zombie wars" that nearly decimated the human population, with first-hand accounts from people who have had a brush with the undead and facts and figures documenting how many undead currently roam the planet.

Siddhartha by Herman Hesse

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.

Sing You Home by Jodi Picoult

Zoe Baxter finds unexpected love with a younger woman after she and her husband divorce, and when the couple wants to use the embryos Zoe and her ex-husband had frozen when they were trying to get pregnant, it sparks a legal battle over the rights of gay couples and whether an embryo is considered a life or a piece of property.

Slaughterhouse Five by Vonnegut

Kurt Vonnegut's absurdist classic *Slaughterhouse-Five* introduces us to Billy Pilgrim, a man who becomes unstuck in time after he is abducted by aliens from the planet Tralfamadore. In a plot-scrambling display of virtuosity, we follow Pilgrim simultaneously through all phases of his life, concentrating on his (and Vonnegut's) shattering experience as an American prisoner of war who witnesses the firebombing of Dresden.

Smoke and Ashes: The Story of the Holocaust by Barbara Rogasky

Some of history's darkest days are examined in this new look at the horror and humanity of the Holocaust and its aftermath.

Speak by Laurie Halse Anderson

Calling the police to a party is a tough choice, but what made Melinda call is the devastating secret that keeps her locked in silence.

Tale of Two Cities by Charles Dickens

Relates the adventures of a young Englishman who gives his life during the French Revolution to save the husband of the woman he loves.

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A Thousand Splendid Suns by Khaled Hosseini

Both born in Afghanistan a generation apart and with very different ideas about love and family, Mariam and Laila are brought together by war, by loss and by fate. As they endure the ever escalating dangers around them -- in their home as well as in the streets of Kabul -- they form a bond that will ultimately alter the course of their lives and the lives of the next generation. With heart-wrenching power and suspense, Hosseini shows how a woman's love for her family can move her to shocking and heroic acts of self-sacrifice, and that in the end it is love, or even the memory of love, that is often the key to survival.

To the Lighthouse by Virginia Woolf

To the Lighthouse is divided into three sections: "The Window," "Time Passes," and "The Lighthouse." Each section is fragmented into stream-of-consciousness contributions from various narrators. "The Window" opens just before the start of World War I. Mr. Ramsay and Mrs. Ramsay bring their eight children to their summer home in the Hebrides (a group of islands west of Scotland).

Treasure Island by Robert Louis Stevenson

The epic tale of a young man's quest to capture a hidden treasure on the open seas.

The Unbearable Lightness of Being: A Novel by Milan Kundera

Set first in Czechoslovakia, then in Switzerland, Kundera's story tells the sometimes laborious story of a womanizing Czech surgeon forced to flee the Russian invasion and take on menial roles, giving his passion for the flesh a slightly different perspective, as he is no longer a doctor but just a window-washer. His relationship with this current female-of-choice, the interesting and puzzling Tereza, is at the center of the novel.

Understanding September 11, Answering Questions about the Attacks on America by Mitch Frank

These events are burned into images we can never forget—but after the pain of September 11 we ask "why" and "what" do we need to learn about the historical, religious and cultural issues that sparked the attacks.

Water for Elephants by Sara Gruen

Jacob Jankowski says: "I am ninety. Or ninety-three. One or the other." At the beginning of *Water for Elephants*, he is living out his days in a nursing home, hating every second of it. *Water for Elephants* is the story of Jacob's life with this circus. The animals are mangy, underfed or fed rotten food, and abused. Jacob, once it becomes known that he has veterinary skills, is put in charge of the "menagerie" and all its ills. August, the animal trainer, is a certified paranoid schizophrenic whose occasional flights into madness and brutality often have Jacob as their object. Jacob is the only person in the book who has a handle on a moral compass and as his reward he spends most of the novel beaten, broken, concussed, bleeding, swollen and hungover.

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Wise Blood by Flannery O'Connor

A man trying to avoid God forms the Church Without Christ.

Witch Hunt: Mysteries of the Salem Witch Trials by Marc Aronson

Revisit a time of nightmare, fear, hysteria--beyond *The Crucible*, sift through the myths, half-truths and misinformation to make up your own mind about what really happened in Salem Village and why.

World War Z: An Oral History of the Zombie War by Max Brooks

Chronicles the fictitious "zombie wars" that nearly decimated the human population, with first-hand accounts from people who have had a brush with the undead and facts and figures documenting how many undead currently roam the planet.

The Yearling by Marjorie Kinnans Rawlings

The story of the Baxter family and their struggle to maintain their small farm and twelve-year-old Jody's relationship with an orphaned fawn.

You Killed Wesley Payne by Sean Beaudoin

Seventeen-year-old Dalton Rev arrives at Salt River High where he must outwit crooked cops and killer cliques in order to solve the mystery of the body found wrapped in duct tape and hanging from the goal posts in the football field.

**List is a compilation of lists provided by the American Association of School Libraries, the American Library Association, School Library Journal, and Ms. Phillips.

Books You Should Read Before Graduating from High School
