Half of a Yellow Sun

The celebrated author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie illuminates a seminal moment in modern African history: Biafra’s impassioned struggle to establish an independent republic in southeastern Nigeria during the late 1960s. We experience this tumultuous decade alongside five unforgettable characters: Ugwu, a thirteen-year-old houseboy who works for Odenigbo, a university professor full of revolutionary zeal; Olanna, the professor’s beautiful young mistress who has abandoned her life in Lagos for a dusty town and her lover’s charm; and Richard, a shy young Englishman infatuated with Olanna’s willful twin sister Kainene. *Half of a Yellow Sun* is a tremendously evocative novel of the promise, hope, and disappointment of the Biafran war.
Uglies

Tally’s adventures begin in Uglies, where she learns the truth about what life as a Pretty really means. She rebels against the surgery that will make her a Pretty, but ultimately succumbs. In Pretties, Tally has forgotten all about her Ugly life, and when she’s reminded, she has a hard time listening. And what little’s left of the old Tally is further compromised in Specials, because Tally has been transformed into a fierce fighting machine. But when she’s offered a chance to forever improve civilization, will she be able to overcome her brainwashing? The answer is evident years later in Extras, after the Pretty regime has ended. Boundless human creativity, new technologies, and old dangers have been unleashed upon the world. But fame and popularity can be just as dangerous as extreme beauty.
Speak

Melinda is a friendless outcast at Merryweather High. She busted an end-of-summer party by calling the cops, and now nobody will talk to her, let alone listen to her. As time passes, she becomes increasingly isolated and practically stops talking altogether. It is through her work on an art project that she is finally able to face what really happened at that terrible party: she was raped by an upperclassman, a guy who still attends Merryweather and who is still a threat to her. It will take another violent encounter with him to make Melinda fight back. This time she refuses to be silent.
Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close

An inspired innocent, Oskar is alternately endearing, exasperating, and hilarious as he careens from Central Park to Coney Island to Harlem on his search. Along the way he is always dreaming up inventions to keep those he loves safe from harm. What about a birdseed shirt to let you fly away? What if you could actually hear everyone's heartbeat? His goal is hopeful, but the past speaks a loud warning in stories of those who've lost loved ones before. As Oskar roams New York, he encounters a motley assortment of humanity who are all survivors in their own way. He befriends a 103-year-old war reporter, a tour guide who never leaves the Empire State Building, and lovers enraptured or scorned. Ultimately, Oskar ends his journey where it began, at his father's grave. But now he is accompanied by the silent stranger who has been renting the spare room of his grandmother’s apartment. They are there to dig up his father’s empty coffin.
The Handmaid’s Tale

It is the world of the near future, and Offred is a Handmaid in the home of the Commander and his wife. She is allowed out once a day to the food market, she is not permitted to read, and she is hoping the Commander makes her pregnant, because she is only valued if her ovaries are viable. Offred can remember the years before, when she was an independent woman, had a job of her own, a husband and child. But all of that is gone now...everything has changed.
Set in South Carolina in 1964, The Secret Life of Bees tells the story of Lily Owens, whose life has been shaped around the blurred memory of the afternoon her mother was killed. When Lily’s fierce-hearted black "stand-in mother," Rosaleen, insults three of the deepest racists in town, Lily decides to spring them both free. They escape to Tiburon, South Carolina—a town that holds the secret to her mother’s past. Taken in by an eccentric trio of black beekeeping sisters, Lily is introduced to their mesmerizing world of bees and honey, and the Black Madonna. This is a remarkable novel about divine female power, a story that women will share and pass on to their daughters for years to come.
Gene was a lonely, introverted intellectual. Phineas was a handsome, taunting, daredevil athlete. What happened between them at school one summer during the early years of World War II is the subject of *A Separate Peace*. A bestseller for over twenty years, it is a starkly moving parable of the dark forces that brood over the tortured world of adolescence.
On a May afternoon in 1943, an American military plane crashed into the Pacific Ocean and disappeared, leaving only a spray of debris and a slick of oil, gasoline, and blood. Then, on the ocean surface, a face appeared. It was that of a young lieutenant, the plane’s bombardier, who was struggling to a life raft and pulling himself aboard. So began one of the most extraordinary sagas of the Second World War.
On the Beach

After a nuclear World War III has destroyed most of the globe, the few remaining survivors in southern Australia await the radioactive cloud that is heading their way and bringing certain death to everyone in its path. Among them is an American submarine captain struggling to resist the knowledge that his wife and children in the United States must be dead. Then a faint Morse code signal is picked up, transmitting from somewhere near Seattle, and Captain Towers must lead his submarine crew on a bleak tour of the ruined world in a desperate search for signs of life. Both terrifying and intensely moving, On the Beach is a remarkably convincing portrait of how ordinary people might face the most unimaginable nightmare.
The Water is Wide

The island is nearly deserted, haunting, beautiful. Across a slip of ocean lies South Carolina. But for the handful of families on Yamacraw Island, America is a world away. For years the people here lived proudly from the sea, but now its waters are not safe. Waste from industry threatens their very existence unless, somehow, they can learn a new way. But they will learn nothing without someone to teach them, and their school has no teacher—until one man gives a year of his life to the island and its people.
Copper Sun

When pale strangers enter fifteen-year-old Amari's village, her entire tribe welcomes them; for in her remote part of Africa, visitors are always a cause for celebration. But these strangers are not here to celebrate. They are here to capture the strongest, healthiest villagers and to murder the rest. They are slave traders. And in the time it takes a gun to fire, Amari's life as she's known it is destroyed, along with her family and village.
Just Mercy

Bryan Stevenson was a young lawyer when he founded the Equal Justice Initiative, a legal practice dedicated to defending those most desperate and in need: the poor, the wrongly condemned, and women and children trapped in the farthest reaches of our criminal justice system. One of his first cases was that of Walter McMillian, a young man who was sentenced to die for a notorious murder he insisted he didn’t commit. The case drew Bryan into a tangle of conspiracy, political machination, and legal brinksmanship—and transformed his understanding of mercy and justice forever.
Required reading by all Hand Middle School students taking English I in 2017-18.

The Book Thief

It is 1939. Nazi Germany. The country is holding its breath. Death has never been busier, and will become busier still.

Liesel Meminger is a foster girl living outside of Munich, who scratches out a meager existence for herself by stealing when she encounters something she can’t resist - books. With the help of her accordion-playing foster father, she learns to read and shares her stolen books with her neighbors during bombing raids as well as with the Jewish man hidden in her basement.

In superbly crafted writing that burns with intensity, award-winning author Markus Zusak, author of I Am the Messenger, has given us one of the most enduring stories of our time.
Laughing at My Nightmare

With acerbic wit and a hilarious voice, Shane Burcaw's Laughing at My Nightmare describes the challenges he faces as a twenty-one-year-old with spinal muscular atrophy. From awkward handshakes to having a girlfriend and everything in between, Shane handles his situation with humor and a "you-only-live-once" perspective on life. While he does talk about everyday issues that are relatable to teens, he also offers an eye-opening perspective on what it is like to have a life threatening disease.
Animal Farm

A farm is taken over by its overworked, mistreated animals. With flaming idealism and stirring slogans, they set out to create a paradise of progress, justice, and equality. Thus the stage is set for one of the most telling satiric fables ever penned—a razor-edged fairy tale for grown-ups that records the evolution from revolution against tyranny to a totalitarianism just as terrible.
A Gathering of Old Men

Set on a Louisiana sugarcane plantation in the 1970s, A Gathering of Old Men is a powerful depiction of racial tensions arising over the death of a Cajun farmer at the hands of a black man.
A Long Way Gone

This is how wars are fought now: by children, hopped-up on drugs and wielding AK-47s. Children have become soldiers of choice. In the more than fifty conflicts going on worldwide, it is estimated that there are some 300,000 child soldiers. Ishmael Beah used to be one of them.

In *A Long Way Gone*, Beah, now twenty-five years old, tells a riveting story: how at the age of twelve, he fled attacking rebels and wandered a land rendered unrecognizable by violence. By thirteen, he’d been picked up by the government army, and Beah, at heart a gentle boy, found that he was capable of truly terrible acts.
All the Light We Cannot See

Marie-Laure lives in Paris near the Museum of Natural History, where her father works. When she is twelve, the Nazis occupy Paris, and father and daughter flee to the walled citadel of Saint-Malo, where Marie-Laure’s reclusive great uncle lives in a tall house by the sea. With them they carry what might be the museum’s most valuable and dangerous jewel.
Dracula

Count Dracula has inspired countless movies, books, and plays. But few, if any, have been fully faithful to Bram Stoker’s original, best-selling novel of mystery and horror, love and death, sin and redemption. *Dracula* chronicles the vampire’s journey from Transylvania to the nighttime streets of London. There, he searches for the blood of strong men and beautiful women while his enemies plot to rid the world of his frightful power.
Fahrenheit 451

Guy Montag is a fireman. In his world, where television rules and literature is on the brink of extinction, firemen start fires rather than put them out. His job is to destroy the most illegal of commodities, the printed book, along with the houses in which they are hidden.
Outcasts United

This young people's edition is a complex and inspirational story about the Fugees, a youth soccer team made up of diverse refugees from around the world, and their formidable female coach, Luma Mufleh. Clarkston, Georgia, was a typical southern town until it became a refugee resettlement center. The author explores how the community changed with the influx of refugees and how the dedication of Lumah Mufleh and the entire Fugees soccer team inspired an entire community.
The Glass Castle

Jeannette Walls grew up with parents whose ideals and stubborn nonconformity were both their curse and their salvation. Rex and Rose Mary Walls had four children. In the beginning, they lived like nomads, moving among Southwest desert towns, camping in the mountains. Rex was a charismatic, brilliant man who, when sober, captured his children’s imagination, teaching them physics, geology, and above all, how to embrace life fearlessly. Rose Mary, who painted and wrote and couldn’t stand the responsibility of providing for her family, called herself an “excitement addict.” Cooking a meal that would be consumed in fifteen minutes had no appeal when she could make a painting that might last forever.
The Iliad

The epic song of Ilion (an old name for Troy), The Iliad recreates a few dramatic weeks near the end of the fabled Trojan War, ending with the funeral of Hector, defender of the doomed city. Through its majestic verses stride the fabled heroes Priam, Hector, Paris, and Aeneas for Troy; Achilles, Ajax, Menelaus, Agamemnon, Patroclus, and Odysseus for the Greeks; and the beautiful Helen, over whom the longstanding war has been waged. Never far from the center of the story are the quarreling gods: Zeus, Poseidon, Apollo, Hera, Athena, and Aphrodite.
Travels with Charley

With Charley, his French poodle, Steinbeck drives the interstates and the country roads, dines with truckers, encounters bears at Yellowstone and old friends in San Francisco. Along the way he reflects on the American character, racial hostility, the particular form of American loneliness he finds almost everywhere, and the unexpected kindness of strangers.
During the summer of 1793, Mattie Cook lives above the family coffee shop with her widowed mother and grandfather. Mattie spends her days avoiding chores and making plans to turn the family business into the finest Philadelphia has ever seen. But then the fever breaks out.

Disease sweeps the streets, destroying everything in its path and turning Mattie's world upside down. At her feverish mother's insistence, Mattie flees the city with her grandfather. But she soon discovers that the sickness is everywhere, and Mattie must learn quickly how to survive in a city turned frantic with disease.
The Glory Field

This is the story of one family. A family whose history saw its first ancestor captured, shackled, and brought to this country from Africa. A family who can still see remnants of the shackles that held some of its members captive -- even today. It is a story of pride, determination, struggle, and love. And of the piece of the land that holds them together throughout it all.