

Here is an opinionated and non-inclusive list of English novels or literature worth reading. I emphasize recent (post-1850) literature. **Start with a subject that interests you. I would buy these books used at Amazon.** The books are roughly presented in order of which ones should be read first, **but choose by subject matter first (what interests you)** rather than by my judgment.

1. *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* by J.K Rowling. Modern classic; enough said.

2. *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho. This parable, maybe even several parables in one of a shepherd who goes in search of fortune and his personal legend, should appeal to most people older than fifteen. I think it should be especially appealing to teenagers.

3. *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* by Sherman Alexie. GoodReads says, "Bestselling author Sherman Alexie tells the story of Junior, a budding cartoonist growing up on the Spokane Indian Reservation. Determined to take his future into his own hands, Junior leaves his troubled school on the rez to attend an all-white farm town high school where the only other Indian is the school mascot.

Heartbreaking, funny, and beautifully written, *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, which is based on the author's own experiences, coupled with poignant drawings by Ellen Forney that reflect the character's art, chronicles the contemporary adolescence of one Native American boy as he attempts to break away from the life he was destined to live."

I think this book will appeal to most minorities.

4. *Bluford Series*. According to their website, "The Bluford Series is a collection of twenty-one young adult novels that focus on the lives of a group of high school students and their families."

"Set in contemporary urban America [and mostly featuring black Americans], each novel addresses complex topics relevant to the lives of today's students: family, friendship, trust, isolation, violence, and peer pressure, to name a few."

"In addition, the books feature male and female characters and include elements from many literary genres, such as mystery, suspense, romance, and a touch of the supernatural. In other words, the Bluford Series offers something for almost every reader."

"Finally, the books are short (less than 200 pages) and written in a highly readable style [written at a low level]. Reviewed in a national reading journal and praised by students and teachers nationwide, the Bluford Series appeals to readers of all ages."

This is young adult fiction for inner city youth, or black youth.

5. *The Fault in Our Stars* by John Green. The following quote is from Wikipedia. “The story is narrated by Hazel Grace Lancaster, a 16-year-old girl with thyroid cancer that has affected her lungs. Hazel is forced by her parents to attend a support group where she subsequently meets and falls in love with 17-year-old Augustus Waters, an ex-basketball player and amputee.” It is a tear jerker and is more for girls than boys.

6. *Catcher in the Rye* by J.D. Salinger. This classic about adolescence still holds its own because it captures the isolation of the teenage years, and the end result that some teenagers never succumb to society or grow up. “The novel's protagonist Holden Caulfield has become an icon for teenage rebellion.” (Wikipedia). The novel is written from the point of view of HC.

7. *The Outsiders* (1967) by S.E. Hinton. The following description paraphrases Wikipedia. Hinton was 15 when **she** started writing the novel but **did most of the work when she was 16** and a junior in high school. Hinton was 18 when the book was published. **The book details the conflict between two rival gangs divided by their socioeconomic status: the working-class "greasers" and the upper-class "Socs" (pronounced / 'soʊfɪz/—short for Socials).** **The story is told in first-person perspective by teenaged protagonist Ponyboy Curtis.** The story in the book takes place in Tulsa, Oklahoma, in 1965, but this is never explicitly stated in the book. In America, often kids are “outsiders”; they do not feel part of society or the group.

8. *A Wrinkle in Time* by Madeleine L'Engle. The following description paraphrases Wikipedia. The main characters, Meg Murry, Charles Wallace Murry, and Calvin O'Keefe, **embark on a journey through space and time, from universe to universe, as they endeavor to save the Murrys' father and the world.** The novel offers a glimpse into the battles between light and darkness, and goodness and evil, as the young characters mature into adolescents on their journey. The novel wrestles with questions of spirituality and purpose, as the characters are often thrown into conflicts of love, divinity, and goodness.” It has received numerous awards.

Collections textbook.

9. *Hoops* (1983) by Walter Dean Myers
More for the guys. This novel is about African-Americans who live in American cities and play basketball. It is poor quality fiction. It is written at a low level so it might be appropriate for an English as a Second Language Learner. Hopes, dreams, and life lessons is what HOOPS is about. We all have some sort of dream or game plan for our future, as well does 17 year old Lonnie (the main character of this book). But do we all know what it's like to live in a bad neighborhood? To deal with the pressures of drugs, alcohol, and the threat of violence lurking in the air? These are all things Lonnie deals with in life, all the while just wanting to play his game-basketball.

10. *Holes* (1998) by Louis Sachar
Many people say this is a modern classic. Stanley Yelnats is under a curse. A curse that began with his no-good-dirty-rotten-pig-stealing-great-great-grandfather and has since

followed generations of Yelnatses. Now Stanley has been unjustly sent to a boys' detention center, Camp Green Lake, where the boys build character by spending all day, every day digging holes exactly five feet wide and five feet deep. There is no lake at Camp Green Lake. But there are an awful lot of holes.

It doesn't take long for Stanley to realize there's more than character improvement going on at Camp Green Lake. The boys are digging holes because the warden is looking for something. But what could be buried under a dried-up lake? Stanley tries to dig up the truth in this inventive and darkly humorous tale of crime and punishment—and redemption.

11. *Hunger Games* (2010) by Suzanne Collins

In the ruins of a place once known as North America lies the nation of Panem, a shining Capitol surrounded by twelve outlying districts. Long ago the districts waged war on the Capitol and were defeated. As part of the surrender terms, each district agreed to send one boy and one girl to appear in an annual televised event called, "The Hunger Games," a fight to the death on live TV. Sixteen-year-old Katniss Everdeen, who lives alone with her mother and younger sister, regards it as a death sentence when she is forced to represent her district in the Games. The terrain, rules, and level of audience participation may change but one thing is constant: kill or be killed.

12. *The Lightning Thief* (Percy Jackson and the Olympians) (2006) by Rick Riordan [Mr. Gamble has not read this book.]

Percy Jackson is a good kid, but he can't seem to focus on his schoolwork or control his temper. And lately, being away at boarding school is only getting worse—Percy could have sworn his pre-algebra teacher turned into a monster and tried to kill him. When Percy's mom finds out, she knows it's time that he knew the truth about where he came from, and that he go to the one place he'll be safe. She sends Percy to Camp Half Blood, a summer camp for demigods (on Long Island), where he learns that the father he never knew is Poseidon, God of the Sea. Soon a mystery unfolds and together with his friends—one a satyr and the other the demigod daughter of Athena—Percy sets out on a quest across the United States to reach the gates of the Underworld (located in a recording studio in Hollywood) and prevent a catastrophic war between the gods.

13. *All Our Pretty Songs* (2013) by Sarah McCarry [Mr. Gamble has not read this book.]

An incredibly lyrical narrative, *All Our Pretty Songs* explores the history of grunge, but it's also about friendships, magical interference, and what happens when your life starts falling apart. It's one of my most highly recommended books for a reason. It slams the myth that literary fiction and YA are mutually exclusive in the head and then knocks it around the ring a few times to boot.

14. *The Maze Runner* (2009) by James Dashner

Thomas wakes up in an elevator, remembering nothing but his own name. He emerges into a world of about 60 teen boys who have learned to survive in a completely enclosed environment, subsisting on their own agriculture and supplies from below. A new boy arrives every 30 days. The original group has been in "the glade" for two years, trying to

find a way to escape through a maze that surrounds their living space. Then a comatose girl arrives with a strange note, and their world begins to change.

15. *Lord of the Flies* (1954) by William Golding

Mr. Golding won the Nobel Prize for this book about a group of British boys stuck on an uninhabited island who try to govern themselves but wind up acting like savages. Mr. Golding portrayed the dark side of human nature, and made a statement about individual welfare versus the common good, and civilization. The main characters were Ralph, Piggy, and Jack Merridew. Published in 1954, *Lord of the Flies* was Golding's first novel. Although it was not a great success at the time—it soon went on to become a best-seller

16. *Divergent* (2011) by Veronica Roth

In a world divided by factions based on virtues, Tris learns she's Divergent and won't fit in. When she discovers a plot to destroy Divergents, Tris and the mysterious Four must find out what makes Divergents dangerous before it's too late.