



Marilyn Grant, Principal

Judson Hamilton, AP

Susan Monahan, AP

Josephine Aulicino, AP

Middle School Classics for 7th & 8th Grade

Adams, Richard. *Watership Down*

Chronicles the adventures of a group of rabbits searching for a safe place to establish a new warren where they can live in peace.

Alcott, Louisa May. *Little Women*

Little Women is the heartwarming story of the March family that has thrilled generations of readers. It is the story of four sisters--Jo, Meg, Amy and Beth--and of the courage, humor and ingenuity they display to survive poverty and the absence of their father during the Civil War.

Alexie, Sherman. *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven*

Contains a collection of twenty-four short stories by the National Book Award-winning author that chronicle the daily life on a Native American Indian Reservation in Spokane, Washington.

Anaya, Rudolfo. *Bless Me, Ultima*

Ultima, a curandera, one who cures with herbs and magic, comes to Antonio Marez's New Mexico family when he is six years old, and she helps him discover himself in the magical secrets of the pagan past. Besides winning the Premio Quinto Sol national Chicano literary award, this novel of a young boy in New Mexico in the 1940s has sold more than 300,000 copies in paperback since its 1973 debut.

Angelou, Maya. *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*

In this first of five volumes of autobiography, poet Maya Angelou recounts a youth filled with disappointment, frustration, tragedy, and finally hard-won independence. Marvelously told, with Angelou's "gift for language and observation," this "remarkable autobiography by an equally remarkable black woman from Arkansas captures, indelibly, a world of which most Americans are shamefully ignorant."

Babbit, Natalie. *Tuck Everlasting*

The Tuck family is confronted with an agonizing situation when they discover that a ten-year-old girl and a malicious stranger now share their secret about a spring whose water prevents one from ever growing any older.

Bradbury, Ray. *The Illustrated Man*

This is one of the classics from the golden age of sci-fi--sixteen tales of horror and terror in the tattoos on an "illustrated" man's body. Even though most were written in the 1940s and 1950s, these 18 classic stories will be just as chillingly effective 50 years from now.

Bradbury, Ray. *The Martian Chronicles*

In this science fiction classic, the first Earth people to attempt the colonization of Mars try to build their new world in the image of the civilization they left behind.

Bradford, Richard. *Red Sky at Morning*

The classic coming of age story set during WWII about the enduring spirit of youth and values in life that count. "No brief review can do justice to Mr. Bradford's book."

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Bronte, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre*

A headstrong heroine, a dashing gentleman, a dark and brooding house with a terrible secret in the attic. A classic novel written in the very best Gothic tradition.

Burnett, Frances H. *The Secret Garden*

Ten-year-old Mary comes to live in a lonely house on the Yorkshire moors and discovers an invalid cousin and the mysteries of a locked garden in this classic story of loss, friendship and redemption.

Card, Orson Scott. *Ender's Game*

Young Ender Wiggin may prove to be the military genius Earth needs to fight a desperate battle against a deadly alien race that will determine the future of the human race.

Carroll, Jim. *The Basketball Diaries*

A diary of the author's early teen years in the mid-1960s, telling how he progressed from sniffing glue to shooting heroin while playing basketball for Trinity High School in Manhattan.

Carroll, Lewis. *Alice in Wonderland*

Lewis Carroll's classic story about a little girl who falls down a rabbit hole and discovers a world of nonsensical and amusing characters.

Cather, Willa. *My Antonia*

A successful lawyer remembers his boyhood in Nebraska and his friendship with an immigrant Bohemian girl named Antonia.

Christie, Agatha. *Murder on the Orient Express*

Detective Hercule Poirot has a wealth of suspects to choose from when a wealthy American is stabbed to death en route to Paris on the Orient Express.

Cisneros, Sandra. *The House on Mango Street*

A young girl living in a Hispanic neighborhood in Chicago ponders the advantages and disadvantages of her environment and evaluates her relationships with family and friends.

Cormier, Robert. *The Chocolate War*

Does Jerry Renault dare to disturb the universe? You wouldn't think that his refusal to sell chocolates during his school's fundraiser would create such a stir, but it does; it's as if the whole school comes apart at the seams. To some, Jerry is a hero, but to others, he becomes a scapegoat--a target for their pent-up hatred. And Jerry? He's just trying to stand up for what he believes, but perhaps there is no way for him to escape becoming a pawn in this game of control...

Courteney, Bryce. *The Power of One*

In 1939, as Hitler casts his enormous, cruel shadow across the world, the seeds of apartheid take root in South Africa. There, a boy called Peekay is born. His childhood is marked by humiliation and abandonment, yet he vows to survive and conceives heroic dreams--which are nothing compared to what life actually has in store for him. He embarks on an epic journey through a land of tribal superstition and modern prejudice where he will learn the power of words, the power to transform lives, and the power of one.

Dahl, Roald. *Skin and Other Stories*

"These bizarre, fascinating, and sophisticated short stories, selected from Dahl's body of adult writings, are...full of irony and unexpected twists, they smack of the master's touch--every word carefully chosen, characters fully fleshed out in only a few pages, the sense of place immediate."

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Dickens, Charles. *Oliver Twist*

One of Dickens's most popular novels, this is the story of an orphan raised in a workhouse, who runs away to London only to be captured by thieves from whom he eventually escapes. This novel is a morality tale and a detective story rolled into one and presents some of Dickens's darkest characters: Bill Sikes, the murderer; Fagin, the master thief; and the leering Artful Dodger.

Doyle, Sir Arthur Conan. *The Hound of the Baskervilles*

What's the truth behind the legend of the hound of the Baskervilles? Is it really a devil-beast that's haunting the lonely moors? Enter Sherlock Holmes to find the answer, in this, the only full-length novel ever written by the creator of one of the most popular and enduring detective series ever written.

Erdrich, Louise. *Love Medicine*

Presents the story of the Kashpaws and the Lamartines, two extended families who live on and around a Chippewa reservation in North Dakota and of Lipsha Morrissey, a young man who attempts to bring his wandering grandfather back to his long-suffering grandmother with a love medicine made from goosehearts.

Flagg, Fannie. *Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Café*

A folksy, funny and endearing story of life in a small town in Alabama in the Depression and in the 1980s. It is the tale of a fierce friendship between two women from the 1920's and 30's, Idgie and Ruth, and how their story inspires a modern woman who has almost given up on life. Among revelations big and small, Fannie Flagg mixes direct and empowering confrontations with racism, sexism, and ageism with the colorful and endearing language of the depression-era South and the cafe's recipes for grits, collard greens, and, of course, fried green tomatoes.

Frank, Anne. *The Diary of a Young Girl*

A beloved classic since its initial publication in 1947, this vivid, insightful journal is a fitting memorial to the gifted Jewish teenager who died at Bergen-Belsen, Germany, in 1945.

Gallman, Kiki. *I Dreamed of Africa*

At the age of 25, Kuki Gallmann moved to Kenya with her future husband, where they established a vast ranch. But Africa's beauty doesn't come without a price, and when tragedy struck, Kuki found herself pregnant and alone with her young son and 90,000 acres of Africa to oversee.

Garden, Nancy. *Annie on My Mind*

The modern classic of two girls who dared to love each other despite social taboos. Looking back on her high school experiences, the now mature Liza narrates a story of friendship, betrayal and loss between she and Annie, her first love.

Gibbons, Kaye. *Ellen Foster*

Having suffered abuse and misfortune for much of her life, a young child searches for a better life and finally gets a break in the home of a loving woman with several foster children.

Gipson, Fred. *Old Yelle*

Set in the rough wilderness of early frontier Texas, "Old Yeller" is a timeless coming-of-age tale. Travis is left to care for the farm when his father leaves on a cattle drive. He copes with many hardships with the help of his big, yellow dog, Old Yeller.

Greene, Bette. *Summer of My German Soldier*

When her small hometown in Arkansas becomes the site of a camp housing German prisoners during World War II, 12-year-old Patty Bergen learns what it means to open her heart. Although she's Jewish, she begins to see a prison escapee, Anton, not as a Nazi--but as a lonely, frightened young man with feelings not unlike her own, who understands and appreciates her in a way her parents never will. And Patty is willing to risk losing family, friends--even her freedom--for what has quickly become the most important part of her life.

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Guevara, Ernesto. *The Motorcycle Diaries*

Latin American revolutionary Che Guevara chronicles his 1952 adventure on motorbike throughout South America with friend Alberto Granado, during which he came face-to-face with the realities of poverty throughout the continent.

Hansberry, Lorraine. *A Raisin in the Sun*

A three-act play concerned with the tensions in a middle-class African American family living on Chicago's Southside in the 1950s.

Hemingway, Ernest. *The Old Man and the Sea*

An old fisherman battles the sea and sharks to bring home the giant marlin he caught. Deceptively short and deep as the ocean.

Hesse, Karen. *Witness*

This contemporary classic is made up of a series of poems that express the views of various people in a small Vermont town, including a young black girl and a young Jewish girl, during the early 1920s when the Ku Klux Klan is trying to infiltrate the town.

Hinton, S.E. *Tex*

The love between two teen-age brothers helps to alleviate the harshness of their usually parentless life as they struggle to grow up. Jen Hubert-Swan's favorite of S.E. Hinton's titles.

Houston, Jeanne Wakatsuki. *Farewell to Manzanar*

Biography of Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston relating her experiences of living at the Manzanar internment camp during World War II and how it has influenced her life.

Huxley, Aldous. *Brave New World*.

Originally published in 1932, Huxley's terrifying vision of a controlled and emotionless future "Utopian" society is truly startling in its prediction of modern scientific and cultural phenomena, including test-tube babies and rampant drug abuse.

Jackson, Shirley. *The Haunting of Hill House*

Five strangers meet at Hill House--a notorious estate in New England to take part in a paranormal science experiment. Hill House is a foreboding structure of towers, buttresses, Gothic spires, gargoyles, strange angles, and rooms within rooms--a place "without kindness, never meant to be lived in...." Shirley Jackson's book has unnerved readers since its original publication in 1959. A tale of subtle, psychological terror, it has earned its place as one of the significant haunted house stories of our time.

Kesey, Ken. *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*

A rebel named Randle Patrick McMurphy is committed to a mental ward and challenges the authority of its dictatorial head nurse.

Keyes, Daniel. *Flowers for Algernon*

In this classic story that inspired the hit movie *Charlie*, Charlie Gordon, a mentally challenged adult who cleans floors and toilets, becomes a genius through an experimental operation. But when his new intelligence begins to wane, Charlie must confront the loss of all he has learned.

Kincaid, Jamaica. *Annie John*

A fictional account of a young girl's coming of age in Antigua, from a doted upon childhood to an adolescence fraught with events and alliances leading her away from mutual complacent acceptance.

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Knowles, John. *A Separate Peace*

The volatile world of male adolescence provides the backdrop for John Knowles' engrossing tale of love, hate, war, and peace. Sharing a room at Devon, an exclusive New England prep school, in the summer prior to World War II, Gene and Phineas form a complex bond of friendship that draws out both the best and worst characteristics of each boy and leads ultimately to violence, a confession, and the betrayal of trust.

Le Carre, John. *Tinker, Tailor, Solider, Spy*

In this familiar contemporary classic, George Smiley, an agent at the very highest level of British Intelligence, enters the twilight world of espionage and his own past when he is assigned to discover which of his four closest colleagues is a double agent.

L'Engle, Madeleine. *A Wrinkle in Time*

Three extraterrestrial beings take Meg and her friends to another world.

Lewis, C.S. *The Chronicles of Narnia*

Enjoy any of the books in the classic series about a group of siblings who enter a magical land through the back of a wardrobe.

London, Jack. *White Fang*

In the desolate, frozen wilds of northwest Canada, a wolf cub soon finds himself the sole survivor of his litter. Son of Kiche--half-wolf, half-dog--and the aging wolf One Eye, he is thrust into a savage world where each day becomes a fight to stay alive. This adventure set in the wild Yukon about a wild dog who learns to live with humans is not to be missed.

Markandaya, Kamala. *Nectar in a Sieve*

A traditional peasant woman in early twentieth-century India struggles with poverty and the changes arriving in her agrarian village, particularly the tanning factory that takes her son's life.

Marshall, James Vance. *Walkabout*

Mary and Peter are stranded in the wilderness of the Australian outback. They meet an Aboriginal youth on a walking journey and he helps them to undergo a journey of their own in order to survive.

McBride, James. *The Color of Water*

An African-American male tells of his mother, a white woman, who refused to admit her true identity. A now classic memoir.

McCourt, Frank. *Angela's Ashes*

The author chronicles his impoverished childhood in Limerick, Ireland in the 1930s and 1940s, describing his father's alcoholism and talent for storytelling; the challenges and tragedies his mother faced, including the loss of three children; and his early experiences in the Catholic church, and balances painful memories with humor.

McCullers, Carson. *A Member of the Wedding*

Frankie Addams, a motherless twelve-year-old raised by her father and the family's African-American cook, struggles with conflicting feelings about her brother's upcoming wedding.

McKissack, Patricia. *The Dark Thirty*

The Newbery award-winning collection of ghost stories with African-American themes, designed to be told during the Dark Thirty--the half hour before sunset.

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Mathabane, Mark. *Kaffir Boy*

The author recalls his personal experiences growing up under South African Apartheid during the 1970s, the poverty and oppression of living in the ghettos of Alexandra, and of those who helped him escape from it.

Montgomery, L.M. *Anne of Green Gables*

Anne, an eleven-year-old orphan, is sent by mistake to live with a lonely, middle-aged brother and sister on a Prince Edward Island farm and proceeds to make an indelible impression on everyone around her.

Paton, Alan. *Cry the Beloved Country*

Stephen Kumalo, a Zulu pastor, and his son, Absalom, experience the joys and tragedies of a South African community struggling with the injustice of apartheid

Potok, Chaim. *The Chosen*

Recounts the story of Reuven Malter and Danny Saunders--one an orthodox Jew, the other the son of a Hasidic rabbi--and the course of their friendship as they grow up in Brooklyn.

Potok, Chaim. *My Name is Asher Lev*

The original, deeply moving story of Asher Lev, a devoutly religious boy with an overwhelming need to draw, to paint, to render the world he knows and the pain he feels, on canvas for everyone to see. It is this need that he must learn to master without shaming his people or relinquishing any of his deeply felt Judaism.

Rawls, Wilson. *Where the Red Fern Grows*

Billy and his precious coonhound pups romp relentlessly through the Ozarks, trying to "tree" the elusive raccoon. In time, the inseparable trio wins the coveted gold cup in the annual coon-hunt contest, capture the wily ghost coon, and bravely fight with a mountain lion. But tragedy is waiting right around the corner...

Read, Piers Paul. *Alive*

Discusses the now classic ordeal of the survivors of an airplane crash in 1972 in the Andes wilderness.

Remarque, Erich. *All Quiet on the Western Front*

Depicts the experiences of a group of young German soldiers fighting and suffering during the last days of World War I.

Ryan, Pam Munoz. *Esperanza Rising*

Esperanza and her mother are forced to leave their life of wealth and privilege in Mexico to go work in the labor camps of Southern California, where they must adapt to the harsh circumstances facing Mexican farm workers on the eve of the Great Depression.

Saint-Exupery, Antoine de. *The Little Prince*

Translation of *Le Petit Prince*. An aviator whose plane is forced down in the Sahara Desert encounters a little prince from a small planet who relates his adventures in seeking the secret of what is important in life.

Sewell, Anna. *Black Beauty*

A horse in nineteenth-century England recounts his experiences with both good and bad masters, an important title as the animal rights movement came to prominence.

Smith, Dodie. *I Capture the Castle*

A reprint of the 1948 novel recounting the story of Cassandra Mortmain, a young woman living on the edge of poverty in a crumbling castle with her somewhat eccentric family, whose prospects begin to improve when new neighbors arrive from America. Reportedly J.K. Rowling's favorite book.

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Smith, Betty. *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*

Francie Nolan, avid reader, penny-candy connoisseur, and adroit observer of human nature, has much to ponder in colorful, turn-of-the-century Brooklyn. Betty Smith's poignant, honest novel created a big stir when it was first published over 50 years ago. Her frank writing about life's squalor was alarming to some of the more genteel society, but the book's humor and pathos ensured its place in the realm of classics.

Steinbeck, John. *Of Mice and Men*

The plot of this well-known classic centers on George Milton and Lennie Small, itinerant ranch hands who dream of one day owning a small farm. George acts as a father figure to Lennie, who is large and simple minded, calming him and helping to rein in his immense physical strength. When a terrible accident involving Lennie takes place, George has an equally terrible decision to make concerning his friend.

Steinbeck, John. *The Pearl*

Terrible events follow the discovery of a magnificent pearl by a poor Mexican fisherman in this classic tale of destiny and fate.

Steinbeck, John. *The Red Pony*

Ten-year-old Jody learns about life and death through her ownership of a beautiful red pony.

Stevenson, Robert Lewis. *Treasure Island*

Climb aboard for the swashbuckling adventure of a lifetime. *Treasure Island* has enthralled (and caused slight seasickness) for decades. With its dastardly plot and motley crew of rogues and villains (including the famous Long John Silver) it seems unlikely that anyone who ever reads this exciting classic will ever forget it (just ask Phil)!

Stoker, Bram. *Dracula*

This is the classic, hypnotic story of the undead creatures of the night--and the human lives they touch—as they relentlessly seek to satiate an accursed craving for their only sustenance: human blood. A Gothic novel of immense proportions, *Dracula* has only strengthened its grip on the public over the course of the last century.

Tan, Amy. *The Joy Luck Club*

In 1949 four Chinese women began meeting in San Francisco to play mah jong. They called their gathering the Joy Luck Club. Forty years later they look back and remember.

Taylor, Mildred D. *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*

An African-American family living in Mississippi during the Depression of the 1930s is faced with prejudice and discrimination which its children do not understand. A powerful contemporary classic.

Thomas, Piri. *Down These Mean Streets*

As a dark-skinned Puerto Rican, born in 1928, Piri Thomas faced with painful immediacy the absurd contradictions of America's racial attitudes (among people of all colors) in a time of wrenching social change. Three decades have not dimmed the luster of his jazzy prose, rich in Hispanic rhythms and beat-generation slang.

Tolkien, J.R.R. *The Hobbit*

Bilbo Baggins loves his cozy hobbit hole and hopes to never have to go farther than his front door. No such luck, however; soon 13 fortune-seeking dwarves arrive on his doorstep in search of a burglar, and before he can even grab his hat or an umbrella, Bilbo Baggins is swept out his door and into a dangerous adventure. Prequel to *The Lord of the Rings*.

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Twain, Mark. *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

Mark Twain's classic novel tells the story of a teenaged misfit who finds himself floating on a raft down the Mississippi River with an escaping slave, Jim. In the course of their perilous journey, Huck and Jim meet adventure, danger, and a cast of characters who are sometimes menacing and often hilarious.

Van der Post, Laurens. *A Story Like the Wind*

Young Francois Joubert, living in the remote region bordering the Kalahari Desert, thrills to the wonder of the still-primitive land until his idyllic world is shattered by the political violence of contemporary Africa.

Wilson, August. *The Piano Lesson*

Winner of the 1990 Pulitzer Prize for drama. Dramatizes the struggles of an African-American family as they consider selling a prized possession, an ornate upright piano, in order to buy the tract of land upon which they were once enslaved.

Wells, H.G. *The Time Machine*

The classic story of time travel, good, and evil that is as thrilling today as any modern science fiction novel.

Wolff, Tobias. *This Boy's Life*

Wolff's account of his boyhood and the process of growing up includes paper routes, whiskey, scouting, fistfights, friendship, betrayal, and America in the fifties.

Wright, Richard. *Black Boy*

This classic of American autobiography is a subtly crafted narrative of Richard Wright's journey from innocence to experience in the Jim Crow South. An enduring story of one young man's coming of age during a particular time and place, *Black Boy* remains a seminal text in our history about what it means to be a man, black, and Southern in America.

Wright, Richard. *Native Son*

Widely acclaimed as one of the finest books ever written on race and class divisions in America, this powerful novel reflects the forces of poverty, injustice, and hopelessness that continue to shape our society. The plot charts the decline of Bigger Thomas, a young African-American imprisoned for two murders--the accidental smothering of his white employer's daughter and the deliberate killing of his girlfriend to silence her. In his cell Thomas confronts his growing sense of injustice and concludes that violence is the only alternative to submission to white society.

Yolen, Jane. *The Devil's Arithmetic*

Hannah resents the traditions of her Jewish heritage until time travel places her in the middle of a small Jewish village in Nazi-occupied Poland. A thought-provoking contemporary classic.

(These annotations are an amalgamation of the Library of Congress's Cataloging in Publication notes, and the passionate scribblings of several Middle School faculty members.)

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Classic Literature Reading List for Middle School Students

By: LuAnn Schindler

Many middle school students enjoy the connection with a young adult novel, but classic literature never goes out of style. Several humanities organizations have established a classic literature reading list that emphasizes the importance of reading timeless books. This abbreviated list introduces new characters and alien worlds to the middle school set. Several of these books are commonly taught in middle school English classes, so adding them to a summer reading list can give your child an advantage when they come up during the school year.

To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee
Treasure Island by Robert Louis Stevenson
Lord of the Flies by William Golding
Fahrenheit 451 by Ray Bradbury
The Diary of a Young Girl by Anne Frank
Robinson Crusoe by Daniel Defoe
1984 by George Orwell
Little Women (Little Women, #1) by Louisa May Alcott
The Catcher in the Rye by J.D. Salinger
Dracula by Bram Stoker
The Count of Monte Cristo by Alexandre Dumas
Animal Farm by George Orwell
The Swiss Family Robinson: The Graphic Novel by Richard Blandford
Frankenstein by Mary Shelley
To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee

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