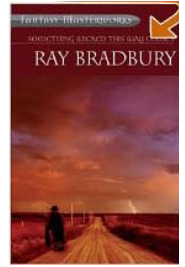


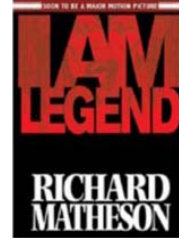
Something Wicked This Way Comes- Ray Bradbury

Something Wicked This Way Comes is the memorable story of two boys, James Nightshade and William Holloway, and the evil that grips their small Midwestern town with the arrival of a "dark carnival" one Autumn midnight. How these two innocents, both age 13, save the souls of the town makes for compelling reading on timeless themes. What would *you* do if your secret wishes could be granted by the mysterious ringmaster Mr. Dark? Bradbury excels in revealing the dark side that exists in us all, teaching us ultimately to celebrate the shadows rather than fear them.



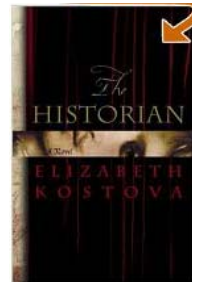
I am Legend – Richard Matheson

One of the most influential vampire novels of the 20th century, *I Am Legend* regularly appears on the "10 Best" lists of numerous critical studies of the horror genre. A terrible plague has decimated the world, and those who were unfortunate enough to survive have been transformed into blood-thirsty creatures of the night. Except, that is, for Robert Neville. He alone appears to be immune to this disease, but the grim irony is that now he is the outsider. He is the legendary monster who must be destroyed because he is different from everyone else.



The Historian – Elizabeth Kostova

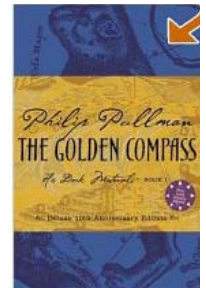
The story opens in Amsterdam in 1972, when a teenage girl discovers a medieval book and a cache of yellowed letters in her diplomat father's library. The pages of the book are empty except for a woodcut of a dragon. The letters are addressed to: "My dear and unfortunate successor." When the girl confronts her father, he reluctantly confesses an unsettling story: his involvement, twenty years earlier, in a search for his graduate school mentor, who disappeared from his office only moments after confiding to Paul his certainty that Dracula--Vlad the Impaler, an inventively cruel ruler of Wallachia in the mid-15th century--was still alive. The story turns out to concern our narrator directly because Paul's collaborator in the search was a fellow student named Helen Rossi (the unacknowledged daughter of his mentor) and our narrator's long-dead mother, about whom she knows almost nothing. And then her father, leaving just a note, disappears also.



As well as numerous settings, both in and out of the East Bloc, Kostova has three basic story lines to keep straight--one from 1930, when Professor Bartolomew Rossi begins his dangerous research into Dracula, one from 1950, when Professor Rossi's student Paul takes up the scent, and the main narrative from 1972. The criss-crossing story lines mirror the political advances, retreats, triumphs, and losses that shaped Dracula's beleaguered homeland--sometimes with the Byzantines on top, sometimes

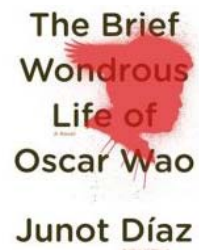
The Golden Compass – Phillip Pullman

The protagonist of this complex fantasy is young Lyra Belacqua, a precocious orphan growing up within the precincts of Oxford University. But it quickly becomes clear that Lyra's Oxford is not precisely like our own--nor is her world. For one thing, people there each have a personal *dæmon*, the manifestation of their soul in animal form. For another, hers is a universe in which science, theology, and magic are closely allied. Not that Lyra spends much time worrying about it; what she likes best is "clambering over the College roofs with Roger the kitchen boy who was her particular friend, to spit plum stones on the heads of passing Scholars or to hoot like owls outside a window where a tutorial was going on, or racing through the narrow streets, or stealing apples from the market, or waging war." But Lyra's carefree existence changes forever when she and her *dæmon*, Pantalaimon, first prevent an assassination attempt against her uncle, the powerful Lord Asriel, and then overhear a secret discussion about a mysterious entity known as Dust. Soon she and Pan are swept up in a dangerous game involving disappearing children, a beautiful woman with a golden monkey *dæmon*, a trip to the far north, and a set of allies ranging from "gyptians" to witches to an armor-clad polar bear.



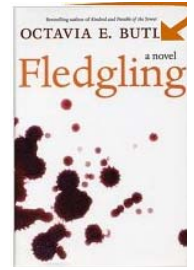
The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao - Junot Diaz

Things have never been easy for Oscar, a sweet but disastrously overweight, lovesick Dominican ghetto nerd. From his home in New Jersey, where he lives with his old-world mother and rebellious sister, Oscar dreams of becoming the Dominican J. R. R. Tolkien and, most of all, of finding love. But he may never get what he wants, thanks to the Fukø--the curse that has haunted the Oscar's family for generations, dooming them to prison, torture, tragic accidents, and, above all, ill-starred love. Oscar, still waiting for his first kiss, is just its most recent victim. D'az immerses us in the tumultuous life of Oscar and the history of the family at large, rendering with genuine warmth and dazzling energy, humor, and insight the Dominican-American experience, and, ultimately, the endless human capacity to persevere in the face of heartbreak and loss.



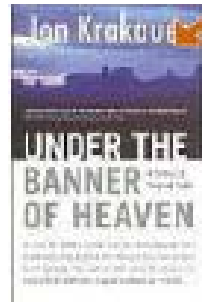
Fledgling by Octavia E. Butler

The much-lauded Butler creates vampires in her 12th novel (her first in seven years) that have about as much to do with Bram Stoker's *Dracula* as HBO's *Deadwood* does with *High Noon*. They need human blood to survive, but they don't kill unless they have to, and (given several hundred years) they'll eventually die peacefully of old age. They are Ina, and they've coexisted with humans for millennia, imparting robust health and narcotic bliss with every bite to their devoted human blood donors, aka "symbionts." Shori is a 53-year-old Ina (a juvenile) who wakes up in a cave, amnesiac and seriously wounded. As is later revealed, her family and their symbionts were murdered because they genetically engineered a generation of part-Ina, part-human children. Shori was their most successful experiment: she can stay conscious during daylight hours, and her black skin helps protect her from the sun. The lone survivor, Shori must rely on a few friendly (and tasty) people to help her warn other Ina families and rediscover herself.



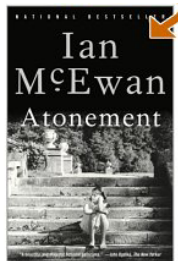
Under the Banner of Heaven - Jon Krakauer

In 1984, Ron and Dan Lafferty murdered the wife and infant daughter of their younger brother Allen. The crimes were noteworthy not merely for their brutality but for the brothers' claim that they were acting on direct orders from God. In *Under the Banner of Heaven*, Jon Krakauer tells the story of the killers and their crime but also explores the shadowy world of Mormon fundamentalism from which the two emerged. The Mormon Church was founded, in part, on the idea that true believers could speak directly with God. But while the mainstream church attempted to be more palatable to the general public by rejecting the controversial tenet of polygamy, fundamentalist splinter groups saw this as apostasy and took to the hills to live what they believed to be a righteous life. When their beliefs are challenged or their patriarchal, cult-like order defied, these still-active groups, according to Krakauer, are capable of fighting back with tremendous violence. While Krakauer's research into the history of the church is admirably extensive, the real power of the book comes from present-day information, notably jailhouse interviews with Dan Lafferty. Far from being the brooding maniac one might expect, Lafferty is chillingly coherent, still insisting that his motive was merely to obey God's command. Krakauer's accounts of the actual murders are graphic and disturbing, but such detail makes the brothers' claim of divine instruction all the more horrifying. In an age where Westerners have trouble comprehending what drives Islamic fundamentalists to kill, Jon Krakauer advises us to look within America's own borders.



Atonement - Ian McEwan

We meet 13-year-old Briony Tallis in the summer of 1935, as she attempts to stage a production of her new drama "The Trials of Arabella" to welcome home her older, idolized brother Leon. But she soon discovers that her cousins, the glamorous Lola and the twin boys Jackson and Pierrot, aren't up to the task, and directorial ambitions are abandoned as more interesting prospects of preoccupation come onto the scene. The charlady's son, Robbie Turner, appears to be forcing Briony's sister Cecilia to strip in the fountain and sends her obscene letters; Leon has brought home a dim chocolate magnate keen for a war to promote his new "Army Ammo" chocolate bar; and upstairs, Briony's migraine-stricken mother Emily keeps tabs on the house from her bed. Soon, secrets emerge that change the lives of everyone present....

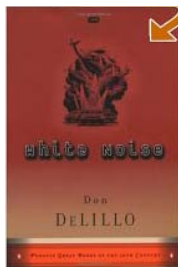


White Noise - Don DeLillo

Something is amiss in a small college town in Middle America. Something subliminal, something omnipresent, something hard to put your finger on. For example, teachers and students at the grade school are falling mysteriously ill:

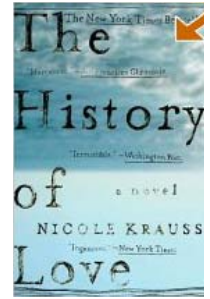
Investigators said it could be the ventilating system, the paint or varnish, the foam insulation, the electrical insulation, the cafeteria food, the rays emitted by microcomputers, the asbestos fireproofing, the adhesive on shipping containers, the fumes from the chlorinated pool, or perhaps something deeper, finer-grained, more closely woven into the fabric of things.

J.A.K. Gladney, world-renowned as the living center, the absolute font, of Hitler Studies in North America in the mid-1980s, describes the malaise affecting his town in a superbly ironic and detached manner. But even he fails to mask his disquiet. There is menace in the air, and ultimately it is made manifest: a poisonous cloud--an "airborne toxic event"--unleashed by an industrial accident floats over the town, requiring evacuation. In the aftermath, as the residents adjust to new and blazingly brilliant sunsets, Gladney and his family must confront their own poses, night terrors, self-deceptions, and secrets.



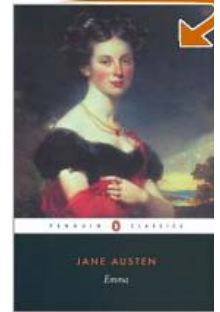
History of Love - Nicole Krauss

Nicole Krauss's *The History of Love* is a hauntingly beautiful novel about two characters whose lives are woven together in such complex ways that even after the last page is turned, the reader is left to wonder what really happened. In the hands of a less gifted writer, unraveling this tangled web could easily give way to complete chaos. However, under Krauss's watchful eye, these twists and turns only strengthen the impact of this enchanting book. *The History of Love* spans a period of over 60 years and takes readers from Nazi-occupied Eastern Europe to present day Brighton Beach. At the center of each main character's psyche is the issue of loneliness, and the need to fill a void left empty by lost love. Leo Gursky is a retired locksmith who immigrates to New York after escaping SS officers in his native Poland, only to spend the last stage of his life terrified that no one will notice when he dies. ("I try to make a point of being seen. Sometimes when I'm out, I'll buy a juice even though I'm not thirsty.") Fourteen-year-old Alma Singer vacillates between wanting to memorialize her dead father and finding a way to lift her mother's veil of depression. At the same time, she's trying to save her brother Bird, who is convinced he may be the Messiah, from becoming a 10-year-old social pariah. As the connection between Leo and Alma is slowly unmasked, the desperation, along with the potential for salvation, of this unique pair is also revealed.



Emma - Jane Austen

Of all Jane Austen's heroines, Emma Woodhouse is the most flawed, the most infuriating, and, in the end, the most endearing. *Pride and Prejudice's* Lizzie Bennet has more wit and sparkle; Catherine Morland in *Northanger Abbey* more imagination; and *Sense and Sensibility's* Elinor Dashwood certainly more sense--but Emma is lovable precisely because she is so imperfect. Austen only completed six novels in her lifetime, of which five feature young women whose chances for making a good marriage depend greatly on financial issues, and whose prospects if they fail are rather grim. *Emma* is the exception: "Emma Woodhouse, handsome, clever, and rich, with a comfortable home and happy disposition seemed to unite some of the best blessings of existence; and had lived nearly twenty-one years in the world with very little to distress or vex her." One may be tempted to wonder what Austen could possibly find to say about so fortunate a character. The answer is, quite a lot. For Emma, raised to think well of herself, has *such* a high opinion of her own worth that it blinds her to the opinions of others. The story revolves around a comedy of errors: Emma befriends Harriet Smith, a young woman of unknown parentage, and attempts to remake her in her own image. Ignoring the gaping difference in their respective fortunes and stations in life, Emma convinces herself and her friend that Harriet should look as high as Emma herself might for a husband--and she zeroes in on an ambitious vicar as the perfect match. At the same time, she reads too much into a flirtation with Frank Churchill, the newly arrived son of family friends, and thoughtlessly starts a rumor about poor but beautiful Jane Fairfax, the beloved niece of two genteelly impoverished elderly ladies in the village. As Emma's fantastically misguided schemes threaten to surge out of control, the voice of reason is provided by Mr. Knightly, the Woodhouse's longtime friend and neighbor.



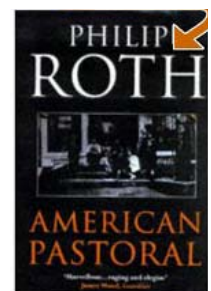
How to be Good – Nick Hornby

Katie Carr is certainly trying to be. That's why she became a GP. That's why she cares about Third World debt and homelessness, and struggles to raise her children with a conscience. It's also why she puts up with her husband David, the self-styled Angriest Man in Holloway. But one fateful day, she finds herself in a Leeds parking lot, having just slept with another man. What Katie doesn't yet realize is that her fall from grace is just the first step on a spiritual journey more torturous than the interstate at rush hour. Because, prompted by his wife's actions, David is about to stop being angry. He's about to become good--not politically correct, organic-food-eating good, but good in the fashion of the Gospels. And that's no easier in modern-day Holloway than it was in ancient Israel.



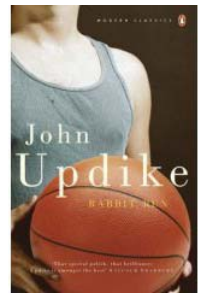
American Pastoral - Phillip Roth

Philip Roth's 22nd book takes a life-long view of the American experience in this thoughtful investigation of the century's most divisive and explosive of decades, the '60s. Returning again to the voice of his literary alter ego Nathan Zuckerman, Roth is at the top of his form. His prose is carefully controlled yet always fresh and intellectually subtle as he reconstructs the halcyon days, circa World War II, of Seymour "the Swede" Levov, a high school sports hero and all-around Great Guy who wants nothing more than to live in tranquillity. But as the Swede grows older and America crazier, history sweeps his family inexorably into its grip: His own daughter, Merry, commits an unpardonable act of "protest" against the Vietnam war that ultimately severs the Swede from any hope of happiness, family, or spiritual coherence.



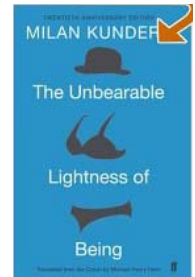
Rabbit, Run - John Updike

To millions of Americans, Rabbit Angstrom is like a member of the family. They have followed him through RABBIT RUN, RABBIT REDUX and RABBIT IS RICH. We meet him for the first time in this novel, when he is 22, and a salesman in the local department store. Married to the second best sweetheart of his high school years, he is the father of a preschool son and husband to an alcoholic wife. The unrelieved squalor and tragedy of their lives remind us that there are such people, and that salvation, after all, is a personal undertaking.



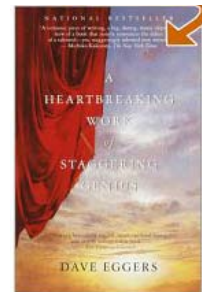
The Unbearable Lightness of Being - Milan Kundera

"The Unbearable Lightness of Being" is primarily the tale of a Prague physician, Tomas, who escapes with his wife Tereza to Zurich after the Russian tanks roll over their country in 1968. When his infidelities drive her to leave him and return to Prague he follows her, knowing there will be no other chance to escape Communism. An editorial Tomas has published in an anti-Communist newspaper loses him his license to practice medicine and he soon becomes a window washer. Much to his surprise he's happier for a while in a job he doesn't have to think about ("it's a terrific relief to realize you're free, free of all missions"). Meanwhile, Tereza continues to play the martyr as his philandering increases. The reader is left to wonder whether it is weakness or strength that keeps them together, and how much the lack of political freedom affects the way men and women love each other. Kundera's narrator explores these and other vital questions of being, sometimes with gentle prodding, and others with sudden incisiveness.



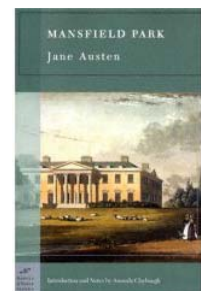
A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius - Dave Eggers

Eggers describes his parents' horrific deaths from cancer within a few weeks of each other during his senior year of college, and his decision to move with his eight year-old brother, Toph, from the suburbs of Chicago to Berkeley, near where his sister, Beth, lives. In California, he manages to care for Toph, work at various jobs, found Might, and even take a star turn on MTV's The Real World. While his is an amazing story, Eggers, now 29, mainly focuses on the ethics of the memoir and of his behavior--his desire to be loved because he is an orphan and admired for caring for his brother versus his fear that he is attempting to profit from his terrible experiences and that he is only sharing his pain in an attempt to dilute it. Though the book is marred by its ending--an unsuccessful parody of teenage rage against the cruel world--it will still delight admirers of structural experimentation and Gen-Xers alike.



Mansfield Park – Jane Austen

At the age of ten, Fanny Price leaves the poverty of her Portsmouth home to be brought up among the family of her wealthy uncle, Sir Thomas Bertram, in the chilly grandeur of Mansfield Park. There she accepts her lowly status, and gradually falls in love with her cousin Edmund. When the dazzling and sophisticated Henry and Mary Crawford arrive, Fanny watches as her cousins become embroiled in rivalry and sexual jealousy. As the company starts to rehearse a play by way of entertainment, Fanny struggles to retain her independence in the face of the Crawfords' dangerous attractions; and when Henry turns his attentions to her, the drama really begins...



Daywatch – Sergei Lukyanenko

The morally ambiguous second volume in Lukyanenko's trilogy (after 2006's *Night Watch*, a major literary and cinematic success in Russia) portrays the epic supernatural struggle between good and evil from the point-of-view of the witch Alisa Donnikova. Lukyanenko imagines a parallel reality, where human history has been shaped by a centuries-old conflict between the Dark Ones and the Light Ones, magical beings whose existence is kept carefully hidden from humanity. After Alisa, a Dark One, loses her powers in a minor confrontation with some Light Ones, she heads to the Crimea to recuperate at a girls' camp, where she feeds on children's nightmares. There she falls in love with Igor, who turns out to be a Light magician. The plot centers on the ramifications of their romance and the theft of Fafnir's Talon, a powerful artifact whose provenance is linked to the legendary Ring of the Nibelungs.

