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Classics

clas·sic *adj* 1a: of the highest quality or rank: having recognized and permanent value: of enduring interest and appeal – used esp. of literature, art, and music <*his achievement as a writer was that out of his knowledge of common speech he forged a ~ prose* > <*a ~ quartet for strings*> b: forming part of the permanent cultural achievement of mankind: felt to be among the great works esp. literary and artistic of mankind

*Prepared by the Staff of the
Cudahy Family Library
Cudahy, Wisconsin
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Sixty-five Classics

This is a highly selective list of books generally recognized as “classics.” All of the authors included have written other books that were not listed. Check CountyCat for additional titles!

This is by no means a complete listing of all the world’s great literature—it’s just a starting point for your journey into great reading.

Alcott, Louisa Mae – *Little Women* (1868)

A touching story of four sisters growing up in the late 1800s.

Austen, Jane – *Pride & Prejudice* (1813)

Mrs. Bennett searches for suitable husbands for her five daughters.

Baldwin, James – *Go Tell It on the Mountain* (1953)

Describes two days and one long night for fourteen-year-old John Grimes and his stepfather, Gabriel, in their struggle for religious conversion.

Bellow, Saul – *Henderson, the Rain King* (1959)

American Gene Henderson goes to Africa, becomes a rainmaker, and inherits a kingdom in a comic voyage of self-discovery.

Bradbury, Ray – *Fahrenheit 451* (1953)

A science-fiction masterpiece showing a future where books are banned.

Brontë, Charlotte – *Jane Eyre* (1847)

Young Jane is an orphan who goes to work as a governess for Mr. Rochester in a house full of mystery.

Brontë, Emily – *Wuthering Heights* (1847)

The passionate tale of Heathcliff and Catherine set in the harsh British moors.

Buck, Pearl – *The Good Earth* (1931)

Traces the life of Wang Lung, a Chinese peasant, as he rises from poverty to become a rich landowner.

Cather, Willa – *My Ántonia* (1954)

A New York lawyer recalls his boyhood on a Nebraska farm at the turn of the century.

Conrad, Joseph – *The Heart of Darkness* (1902)

Marlow searches the Belgian Congo for white trader Kurtz and discovers humans' potential for evil.

Cooper, James Fenimore – *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826)

Adventurous tale of white frontiersman Natty Bumppo and his Native American friend Chingachgook.

Crane, Stephen – *The Red Badge of Courage* (1895)

The experiences of a young Union soldier during the Civil War.

Dickens, Charles – *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859)

A passionate and suspenseful tale set against the backdrop of the French Revolution.

Dostoevsky, Fyodor – *Crime and Punishment* (1866)

A poor student murders a St. Petersburg pawnbroker, then must cope with the overwhelming guilt he feels.

Doyle, Sir Arthur Conan – *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* (1892)

The infamous British detective and the faithful Dr. Watson work together to solve mysteries.

Eliot, George – *The Mill on the Floss* (1860)

The love/hate relationship between a brother and sister is further complicated by financial and romantic troubles.

Ellison, Ralph – *The Invisible Man* (1952)

A young African-American man searches for himself during the Depression.

Faulkner, William – *As I Lay Dying* (1930)

Family members relate the story of Addie Burden's life and death as they transport her coffin to her hometown for burial.

Fitzgerald, F. Scott – *The Great Gatsby* (1925)

Wealthy and mysterious Jay Gatsby's life during the Roaring Twenties.

Flaubert, Gustave – *Madame Bovary* (1856)

Chronicles the unhappy life of Emma Bovary: her boring marriage, adulterous affairs, financial troubles, and tragic end.

Forster, E. M. – *Howard's End* (1919)

Tells the story of British upper class personal and social life in the late eighteenth century.

García Márquez, Gabriel – *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1970)

Traces the rise and fall of the mystical town of Macondo, as seen through seven generations of the Buendía family.

Golding, William – *Lord of the Flies* (1954)

A group of boys stranded on an island after a plane crash reject societal organization and revert to savagery.

Hardy, Thomas – *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891)

Poverty-stricken Tess becomes involved with her wealthy employer's son, setting off a chain of events leading to adultery, murder, and death.

Hawthorne, Nathaniel – *The Scarlet Letter* (1850)

Hester Prynne's adulterous affair with a minister and its aftermath in seventeenth century New England.

Heller, Joseph – *Catch-22* (1961)

A comic tale of Captain Yossarian, an American stationed in the Mediterranean during World War II.

Hemingway, Ernest – *A Farewell to Arms* (1929)

An English nurse falls in love with an American ambulance driver in her care during World War I.

Hugo, Victor – *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1831)

Quasimodo, a hunchback living in a monastery bell tower, falls in love with the beautiful Esmeralda who seeks sanctuary there.

Hurston, Zora Neale – *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937)

The story of an African-American woman's struggles in her search for love and self-fulfillment.

Huxley, Aldous – *Brave New World* (1932)

Set in a nightmarish future where genetic engineering has taken the humanity out of humans, this novel follows Bernard Marx in his attempt to broaden his relationships beyond what is allowed by society.

James, Henry – *The Turn of the Screw* (1898)

A terrifying tale of a young governess who is caring for two children who can communicate with the dead.

Jewett, Sarah Orne – *The Country of the Pointed Firs* (1896)

Rural New England of the late 19th century is brought to life through the eyes of a summer visitor in this gently humorous book.

Joyce, James – *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916)

An autobiographical novel that tells of the early struggles of a young writer.

Kafka, Franz – *The Metamorphosis* (1916)

Gregor Samsa awakens one day to find he has been turned into a giant insect.

Kerouac, Jack – *On the Road* (1957)

This semi-autobiographical novel follows two friends rebelling against boredom as they wander the United States in a search for meaning.

Kesey, Ken – *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1962)

Randle Patrick McMurphy attempts to revitalize his fellow patients in his ward in a mental institution, but is cruelly thwarted by Nurse Ratched.

Lee, Harper – *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1961)

Scout, the daughter of a lawyer from Alabama, tells of her father's defense of a black man accused of rape.

London, Jack – *The Call of the Wild* (1903)

Buck is stolen from his comfortable home in California and taken to be a sledge dog in the Klondike.

Maugham, W. Somerset – *Of Human Bondage* (1915)

An autobiographical novel about Philip Carey, a disabled orphan who is raised by a clergyman and goes to Paris to study art.

McCullers, Carson – *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* (1940)

Set in a 1930s Georgia mill town, this is the story of John Singer, a deaf-mute who becomes the confidant of the town's misfits, but who cannot form a relationship with any of them.

Melville, Herman – *Moby-Dick* (1851)

Captain Ahab pursues Moby-Dick, the white whale that bit off one of Ahab's legs.

Morrison, Toni – *The Bluest Eye* (1970)

Pecola Breedlove, an African-American teenager, struggles with white society's ideals of beauty.

Orwell, George – *Animal Farm* (1945)

A satirical novel in which farm animals revolt, drive out the humans, and establish a communist society that gradually evolves into totalitarianism.

Pasternak, Boris – *Doctor Zhivago* (1957)

Yurii Zhivago's life and loves are chronicled, against a backdrop of the Russian Revolution.

Remarque, Erich – *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1929)

A German soldier of World War I relates his experiences and the horrors of war.

Salinger, J.D. – *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951)

The misadventures of 16-year-old Holden Caulfield as he wanders the streets of New York City.

Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft – *Frankenstein* (1818)

Frankenstein, a student, discovers how to give life and, unwittingly, creates a monster.

Sinclair, Upton – *The Jungle* (1906)

This novel chronicles conditions in the Chicago meat-packing industry in the early twentieth century.

Solzhenitsyn, Alexander – *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* (1963)

Follows Ivan Denisovich Shukhov through a typical day as he tries to survive in one of Stalin's slave-labor compounds in Russia.

Spark, Muriel – *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1961)

A teacher at an all-girls school in the 1930s, Miss Jean Brodie sets apart five students to mold into the "crème de la crème" using unorthodox teaching methods.

Steinbeck, John – *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939)

This Depression-era novel follows the Joads, a family of migrant workers, from Oklahoma to California.

Stevenson, Robert Louis – *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886)

Dr. Jekyll develops a formula that allows him to separate his good and evil sides for scientific study, but realizes he cannot control the evil Mr. Hyde.

Stoker, Bram – *Dracula* (1897)

Count Dracula, a vampire from Transylvania, preys upon unsuspecting victims, drinking their blood to stay alive.

Stowe, Harriett Beecher – *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1851)

Uncle Tom is a slave mistreated by plantation owner Simon Legree, in this book describing the evils of slavery.

Swift, Jonathan – *Gulliver's Travels* (1726)

A satirical novel that follows Gulliver in his voyages to the fantastic lands of Lilliput, Brobdingnag, Laputa, Balnibarbi, Luggnagg, Glubbdubdribb, and Japan.

Thackeray, William Makepeace – *Vanity Fair* (1847)

Becky Sharp is a young woman determined to break into fashionable society any way she can.

Tolkien, J.R.R. – *The Hobbit* (1937)

A fantasy novel centered on Bilbo Baggins, a hobbit who joins a group of dwarves trying to regain stolen treasure guarded by a dragon.

Tolstoy, Leo – *War and Peace* (1864)

Depicts Napoleon's invasion of Russia in 1812 and the Russian people's resistance.

Twain, Mark – *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876)

The story of Tom and Huck, two mischievous boys who have many adventures together.

Verne, Jules – *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* (1870)

Captain Nemo pilots the submarine *Nautilus* on an undersea adventure.

Vonnegut, Kurt – *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1969)

A science-fiction novel in which the hero travels to Dresden just as it is about to be firebombed in World War II, to fictional Ilium, N.Y., and to the planet Tralfamadore.

Walker, Alice – *The Color Purple* (1982)

Relates the story of African-American sisters Celie and Nettie's lives and loves.

Wharton, Edith – *The Age of Innocence* (1921)

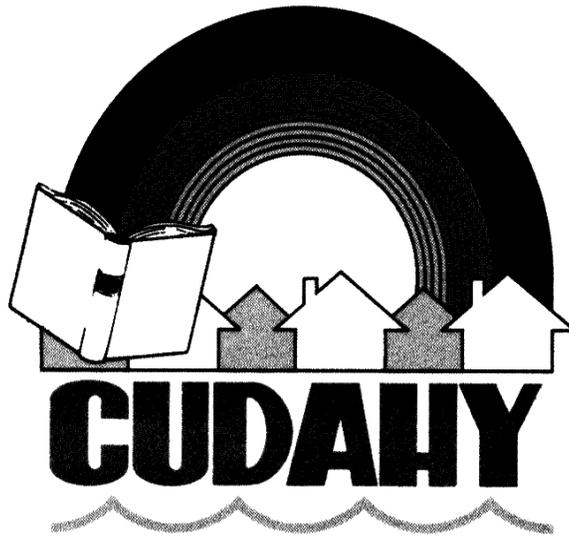
New York City society of the 1920s frowns on Newland Archer's attraction to the bohemian Ellen, his fiancée's cousin.

Wilde, Oscar – *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891)

A wealthy Englishman purchases eternal youth at the expense of his soul.

Wright, Richard – *Native Son* (1940)

African-American Bigger Thomas accidentally kills a member of his white employer's family and then murders his own girlfriend.



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Cudahy, WI 53110
Phone: (414) 769-2244
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