



Indispensable titles

THE BELOVED

First, we are captivated. And in the end, we can't forget. These are the books many of us love most of all.

- *Gilead*, by Marilynne Robinson (2004)
- *I capture the castle*, by Dodie Smith (1948)
- *The kite runner*, by Khaled Hosseini (2003)
- *Ladder of years*, by Anne Tyler (1995)
- *A lesson before dying*, by Ernest J. Gaines (1993)
- *Memoirs of a geisha*, by Arthur Golden (1997)
- *My Antonia*, by Willa Cather (1918)*
- *The poisonwood bible*, by Barbara Kingsolver (1998)
- *The secret life of bees*, by Sue Monk Kidd (2002)
- *To kill a mockingbird*, by Harper Lee (1960)

THE BOOK CLUB CLASSIC

The fiercest wars rage, the plots are of biblical proportions, the *largest* passions are in play, emotions are operatic and women often get the choicest roles.

- *The amazing adventures of Kavalier & Clay*, by Michael Chabon (2000)
- *Bel canto*, by Ann Patchett (2001)
- *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, by Truman Capote (1958)
- *Crossing to safety*, by Wallace Stegner (1987)
- *The dive from Clausen's Pier*, by Ann Packer (2002)
- *Empire Falls*, by Richard Russo (2001)
- *Girl with a pearl earring*, by Tracy Chevalier (2000)
- *The hours*, by Michael Cunningham (1998) and *Mrs. Dalloway*, by Virginia Woolf (1925)

- *The killer angels*, by Michael Shaara (1974)
- *The known world*, by Edward P. Jones (2003)
- *Life of Pi*, by Yann Martel (2001)
- *The lovely bones*, by Alice Sebold (2002)
- *Middlesex*, by Jeffrey Eugenides (2002)
- *Midwives*, by Chris Bohjalian (1997)
- *The other Boleyn girl*, by Philippa Gregory (2001)
- *The red tent*, by Anita Diamant (1997)
- *The shadow of the wind*, by Carlos Ruiz Zafon, translated by Lucia Graves (2004)
- *The sparrow*, by Maria Doria Russell (1996)
- *The time traveler's wife*, by Audrey Niffenegger (2003)
- *Zorro*, by Isabel Allende, translated by Margaret Sayers Peden (2005)

CLASSIC FICTION

They have been described as "permanent masterpieces" by Professor Vladimir Nabokov, but you can call them the evening's snack.

- *The age of innocence*, by Edith Wharton (1920)
- *Anna Karenina*, by Leo Tolstoy (1877)
- *Beloved*, by Toni Morrison (1987)
- *A fine balance*, by Rohinton Mistry (1996)
- *Frankenstein, or the modern Prometheus*, by Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley (1818)
- *The grapes of wrath*, by John Steinbeck (1939)
- *Great expectations*, by Charles Dickens (1860-61)
- *The great Gatsby*, by F. Scott Fitzgerald (1925)
- *Heart of Darkness*, by Joseph Conrad (1902)
- *Invisible man*, by Ralph Ellison (1952)
- *Lolita*, by Vladimir Nabokov (1955)
- *Madame Bovary*, by Gustave Flaubert (1856)

- *Moby Dick*, by Herman Melville (1851)
- *1984*, by George Orwell (1949)
- *One hundred years of solitude*, by Gabriel Garcia Marquez, translated by Gregory Rabassa (1970)
- *Palace walk*, by Naguib Mahfouz (1956), translated by William H. Hutchins and Olive E. Kenny (1989)
- *Sister Carrie*, by Theodore Dreiser (1900)
- *The sun also rises*, by Ernest Hemingway (1926)
- *Vanity Fair*, by William Makepeace Thackeray (1848)
- *Washington Square*, by Henry James (1881) and *The master*, by Colm Toibin (2004)

BRIT LIT 101

Here, the master storytellers are at work. The English tradition of social satire, quirkiness, and narrative invention mixed with scarily brilliant dialogue is a pleasure to read and dramatic to discuss.

- *Atonement*, by Ian McEwan (2001)
- *Behind the scenes at the museum*, by Kate Atkinson (1995)
- *Birdsong*, by Sebastian Faulks (1993)
- *Brideshead revisited*, by Evelyn Waugh (1945)
- *Cold Comfort Farm*, by Stella Gibbons (1932)
- *The golden compass*, by Philip Pullman (1996)
- *The line of beauty*, by Alan Hollinghurst (2004)
- *Pride and prejudice*, by Jane Austen (1813)
- *The prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, by Muriel Spark (1961)
- *The quiet American*, by Graham Greene (1955)

RED, WHITE AND NOIR

Fear is the theme. Claustrophobia is the sensation. Noir is the atmosphere. Some of these thrill-

ers have uplifting moments. Some even have what passes for happy endings. But each is tough-minded, often violent, and provokes the most intense, hair-raising conversations.

- *The alienist*, by Caleb Carr (1994)
- *Black and blue*, by Anna Quindlen (1998)
- *The corrections*, by Jonathan Franzen (2001)
- *The handmaid's tale*, by Margaret Atwood (1986)
- *House of sand and fog*, by Andrew Dubus III (1999)
- *The moviegoer*, by Walker Percy (1961)
- *The plot against America*, by Philip Roth (2004)
- *Revolutionary Road*, by Richard Yates (1961)
- *The secret history*, by Donna Tartt (1992)
- *White oleander*, by Janet Fitch (1999)

LITERARY RESPITES

The books of Literary Respites share themes of friendship, adventures and in many cases, goodness. A sense of place is ever present and sharing food is often a communal experience.

- *At home in Mitford*, by Jan Karon (1994)
- *Durable goods*, by Elizabeth Berg (1993)
- *The Eyre affair*, by Jasper Fforde (2002)
- *Fried green tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Café*, by Fannie Flagg (1987)
- *Gift from the sea*, by Anne Morrow Lindbergh (1955)
- *Hens dancing*, by Raffaella Barker (1999)
- *The hitchhiker's guide to the galaxy*, by Douglas Adams (1979)
- *Like water for chocolate*, by Laura Esquivel, translated by Carol Christensen and Thomas Christensen (1992)
- *Lying awake*, by Mark Salzman (2000)
- *The No. 1 Ladies Detective Agency*, by Alexander McCall Smith (1998)

BLACK LIT

They are dreamy, timeless, contemporary, magical, funny and real. The novels of Black Lit show the dazzling talent of African American writers whose subject matter knows no bounds and who work in every literary genre.

- *Any way the wind blows*, by E. Lynn Harris (2001)
- *The bluest eye*, by Toni Morrison (1970)
- *Cane River*, by Lalita Tademy (2001)
- *The color purple*, by Alice Walker (1982)
- *Little Scarlet*, by Walter Mosley (2004)
- *Native son*, by Richard Wright (1940)
- *72 hour hold*, by Bebe Moore Campbell (2005)
- *Their eyes were watching God*, by Zora Neale Hurston (1937)*
- *Upstate*, by Kalisha Buchhanon (2005)
- *Waiting to exhale*, by Terry McMillan (1992)

NONFICTION THAT READS LIKE FICTION

The brand-name authors we follow up the trail and down the dusty streets, around the charming, historic square of mystery and death and into history and back can be as beloved as fiction favorites Kingsolver, Patchett and McMillan.

- *The devil in the White City: murder, magic, and madness at the Fair That Changed America*, by Erik Larson (2003)
- *Foreign babes in Beijing: behind the scenes of a new China*, by Rachel DeWoskin (2005)
- *In cold blood*, by Truman Capote (1965)
- *Into thin air: a personal account of the Mount Everest disaster*, by Jon Krakauer (1997)
- *Midnight in the garden of good and evil*, by John Berendt (1994)
- *Parallel lives: five Victorian marriages*, by

Phyllis Rose (1983)

- *The planets*, by Dava Sobel (2005)
- *The professor and the madman: a tale of murder, insanity, and the making of the Oxford English Dictionary*, by Simon Winchester (1998)
- *Seabiscuit: an American legend*, by Laura Hillenbrand (2001)
- *A walk in the woods: rediscovering America on the Appalachian Trail*, by Bill Bryson

THE MEMOIR

Everyone has a personal history. But it really comes down to this: the writers who mine the best fossils from his or her personal history will be the ones who are read and discussed.

- *Angela's ashes*, by Frank McCourt (1996)
- *The color of water: a black man's tribute to his white mother*, by James McBride (1996)
- *On writing*, by Stephen King (2000)
- *Out of Africa*, by Isak Dinesen (1937)
- *Personal history*, by Katharine Graham (1997)
- *Reading Lolita in Tehran: a memoir in books*, by Azar Nafisi (2003)
- *The tender bar: a memoir*, by J.R. Moehringer (2005)
- *This boy's life: a memoir*, by Tobias Wolff (1989)
- *Truth and beauty: a friendship*, by Ann Patchett (2004)
- *Wild swans: three daughters of China*, by Jung Chang (1991)

— From *The book group companion*