

English 12 Term Papers Recommended Reading

When a • precedes the description of the novel, it is recommended for Grade 11 or 12; however, it still remains a choice for a Grade 12 Term Paper.

Twentieth Century Canadian Authors of Distinction

The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz—Mordecai Richler

This novel still has much to say today on the theme of having big, sprawling and youthful dreams, and the costs and sacrifices associated with seeing them through. Dreamers like Duddy often fail, but they often succeed, becoming the next wealthy entrepreneur, savvy artist, great writer or sports hero.

The Blind Assassin—Margaret Atwood

A novel within a novel, this spine-tingling mystery nested within a tragic love story chills the reader.

Alias Grace—Margaret Atwood

Grace Marks does not come from a moneyed background, and she lacks the respectability or formal education to get anything more than a housemaid's position. Not long after her arrival in Canada from Ireland, she finds employment with Nancy Montgomery and winds up regretting it when the authorities come knocking on her door, claiming Grace murdered her.

• Crow Lake—Mary Lawson

Four children living in northern Ontario struggle to stay together after their parents die in an auto accident. It is a compelling study of sibling rivalry and family dynamics where one of the children, Kate Morrison, narrates the tale in flashback mode.

The Diviners—Margaret Laurence

This is a powerful story of an independent woman, Morgan Gunn, who grows up in a small Canadian prairie town; however, as she matures she reveals that she wants to flee from this environment, and she has a strong desire to search for love.

The English Patient—Michael Ondaatje

In this unforgettable story of love and war, a young Canadian nurse, a Sikh bomb disposal expert, a thief turned spy and a man burnt beyond recognition, meet in the last moments of the Second World War. The identity of the patient is the heart of the story as he tells his memories of a doomed love affair in the North African desert.

A Fine Balance—Rohinton Mistry

Set against the emergency measures imposed by Indira Gandhi in the mid-1970's, the novel follows the lives of four unlikely people as they struggle "to maintain a fine balance between hope and despair." Originally published in 1995, this novel is both a warning about the human terrors that await a society without compassion and a testimony to the enduring greatness of the human spirit.

- A Hero's Walk—Anita Rau Badami

Set in the dusty seaside town of Toturpuram on the Bay of Bengal, this novel traces the terrain of family and forgiveness through the lives of an exuberant cast of characters bewildered by the rapid pace of change in today's India. Each member of the Rao family pits his or her chance at personal fulfillment against the conventions of a crumbling caste and class system.

The In-Between World of Vikram Lall—M. G. Vassanji

This is a haunting novel of corruption and regret that brings to life the complexity and turbulence of Kenyan society in the last five decades.

- The Jade Peony—Wayson Choy

In the Chinatown of the 1940's, three children of Chinese immigrant parents nurture dreams of making their own mark on the world around them. Jung-Sum is an adopted son who fights in the boxing ring, and wrestles with uncertainty about his own sexual identity. Jook-Liang dreams of escaping the confines of tradition to become the next Shirley temple, and Sekky, the youngest child, always surprises the family.

Larry's Party—Carol Shields

Larry is an ordinary guy made extraordinary who during the 70's, 80's and the 90's adapts to society's changing expectations of men.

Oryx and Crake—Margaret Atwood

The novel includes a near-future world that turns from the merely horrible to the horrific, from a fool's paradise to a bio-wasteland. Snowman (a man once known as

Jimmy) sleeps in a tree and just might be the only human left on our devastated planet. He is not entirely alone; however, as he considers himself the shepherd of a group of experimental, human-like creatures called the Children of Crake. As he scavenges and tends to his insect bites, Snowman recalls in flashbacks how the world fell apart.

• Stanley Park—Timothy Taylor

An aspiring food artiste Jeremy Papier attempts to juggle the finances of his fledgling eatery, The Monkey's Paw, and his conflicted feelings about his attractive sous-chef. Meanwhile, on the other side of downtown Vancouver, his anthropologist father camps out in Stanley Park to study a group of homeless men. Impending financial ruin drives Jeremy into the clutches of an evil coffee magnate while his father delves deeper into the indigent lifestyle, probing the mystery of two dead children once found in the park as well as his failed marriage to Jeremy's mother.

The Stone Carvers—Jane Urquhart

Set in the first half of the twentieth century, but reaching back to Bavaria in the late nineteenth century, the novel weaves together the story of ordinary lives marked by obsession and transformed by art.

Unless—Carol Shields

Forty-four-year-old Reta Winters, wife, mother, writer, and translator, is living a happy life until one of her three daughters drops out of university to sit on a downtown street corner silent and cross-legged with a begging bowl in her lap and a placard round her neck that says "Goodness." Reta finds out what it takes to rescue her daughter.

Memorable Classics

Anna Karenina—Leo Tolstoy

This novel portrays the doomed love affair between the sensuous and rebellious Anna and the dashing officer, Count Vronsky. Tragedy unfolds as Anna rejects her passionless marriage and must endure the hypocrisies of society. Set against a vast and richly textured canvas of nineteenth-century Russia, the novel's seven major characters create a dynamic imbalance, playing out the contrasts of city and country life and all the variations on love and family happiness.

The Count of Monte Cristo—Alexandre Dumas

Set against the tumultuous years of the post-Napoleonic era, the Count of Monte Cristo recounts the swashbuckling adventures of Edmond Dantes, a dashing young sailor falsely accused of treason. The story of his long imprisonment, dramatic escape, and carefully wrought revenge offers up a vision of France that has been immortal.

Dracula—Bram Stoker

Dracula is a literary creation that resides in our collective consciousness and has spawned many a ghoulish likeness. The elegant count from Transylvania, a sister vampire residing alone in his mansion who drinks blood to stay alive is as beloved a Gothic figure as the Hunchback of Frankenstein's monster.

Doctor Zhivago—Boris Pasternak

This classic story portrays the life and loves of a poet/physician during the turmoil of the Russian Revolution. A fantastic novel about love, art and one man's struggle to remain true to himself during times of confusion and instability. This novel reflects the reality of Russian life and that of its author.

The Hunchback of Notre Dame—Victor Hugo

Set in medieval Paris, it tells the story of the beautiful gypsy Esmeralda, condemned as a witch by the tormented archdeacon Claude Frollo, who lusts after her. Quasimodo, the deformed bell ringer of Notre-Dame Cathedral, having fallen in love with the kindhearted Esmeralda, tries to save her by hiding her in the cathedral's tower. When a crowd of Parisian peasants, misunderstanding Quasimodo's motives, attacks the church in an attempt to liberate her, the story ends in tragedy.

Jane Eyre—Charlotte Bronte

This revolutionary novel introduces the world to a radical, new type of heroine whose defiant virtue and moral courage depart from the traditional female characters of her time.

Ivanhoe—Sir Walter Scott

In the twelfth century, Sir Wilfred of Ivanhoe returns home to England from the Third Crusade to claim his inheritance and the love of Lady Rowena. The heroic adventure of this noble Saxon knight involves him in the struggle between Richard the Lion-Hearted and his malignant brother John: a conflict that brings Ivanhoe into alliance with the mysterious outlaw, Robin Hood, and his legendary fight for the forces of good.

Mrs. Dalloway—Virginia Woolf

This brilliant novel solely explores the hidden springs of thought and action in the one day that Clarissa Dalloway's prepares for a party she is to give that evening.

A Passage to India—E. M. Forster
This tells of the clash of cultures in British India after the turn of the century. A common misunderstanding erupts into a devastating affair.

Pride and Prejudice—Jane Austen

Published in 1813, this novel illustrates a comedy of manners, a welcome change from the moralistic novels of the past. In recounting the courtship of the witty, independent Elizabeth Bennett and Mr. Darcy—the handsome bachelor whose arrogant pride Elizabeth regards as a fatal flaw—Austen illuminates, with humor, the prejudices of society as a whole.

The Three Musketeers—Alexandre Dumas

'One for all and all for one' is one of those refrains that started somewhere but no one can seem to remember where. If you've read *The Three Musketeers*, you'd know exactly from whence it came and you would have joined in a great adventure to boot! Alexandre Dumas' exciting and long-lasting tale of heroism and camaraderie takes you on a wild ride through the French countryside.

20,000 Leagues Under the Sea—Jules Vern

In this 1870 science-fiction classic, obsessed Captain Nemo and his prisoners descend beneath the sea in his secret submarine, the *Nautilus*, for nonstop adventure and suspense.

Vanity Fair—William Makepeace Thackeray

This social satire exposes the greed and corruption raging in England during the turmoil of the Napoleonic wars. It traces the changing fortunes of two unforgettable women: the scheming opportunist Becky Sharp—one of literature's most resourceful, engaging and amoral heroines—and her foil, the faithful, naïve Amelia Sedley.

Wuthering Heights—Emily Bronte

The dark, wild gypsy orphan Heathcliff loves only one person on earth—the beautiful, willful Cathy Earnshaw. However, Cathy's brother Hindley—the cruel drunken master of Wuthering Heights—hated and abused the orphan, their rich neighbours at Thrushcross Grange, Edgar Linton and Isabella Linton, reviled the

boy. They all conspired to force Heathcliff and Cathy apart, first as playmates, then as lovers, and at last to drive Heathcliff away.

Contemporary International Authors

All Quiet on the Western Front—Erich Maria Remarque

Paul Baumer, a young German soldier, serves in the trenches in France in World War I. Baumer eventually discovers all the atrocities of war.

The Autobiography of Malcolm X—Malcolm X

This autobiography tells of this man's involvement in the civil rights movement in the United States from his life of crime to his involvement with the Nation of Islam.

A Brave New World—Aldous Huxley

Through the most efficient scientific and psychological engineering, people are genetically designed to be passive, and therefore, consistently useful to the ruling class.

- Catcher in the Rye—J. D. Salinger

A defiant 16-year-old prep school student runs away to New York City after getting expelled. Although Holden Caulfield is cynical, his pain and loneliness slowly escape from underneath his tough exterior.

Catch 22—Joseph Heller

Set in World War II, an American bomber squadron off the coast of Italy, is the story of John Yossarian, who is furious because thousands of people he has never met are trying to kill him. He is also trying to decode the meaning of Catch 22, a mysterious regulation that proves that insane people are really the sanest.

Cry, The Beloved Country—Alan Paton

In 1948 in apartheid South Africa, an old black rural priest searches for his corrupt son, and an old white rural man confronts the loss of his son. All three aspects of the book are connected by a common thread.

A Confederacy of Dunces—John Kennedy Toole

We live in a society that is obsessed with beautiful people and beautiful bodies; however Ignatius J. Reilly is a huge beast of a man and a refreshing change.

Fahrenheit 451—Ray Bradbury

Fireman Guy Montag loves to rush to a fire and watch books burn up. Then he met a 17-year-old girl who told him of a past when people were not afraid, and a professor who told him of a future where people could think.

A Farewell to Arms—Ernest Hemingway

A volunteer ambulance driver and a beautiful English nurse tragically fall in love when he is wounded on the Italian front.

The Grapes of Wrath—John Steinbeck

This post-Depression novel tells the story of the Joad family who, forced from their home, head to California in search of work and the hope of a brighter future.

The Inheritors—William Golding

Eight Neanderthals encounter another race of beings like themselves, yet strangely different. This new race, Homo Sapiens, fascinating in their skills and sophistication, become terrifying in their cruelty.

* The Joy Luck Club—Amy Tan

In 1949, four Chinese women, drawn together by the shadow of their past, begin meeting for more than three decades in San Francisco to play mah jong, invest in stocks and “say” stories.

A Lesson Before Dying—Ernest J. Gaines

In a small Cajun community in 1940s Louisiana, a young black man is about to go to the electric chair for murder. A white shopkeeper had died during a robbery gone bad; though the young man on trial had not been armed and had not pulled the trigger, in that time and place, there could be no doubt of the verdict or the penalty.

Love in the Time of Cholera—Gabriel Garcia Marquez

This is a half-century story of unrequited love. While delivering a message to her father, Florentino Ariza spots the barely pubescent Fermina Daza and immediately falls in love. What follows is the story of a passion that extends over 50 years, as Fermina is courted solely by letter, decisively rejects her suitor when he first speaks, and then joins the urbane Dr. Juvenal Urbino, much above her station, in a marriage initially loveless but ultimately remarkable in its strength. Florentino remains faithful in his fashion; paralleling the tale of the marriage is that of his numerous liaisons, all ultimately without the depth of love he again declares at Urbino's death.

1984—George Orwell

A satire set in England in 1984 that describes the possible horrors of a government that has total control of a person, even their thoughts.

Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha—Roddy Doyle

Set in the working-class environment of an Irish town in the late 1960s, the story is related by bright, sensitive 10-year-old Paddy Clarke, who, when we first meet him, is merely concerned with being as tough as his peers. Paddy and his best friend Kevin are part of a neighborhood gang that sets fires in vacant buildings, routinely teases and abuses younger kids and plays in forbidden places. Paddy becomes aware that his parents' marriage is disintegrating, so there is a gradual transition from play and pranks to fear and misery.

The Power of One—Bryce Courtenay

A five-year-old boy is being sent off to boarding school. Peekay is small for his age, white and of English descent; he lives in South Africa. Up to this point in his life he's known only his family and his beloved black Nanny. Now, he's forced to take care of himself and survive under the most brutal of circumstances. The time is World War II and Peekay spends years in a boarding school where he's the only English student among Afrikaners who are sympathetic to the Nazi cause. He's beaten, tortured and treated as a "prisoner of war" by the older boys. The novel outlines this conflict as Peekay matures into a dynamic character.

The Sun Also Rises—Ernest Hemingway

A poignant look at the disillusionment and angst of the post-World War I generation, the novel introduces two of Hemingway's most unforgettable characters: Jake Barnes and Lady Brett Ashley. The story follows the flamboyant Brett and the hapless Jake as they journey from the wild nightlife of 1920s Paris to the brutal bullfighting rings of Spain with a motley group of former soldiers.

Recent Releases

Atonement—Ian McEwan

Young Briony Tallis, a hyperimaginative 13-year-old who sees her older sister, Cecilia, mysteriously involved with their neighbor Robbie Turner, a fellow Cambridge student subsidized by the Tallis family, points a finger at Robbie when her young cousin is assaulted in the grounds that night; on her testimony alone,

Robbie is jailed. The second part of the book moves forward five years to focus on Robbie, now freed and part of the British Army that was cornered and eventually evacuated by a fleet of small boats at Dunkirk during the early days of WWII.

- The Glass Castle by Jeannette Walls

Walls memoir chronicles her upbringing at the hands of eccentric, nomadic parents—Rose Mary, her frustrated-artist mother, and Rex, her brilliant, alcoholic father. To call the elder Walls's childrearing style *laissez faire* would be putting it mildly. As Rose Mary and Rex, motivated by whims and paranoia, uprooted their kids time and again, the youngsters (Walls, her brother and two sisters) were left largely to their own devices. But while Rex and Rose Mary firmly believed children learned best from their own mistakes, they themselves never seemed to do so, repeating the same disastrous patterns that eventually landed them on the streets.

The Inheritance of Loss by Kiran Desai

- The Kite Runner—Khaled Hosseini

The novel follows the story of Amir, the privileged son of a wealthy businessman in Kabul, and Hassan, the son of Amir's father's servant. As children in the relatively stable Afghanistan of the early 1970s, the boys are inseparable. They spend idyllic days running kites and telling stories of mystical places and powerful warriors until an unspeakable event changes the nature of their relationship forever, and eventually cements their bond in ways neither boy could have ever predicted. Even after Amir and his father flee to America, Amir remains haunted by his cowardly actions and disloyalty.

- A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier by Ishmael Beah

- The Memory Keeper's Daughter—Kim Edwards

Dr. David Henry's life changes forever when he is forced to deliver his own twins, one healthy and one mentally challenged.

The Life of Pi—Yann Martel

The precocious son of a zookeeper, 16-year-old Pi Patel is raised in Pondicherry, India, where he tries on various faiths for size, attracting "religions the way a dog attracts fleas." Planning a move to Canada, his father packs up the family and their menagerie and they hitch a ride on an enormous freighter. After a harrowing

shipwreck, Pi finds himself adrift in the Pacific Ocean, trapped on a 26-foot lifeboat with a wounded zebra, a spotted hyena, a seasick orangutan, and a 450-pound Bengal tiger named Richard Parker.

- **I am the Messenger** by Marcus Zusak

When hapless cabdriver Ed Kennedy offhandedly stops a bank robbery, someone takes notice. The Ace of Diamonds appears in his mailbox with three addresses written on it. Ed is supposed to deliver a message to these addresses, but no one is telling him what that message is. All he is told is that his life depends on it.

- **Prisoner of Tehran: a Memoir** by Marina Nemat

- **Snow Falling on Cedars**—David Guterson

The story begins in 1954 as a Japanese-American fisherman is on trial for murder. Kabuo Miyamoto is the chief suspect in the killing of fellow fisherman Carl Heine because of a dispute over farm land. The entire book takes place on fictional San Pedro Island in Puget Sound. In flashbacks, Guterson takes us to life on the island prior to World War II.

The Things They Carried—Tim O'Brien

Lieutenant Jimmy Cross' platoon of soldiers are a group of very young men, most of whom are unprepared for the Vietnam War. They carry heavy rations and supplies, and pictures of their girlfriends, and fear and sadness and confusion.

- **The Thirteenth Tale**—Diane Setterfield

There are two heroines here: Vida Winter, a famous author, whose life story is coming to an end, and Margaret Lea, a young, unworldly, bookish girl who is a bookseller in her father's shop. This is a story within a story that has many twists and turns that will eventually connect Vida and Margaret.

- **A Thousand Splendid Suns** by Khaled Hosseini

The main action begins in the early 1970s, when 15-year-old Mariam, after her mother's suicide, is forced to marry Rasheed, a much older Kabul shoemaker. One of the most repulsive males in recent literature, Rasheed has "watery bloodshot eyes" and fingernails "yellow brown, like the inside of a rotting apple." He's not just ugly on the outside: He keeps his nubile bride under a burka, essentially tethered to the grounds of their shabby house where, over the years, she gradually loses beauty, teeth, and her fighting spirit. To make matters worse he takes a second, more beautiful wife, Laila. Hosseini chronicles the treatment of women in Afghanistan.

-Three Day Road by Joseph Boyden

Inspired in part by real-life WWI Ojibwa hero Francis Pegahmagabow, *Three Day Road* is the extraordinary, beautifully written story of Xavier and Elijah, two Cree snipers in the killing fields of Ypres and the Somme, and the winding journey home to northern Ontario that only one of them will make with Niska, the last Oji-Cree medicine woman living off the land.