

A Level Literature Summer Work

Task One

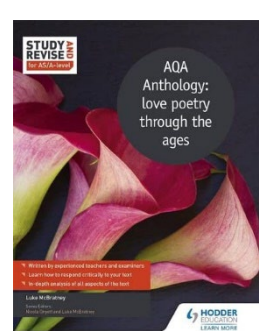
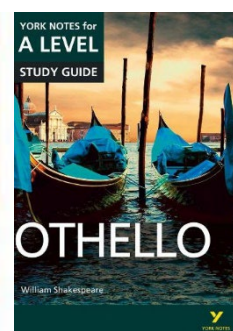
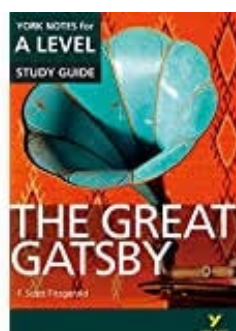
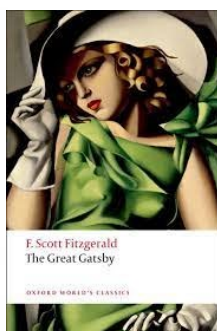
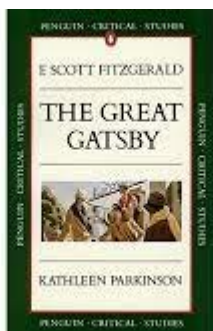
In preparation for the course, you need to read “The Great Gatsby” by F. Scott Fitzgerald which is one of your set texts for the exam. You can read it for free online at <https://www.planetebook.com/free-ebooks/the-great-gatsby.pdf> We will provide copies of the novel for you but if you want to annotate the copy, you will need to buy your own - you can usually pick up a cheap second hand copy from an online bookstore. The text we use in class is the Oxford world Classics version. It's helpful to get that one if you can as it makes it easier to find page references. You will study “The Great Gatsby” in detail in term 2 but it is helpful to have read it by September so you can make links to it as you study the poetry anthology in term 1. As you read, you should keep notes on your reactions to events and thoughts about the characters, the way that love is presented and explored in the novel, and anything you feel is significant about the context of the text. You might like to do some reading from Sparknotes online to support your ideas and guide you on things to look for in each chapter: <https://www.sparknotes.com/lit/gatsby/>

As you read, try to make a few notes or annotate the text as you go with what you think might be links to key themes and ideas and your impressions of the characters and how they are used to explore some of these ideas. Key themes to consider are:

- The presentation of men, women and their relationships: women as weak, women as strong characters, women as a ‘femme fatale’, women who don’t quite fit social expectations, idealised women, women as victims of society, men as outsiders, men as victims of society, the abuse of power in relationships, women as seen through the eyes of men.
- The presentation of love: romantic love, unrequited love, barriers to love, disappointing love, absence of love, lost love, destructive love, painful love, idealised love, love and responsibility, love and conflict, love and social expectations.
- The presentation of America in the 1920s: American ideals, the American Dream, social class, greed, capitalism, consumerism, flappers, the Jazz Age, the effects of technology and the city on the individual and relationships.
- Other ideas and themes: identity, honesty and deception, loneliness and isolation, prejudice and racism, dreams and reality, disappointment and regret.

If you would like to do a little extra reading and research around the novel, Sparknotes and CliffsNotes are free online resources which are a good starting point. We also recommend the York Notes revision guide. If you want to go even deeper, Kathleen Parkinson has also written an excellent critical study of the novel.

Recommended texts and revision guides:



Task Two: Wider Reading to Prepare for the NEA

Read at least two more literary texts which you might consider using for your coursework option later in year 12. These can be novels, plays or **collections** of short stories/ poems- most students choose two novels. One should be from pre-1900 and the other should be a post-1900 text. Ideally they should have something in common in terms of a theme or issues. For example, they might both be about women in love or both explore ideas about race, identity or social class, or perhaps they explore family relationships or urban life.

Keep a reading log to document your reading journey. This can be in any form you like- two mind-maps or posters, or a more traditional table of notes with different subheadings. However, ensure you make notes on:

- what themes/issues/ ideas/ aspects of the book interested you most- this can include aspects of plot structure and writing style, as well as ‘big ideas
- which characters you thought were most interesting and why
- anything about the context of the texts you enjoyed or found interesting- this can include the time/ place in which it is set, as well as contextual information about the author
- notes on comparisons and connections- either to the other text you choose to read over the summer, or with any other good quality literary texts you have read in the past

There is a reading list at the end of this document, but you don’t have to choose from just this. Many of the texts can be found online for free as ebooks or pdfs- we are not expecting you to spend lots of money on books – but most of these texts are available from the school library.

The texts you choose for Task Two may potentially be used as a text for your course work (Non-Exam Assessment). There are however some texts that cannot be used for the NEA, as they are on the list of exam texts for this syllabus. These are listed at the very end of this document. We recommend that you **DO NOT** choose one of these for the summer reading task as you can’t use them for your coursework. You might like to read some of them anyway at some point as they are classics, but focus on useful texts first.

The list is long enough to give you lots of choice. All the books are highly recommended. Feel free to read more texts from the reading list of course. The more you read, the better your overview of literature genres, developments and techniques.

Optional Extras – these are not compulsory but recommended

If you would like to really challenge yourself, or if you find you have extra time on your hands, you could always complete one or more of the following activities. You don’t have to do them in order.

Challenge Task One

Begin to explore your other set text: ‘Othello’. Begin to find out a little bit about it- the plot and characters. You could use Sparknotes online to begin getting to know the characters and plot. You might be able to find an online version of the play to watch- or borrow a copy of one of the versions on DVD from the library. The Hugh Quarshie version from the RSC is available here: [Othello | English Full Movie | Drama](#)

Challenge Task Two

You might also like to explore some key works by famous poets- remember, there will be both a seen and unseen poetry element to the course. Poem Hunter is a good website to use but there are lots of others. Poets that you would benefit from being familiar with include some of the following. The ones in bold are the more accessible or ‘recommended’ poets.

Simon Armitage, **WH Auden**, **William Blake**, Evan Boland, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Lord Byron, Geoffrey Chaucer, ST Coleridge, **ee cummings**, Emily Dickinson, **Carol Ann Duffy**, TS Eliot, **Seamus Heaney**, **Ted**

Hughes, John Keats, **Philip Larkin**, John Milton, **Wilfred Owen**, **Sylvia Plath**, Christina Rossetti, Jacob Sam-La Rose, Siegfried Sassoon, Percy Shelley, Alfred Lord Tennyson, **William Wordsworth**

Challenge Task Three: understanding literature through time research task

Part of the course will involve studying Literature across time and it is important that you have an understanding of the key changes and developments in literature during various periods. Spend some time researching the following literary genres and periods. For each one, make notes on:

- The historical context. What were some of the key historical events and changes that were happening during this period?
- The main genre conventions and features of this literary period or movement. Don't get too technical, but find out some of the overall features, themes, forms or ideas which were 'typical' of the period or movement.
- Which writers or works are considered important representatives of each of the literary period or movement? Try to find out a little bit about key writers associated with each- anything from a couple up to a max of 5- as well as the works they wrote. You might choose a variety of forms from drama, prose or poetry or just focus on one, but some movements are associated with one particular genre only.

Key Literary movements to research:

1. Renaissance/Elizabethan/Jacobean
2. Metaphysical
3. Restoration
4. Romantic
5. Regency
6. Gothic
7. Victorian
8. Decadent
9. Modernism
10. Post Modern

Challenge Task Four

Explore one or more of these approaches to literature. They are all worth knowing a bit about. Don't get too complicated though as some of them can be quite academic! For each one, just do a little reading and research on the internet and make a mind-map which summarises key ideas, thinkers and approaches to literature that these theories deal with.

- Feminism and feminist literary criticism
- Marxism and Marxist literary criticism
- Post Colonialism and Post Colonial literary criticism
- Psychoanalysis and Psychoanalytical literary criticism

Summer work Reading: List of recommended texts

Choose from any of the following lists– there should be something to suit everyone’s tastes. The first two lists of prose and drama are all pre-1900 titles recommended by AQA for the NEA. Remember, one of your choices must be pre-1900. You will then find two lists of other recommended writers (pre and post-1900) which might be good choices. This is a generic ‘classic texts lists’ and we haven’t read all of them, so do research the synopsis carefully of any you choose as some of the post-1900 texts may contain challenging adult themes and issues. They are recommendations, so don’t feel you have to read anything which makes you feel uncomfortable. There are lots of lists on the internet of ‘great books to read’ so see what else you can find if none of these appeal. For example:

<https://www.womensprizeforfiction.co.uk/reading-women>

<https://thebookerprizes.com/the-booker-library/prize-years>

Finally, at the end, you will find the list of texts which CANNOT be used for the NEA so avoid these. Double check this carefully with your summer reading choices so you don’t accidentally read something you can’t later use for your NEA. Enjoy your reading and we will see you in September!

AQA pre-1900 recommended Texts:

Prose

Jane Austen	Northanger Abbey Mansfield Park
Anne Brontë	The Tenant of Wildfell Hall
Wilkie Collins	The Moonstone The Woman in White
Charles Dickens	Hard Times
George Eliot	Middlemarch The Mill on the Floss
Elizabeth Gaskell	North and South
Mary Shelley	Frankenstein
William Makepeace Thackeray	Vanity Fair
Oscar Wilde	The Picture of Dorian Gray

Drama

William Congreve	The Way of the World
Henrik Ibsen	A Doll's House Hedda Gabler
Oliver Goldsmith	She Stoops to Conquer
George Bernard Shaw	any pre-1900 play by this writer
Richard Brinsley Sheridan	The School for Scandal
Oscar Wilde	any pre-1900 play by this writer
William Wycherley	The Country Wife

Other texts you might enjoy:

Classic prose- pre 1900

- Thomas Hardy – Jude The Obscure, The Mayor of Casterbridge, Far from the Madding Crowd
- W.M. Thackeray - Vanity Fair
- Charles Dickens – Great Expectation, Oliver Twist, Nicholas Nickleby
- George Elliot – Middlemarch, Silas Marner, Adam Bede, The Mill on the Floss
- Henry Fielding - Tom Jones
- Elizabeth Gaskell - Mary Barton, North and South, Ruth
- Jane Austen – Emma, Pride and Prejudice
- Mark Twain - Huckleberry Finn
- Mary Shelley – Frankenstein
- Bram Stoker – Dracula
- Robert Louis Stevenson – Treasure Island, Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde
- Daniel Defoe – Robison Crusoe
- Anthony Trollope – The Way We Live Now
- Arthur Conan Doyle – The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes etc.
- Charlotte Bronte- Villette
- Gustave Flaubert - Madame Bovary
- Feodor Dostoevsky - Crime & Punishment, The Brothers Karamazov
- Nathaniel Hawthorne- The Scarlett Letter
- Alexandre Dumas – The Three Musketeers, The Count of Monte Cristo
- Henry James- Portrait of a Lady
- George Meredith- The Egoist
- Samuel Richardson- Pamela

20th Century Literature

- Daphne Du Maurier – My Cousin Rachel
- AS Byatt- Possession
- Peter Carey- Oscar and Lucinda
- Sylvia Plath- The Bell Jar
- Joseph Conrad - Heart of Darkness
- F Scott Fitzgerald- Tender is the Night
- John Fowles- the French Lieutenant's Woman
- E.M. Forster - Where Angels Fear to Tread, Howards End, Maurice
- D.H. Lawrence - Sons & Lovers, Women in Love, The Rainbow
- Alan Hollinghurst- The Line of Beauty
- Kazuo Ishiguro – The Remains of the Day
- James Joyce - Portrait of the Artist
- Virginia Woolf – Orlando, Mrs Dalloway
- Edith Wharton - The Age of Innocence
- Graham Greene - Power & the Glory, Brighton Rock, The End of the Affair
- George Orwell – 1984, Animal Farm
- John Steinbeck - The Grapes of Wrath
- Ernest Hemingway - For Whom the Bell Tolls
- Evelyn Waugh - Brideshead Revisited
- William Golding – The Lord of the Flies
- Jack Kerouac – On the Road
- John Le Carre – Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy
- J.L Carr- A month in the Country
- Paul Scott - Staying On
- Joseph Heller - Catch 22
- Margaret Drabble - The Millstone
- Fay Weldon - Life & Loves of a She-Devil
- Tony Parsons – Man and Boy
- Aldous Huxley – Brave New World
- Jean Rhys- Wide Sargasso Sea
- Jonathan Franzen – The Corrections
- Paul Auster – The New York Trilogy, Leviathan, The Book of Illusions
- Truman Capote – Breakfast at Tiffany's
- Salman Rushdie - Midnight's Children
- Khalid Hosseini - The Kite Runner
- Chinua Achebe - Things Fall Apart
- Doris Pilkington - The Rabbit Proof Fence
- Jung Chang - Wild Swans
- Yann Martel - Life of Pi
- Arthur Golden - Memoirs of a Geisha
- Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie - Half of a Yellow Sun
- Gabriel Garcia Marquez - One Hundred Years of Solitude, Love in the Time of Cholera
- Nancy Mitford- Love in a Cold Climate
- Ahdaf Soueif- The Map of Love

- Jeanette Winterson- The Passion
- Sarah Waters- The Night Watch
- Anne Tyler: Breathing Lessons
- Thomas Mann- Death in Venice

A Select Few Summaries:

Jane Austen: *Pride and Prejudice*

This perennially delightful romantic comedy gives us timeless lovers and sly social satire. Note that any other of her novels are equally delightful to read: **Sense and Sensibility**, **Emma** and **Persuasion** are particularly relevant to love.

Charlotte Brontë: *Villette* (1853)

In Brontë's most self-revealing novel, Lucy Snowe, the narrator-heroine, finds work as a teacher in Brussels (the *Villette* of the title). She has a strained relationship with the proprietress, Madame Beck; the school doctor, John Bretton, is attracted to her, but Lucy loses her heart to the martinet professor, Paul Emanuel. The couple plight their troth, despite obstacles thrown in their way by a sexually jealous Mme Beck. Before they can marry, Paul must work in the West Indies, where the slaves are proving unruly. On his return voyage he may, or may not, be drowned. Lucy declines to inform us, doubting the reader's strength. **JS**

AS Byatt: *Possession* (1990)

In this Booker-winning, bestselling novel (subtitled "A Romance"), Byatt makes great play with the notions of possession — between lovers, and between biographers and their subjects. When research assistant Roland Michell discovers — and then steals — a cache of letters from the London Library, he not only uncovers a clandestine relationship between two Victorian poets, but finds romantic fulfilment for himself. Part thrilling academic quest, part Victorian pastiche (with impressively rendered 19th century letters, diary entries and poetry), *Possession* restores sex to the Victorians and romance to the 20th century — and shows that while the language of love might change, love remains the same. **LA**

Truman Capote: *Breakfast at Tiffany's* (1958)

Those coming to Capote's novella after the 1961 movie will find an altogether darker, rougher gem than the sparkling Hollywood version. Told by a struggling writer (nicknamed "Fred" after the heroine's beloved brother), this is the story of Holly Golightly, a restless stray from the south, who makes her way in New York by asking men for "\$50 for the powder room". An attack of "the mean reds" can only be assuaged by jumping in a cab and going to Tiffany's: "If I could find a real-life place that made me feel like Tiff any's then I'd buy some furniture and give the cat a name." In one of the most famous soggy cinematic endings of all time, Audrey Hepburn, George Peppard and cat enjoy a raindrenched clinch, but in the novella only Fred and the cat are reunited. **LA**

Peter Carey: *Oscar and Lucinda* (1988)

It is 1864. Oscar Hopkins, a young English clergyman, and Lucinda Leplastrier, an heiress, meet aboard a ship bound for Australia and find they share a passion for gambling. On arrival, she buys a glass factory on a whim, and challenges him to transport a church built entirely of glass by boat from Sydney 250 miles up the coast to the Australian outback. A gripping study of sin, guilt and obsession, in which love proves to be the ultimate gamble. Carey modelled Oscar's character in part on the childhood recollections of Edmund Gosse in his memoir *Father and Son*. The novel won the 1988 Booker prize and was filmed in 1997 with Cate Blanchett and Ralph Fiennes. **Adam Newey**

JL Carr: *A Month in the Country* (1980)

In the slimmest novel to grace a Booker shortlist, the spiritual recovery of trench veteran Tom Birkin is charted as he restores a medieval wall-painting in a rural church. Much of the novel's potency is rooted in what isn't said, by

Carr and his characters alike, including the very thing that returns Birkin to the land of the living: his impossible love for the vicar's young wife, which Carr evokes in poetic, economic prose. Both Kenneth Branagh and Colin Firth made fresh-faced debuts in the 1987 film, which does justice to the novel's slow pace.

Rosalind Porter

George Eliot: Adam Bede (1859)

Eliot's first full-length novel, and the work which made her (pseudonymous) name as Victorian fiction's leading novelist of ideas. Set at the turn of the 19th century, in "Hayslope" during the Methodist revival, the story concerns Adam, a stern carpenter who is engaged to the pretty but flighty milkmaid, Hetty Sorrel. Hetty is seduced by the local squire, Arthur. He abandons her; she — pursuing him — kills their baby. She is sentenced to hang, but reprieved (by Arthur's last-minute intervention) With this novel Eliot raised Victorian fiction to a new level of intellectual and moral seriousness. **JS**

George Eliot: The Mill on the Floss (1860)

Eliot's most autobiographical work of fiction, and one of the great bildungsromane of its time, along with David Copperfield and Thackeray's Pendennis. Maggie and Tom are children of the mill-owner, Edward Tulliver. The passionate Maggie is contrasted with her genteel cousin, Lucy. Tom is less clever than his sister, but moralistic. Old Tulliver is ruined by local lawyer, Wakem. Maggie's love affair with the disabled Philip Wakem is prohibited by a vengeful Tom, who devotes himself to recovering the family mill. Maggie devotes herself to self-control. All is lost when brother and sister are drowned by a catastrophic flood which sweeps past the mill, but "in death they were not divided". **JS**

F Scott Fitzgerald: Tender is the Night (1934)

When actress Rosemary Hoyt arrives on the French riviera, she's seduced by the dash and verve of a group of American expats gathered around successful psychiatrist Dick Diver and his beautiful patient-turned-wife, Nicole. Outwardly ideal, their marriage (drawn in part from Fitzgerald's own) is in fact fatally flawed. As Rosemary is drawn deeper into their lives, she watches glamour give way to dissipation; Dick's drinking escalates and his behaviour deteriorates, leading ultimately to his personal and professional disintegration. Almost a decade in the making, Fitzgerald's elegiac romance is a narrative of failure: of ambition unrealised, relationships dishonoured, talent spent.

Sarah Crown

Gustave Flaubert: Madame Bovary (1856)

Emma Bovary, the wife of a kindly but dull country doctor, yearns for a life of luxury and romance that she has read about in popular novels. When a landowning libertine takes a fancy to her, she begins an affair which ends when he abandons her on the eve of their elopement. No sooner has she recovered than she takes up with a young lawyer with whom she has weekly trysts in a hotel room. As their passion cools, her extravagance increases, and she is lured into a credit trap from which only suicide can release her. Flaubert was prosecuted for obscenity when the book was first serialised, and it has been a bestseller ever since, becoming arguably the most famous realist novel.

Claire Armistead

John Fowles: The French Lieutenant's Woman (1969)

In 1969 John Fowles opened up the Victorian realist novel, with its driving marriage plot, to the instability of the existentialist age. Charles Smithson is a gentleman of independent means engaged to the conventional Ernestina while secretly falling in love with the intriguing Sarah Woodruff, a fallen woman who has been betrayed by the French lieutenant of the title. Set mainly on the Jurassic undercliff at Lyme Regis, the novel plays with the idea that the Victorian bourgeoisie — and the kind of novel that represents it — is on the brink of extinction. The book's celebrated double ending meant that for a long time it was considered unfilmable, until Harold Pinter's screenplay of 1981 proved this to be magnificently untrue. **KH**

Elizabeth Gaskell: Ruth (1853)

Ruth Hilton, an orphaned seamstress, is seduced and then abandoned by Henry Bellingham, a young squire. Rescued by a dissenting minister, Mr Benson, and his sister, and taken to live with them in his northern English parish, she passes as a widow and slowly builds a life of quiet respectability for herself and her son. But Bellingham's return threatens all of them with exposure of the lie in which they have colluded. Gaskell's sympathetic portrayal of a fallen woman was taboo-breaking for the time, though Ruth's eventual apotheosis, when she sacrifices her own life to save that of her seducer, may strike modern readers as overdone, just as it struck Charlotte Brontë as unjust to Ruth: "Why should she die?" she wrote to Gaskell. "Why are we to shut up the book weeping?" **AN**

Graham Greene: The End of the Affair (1951)

"Insecurity is the worst sense that lovers feel; sometimes the most humdrum desireless marriage seems better. Insecurity twists meanings and poisons trust," writes Greene in this novel of agonisingly restrained passion, set amid the shattered stained glass of wartime London. "This is a record of hate far more than of love," begins the novelist narrator Maurice Bendrix. The affair between Maurice and Sarah, married to the dull but decent civil servant Henry Miles, has been over for two years before the novel opens one rainy January night on Clapham Common in 1946. Maurice determines to find out why Sarah ended their relationship so abruptly — only to discover that instead of another lover, as he fears, she made a promise to God to renounce him after she believed he had been killed in an air raid. The last of Greene's so-called Catholic books (dedicated to C — Catherine Walston, his affair with whom was the basis for the novel), it is one his best. **Lisa Allardice**

Thomas Hardy: Far from the Madding Crowd (1874)

Hardy's breakthrough Wessex novel, in which he tells a bundle of stories while creating a whole world (which, as Hardy reminds us, is forever gone). The sheep farmer Gabriel Oak loves the beautiful but capricious Bathsheba Everdene. His hopes are dashed when his flock is lost. Bathsheba, who inherits a farm, is subsequently courted by the dashing Sergeant Troy. They marry, he is unfaithful (his other love, Fanny Robin, dies with their child in a workhouse). Troy decamps and is thought drowned. After seven years, Bathsheba is legally a widow, and accepts an offer of marriage from the stolid farmer, William Boldwood. Oak, meanwhile, is employed by her as farm steward. Troy returns and is shot dead by Boldwood. Oak, on the foundation of this tragedy, finally wins Bathsheba. **John Sutherland**

Thomas Hardy: Jude the Obscure (1895)

Hardy's last full-length Wessex novel provoked a storm of protest for anti-marriage doctrines. Jude Fawley, an orphan (with a mysterious scandal in his background), is inspired by the village schoolteacher, Phillotson, to educate himself. His rigorous programme of self-help ends when he is tricked into marriage by the carnal Arabella Donn. They separate and, now a stonemason, Jude goes to Christminster (Oxford), where he falls in love with a cousin, Sue Bridehead, a neurotic new woman. Their sinful union turns to catastrophe when their eldest child kills himself and his siblings. All ends tragically. This, Virginia Woolf asserted, is the only one of Hardy's novels which could be accused of pessimism. It is fairer to see it as a powerful contradiction to Victorian optimism. **JS**

Nathaniel Hawthorne: The Scarlet Letter (1850)

In the 17th-century puritan settlement of Boston, Hester Prynne is shunned and publicly shamed by the community for bearing a child out of wedlock. She is also condemned to wear a "fantastically embroidered" scarlet "A" on her dress. Unknown to her, her elderly husband — whom she believes to be dead — has returned, and is determined to discover the identity of the child's father. His hounding of the town's preacher leads to an intense and relentless portrayal of guilt and moral anguish. Hawthorne's long preface, "The Custom-House", which functions both as framing device and historical note, has become almost as celebrated as the novel itself. **Adam Newey**

Alan Hollinghurst: The Line of Beauty (2004)

The novel is set in Britain in three parts, taking place in 1983, 1986 and 1987. The story surrounds the young gay protagonist, Nick Guest. Nick is middle-class and from the fictional market town of Barwick in Northamptonshire; he has graduated from Worcester College, Oxford with a First in English and is to begin postgraduate studies at University College London. Many of the significant characters in the novel are Nick's male contemporaries from Oxford. The book explores the tension between Nick's intimate relationship with the Fedden family, in whose parties and holidays he participates, and the realities of his sexuality and gay life, which the Feddens accept only to the extent of never mentioning it. It explores themes of hypocrisy, privilege, drugs, and homosexuality, with the emerging AIDS crisis forming a backdrop to the book's conclusion.

Kazuo Ishiguro: The Remains of the Day (1989)

Seeking a recognisable English myth, Ishiguro chose the English butler, saying Jeeves was a big influence. But Salman Rushdie notes that "death, change, pain and evil invade the innocent Wodehouse-world". And the butler wants the former housekeeper back.

When butler Stevens sets out on a road trip to visit his former housekeeper, Miss Kenton, who is on the verge of leaving her marriage, he tells himself that his motives, as always, are purely professional. Looking back over 30 years of loyal service to Lord Darlington, Stevens reveals a life of sterile duty, routine and denial — in which his chance of personal happiness never stretched beyond an evening cup of cocoa with Miss Kenton. When Miss Kenton confesses to her lost hopes of a life with Stevens, his realisation of his own wasted past is as understated yet shocking as if he had smashed the best china. This masterful study of repression, regret and a dying class system won the Booker in 1989 and was made into a Merchant Ivory film, starring Anthony Hopkins and Emma Thompson, naturally. **LA**

Henry James: Portrait of a Lady (1881)

On his deathbed, Isabel Archer's cousin Ralph gasps, "Love remains. I don't know why we should suffer so much. Perhaps I shall find out." But readers still argue over the nature of her affection for her cruel and oppressive husband. Why does Isabel Archer go back to Gilbert Osmond? There can be few questions more often asked of the ending of a novel. The story of a young American woman "affronting her destiny", James endows his heroine with every possibility for freedom and happiness — an inheritance, independence of mind and beauty — only for her to become trapped by the Machiavellian Madame Merle and the sinister Osmond. Not even a passionate embrace with the manly Caspar Goodwood (is there a sexier kiss in all of literature?) can make her change her mind and renounce her duty. From the moment the dying Ralph entreats her "if you've been hated you've also been loved. Ah but, Isabel — adored!" the rest of the novel is a blur of tears. **LA**

DH Lawrence: Women in Love (1920)

Like many modernists, DH Lawrence was preoccupied with the possibility of unity and believed love could bridge — or further — the fragmentary nature of post-industrial life. Perhaps nowhere in the literary tradition is love permitted such messianic value than in his saccharinely titled fifth novel. Through the story of two couples struggling to negotiate their individualism within a relationship, the Lawrentian metaphysic is tried and tested. The most memorable scene in Ken Russell's 1969 film is certainly when Alan Bates and Oliver Reed wrestle naked, but action is largely relegated to the almost cosmic dimension of the characters' inner lives. **RP**

Thomas Mann: Death in Venice (1912)

When the ageing writer Gustav von Aschenbach catches sight of a young boy in Venice, his assumption that love is an ailment of the undisciplined character is dismantled. As a critique of stoical rationalism, Death in Venice shows how Aschenbach's "path of least resistance" attitude to matters of the heart gains him professional stature, but is ultimately what kills him — what death relieves him of. Unlike many novels which examine love's consequences, it is absolute in its endorsement of emotion, allowing even the most taboo of passions to be celebrated for their redemptive qualities. **RP**

Gabriel García Márquez: Love in the Time of Cholera (1985)

Fifty-one years, nine months and four days after Florentino Ariza was rejected for another man by the beautiful Fermina Daza, he finds her helping out at her husband's wake. In the intervening years, he has made a fortune and sampled every variety of love, but has "not stopped thinking of her for a single moment". Set in a steaming, disease-prone and politically unstable Caribbean country, and culminating in the reunion of the aged lovers aboard a riverboat, García Márquez's novel delicately concludes that true passion is not the preserve of young bodies. **CA**

George Meredith: The Egoist (1879)

A novel which many Victorians would have proposed as one of the greatest that their literary culture produced. The egoist is Sir Willoughby Patterne, a man brought up surrounded by wealth and female adoration. On coming into his inheritance, he announces his engagement to Constantia Durham — but she sees through him and elopes with another man. Willoughby tours the world for three years and when he returns he ignores the devotion of Laetitia Dale, who has always loved him. Instead he courts Clara Middleton, the daughter of a wine-loving clergyman. They become engaged, but confronted by Clara's reluctance, he treacherously forms a second engagement with Laetitia. He is exposed. Laetitia remains true to her egoist. The novel embodies Meredith's complex theory of the comic spirit and deserves to be read more than it is nowadays. **JS**

Nancy Mitford: Love in a Cold Climate (1949)

When the remote and lovely Polly returns from India and reveals she wants to marry her lecherous uncle she sets the cat among the inter-war, upper-class pigeons in this deliciously sharp and funny novel. Mitford's follow-up to *The Pursuit of Love* is, amazingly, even more brittle, sparkling and outrageous. The Radlett family are still in evidence, but they play second fiddle to the Hamptons, particularly young Polly, whose polite manner must surely hide a secret. Her mother, Lady Montdore, is a terrific old battleaxe, one of literature's great gems; as is Cedric, who calls everyone "angel" and dresses up as Romance for a fancy-dress ball. The comedy becomes all the more entrancing when you realise how dark is the story it adorns. **CO**

Jean Rhys: Wide Sargasso Sea (1966)

This brief, exotic novel tells the story of Antoinette, a Creole heiress who is married off to an unnamed Englishman, falls in love with him but is gradually driven mad. By the end, she is incarcerated in an attic room, in a cold foreign country, but still dreaming of "the smell of vetivet and frangipani, of cinnamon and dust and lime trees". Told in turn by Antoinette and her husband, the Mr Rochester of *Jane Eyre*, it is, as Francis Wyndham commented in his introduction, "an imaginative feat almost uncanny in its vivid intensity". **Prudence Hone**

Samuel Richardson: Pamela (1740)

This story of a maidservant struggling to resist the advances of her sexually predatory master was the first complex novel of love in English fiction. Told in the heroine's own self-questioning, agitated letters, it traces her feelings moment by moment. She is fighting to save her soul as well as her body. Mr B, the would-be rake, intercepts and reads those letters, and as a result falls in love with her. His intended victim conquers him with her writing. **John Mullan**

Marilynne Robinson: Gilead (2004)

Few contemporary writers are as critically acclaimed as Marilynne Robinson. The Pulitzer prizewinning *Gilead*, rapturously received more than 20 years after Robinson's first novel *Housekeeping*, could equally belong in a different category, as it is a novel-long letter from an adoring 72-year-old father, Reverend John Ames, who believes he is terminally ill, to his seven-year-old son. But as well as being a powerfully lucid expression of filial love and faith,

it is the story of how two men achieve grace through marriage — one unexpectedly late in life, the other through an illegal union with a black woman from Tennessee. Set in small-town Iowa in 1956, *Gilead* is a quiet, slow-moving but ultimately majestic avowal of the redemptive power of love. **LA**

Ahdaf Soueif: *The Map of Love* (1999)

In 13 years of reading fiction by women since founding the Orange prize, Kate Mosse cites *The Map of Love* as her favourite. Soueif's sweeping family saga describes two cross-cultural romances separated by nearly a century. Epic in its historical and geographical range yet rich in detail, the novel is also a love letter to Soueif's native Egypt. Shortlisted for the Booker prize in 1999, it combines romance and politics with a rare passion. **LA**

Anne Tyler: *Breathing Lessons* (1988)

Winner of the 1989 Pulitzer Prize for fiction, *Breathing Lessons*'s structure is simple — a middle-aged couple, Ira and Maggie, spend a day driving to and from a funeral — but it is stuffed with more insight into human relations than many other novels. The couple have typical marital spats while quietly reflecting on their individual dreams and disappointments, particularly their son Jesse, a wannabe rock star, who has been a lifelong bafflement to his conventional father. With a deceptively light touch, Tyler creates a stunningly realistic, and ultimately optimistic, portrait of marriage. **Hadley Freeman**

Sarah Waters: *The Night Watch* (2006)

In a bold leap from the Victorian lesbiana of Waters's previous hit novels, *The Night Watch*, told backwards from 1947 to 1941, traces the lives of its four lost characters as they pick their way back through the rubble and ruined lives of austerity Britain to the danger of the Blitz. With Pinter's *Betrayal* as a template, *The Night Watch* records four love stories from sorry endings to romantic beginnings. And while war-ravaged London — immaculately rendered in both atmosphere and detail — provides a dramatic backcloth, Waters' is most interested in the inner conflict of her characters' hearts. **LA**

Edith Wharton: *The Age of Innocence* (1920)

This look back at the rigid conventions of New York society in the 1870s, where "they all lived in a kind of hieroglyphic world, where the real thing was never said or done or even thought", is also an examination of duty and sacrifice. Newland Archer, engaged to the perfect but conventional May, falls in love with May's exotic cousin, Countess Ellen Olenska, but marriage and May's pregnancy come between them. Poignant, measured and wistful, it was a bestseller and won the Pulitzer prize — the first to be awarded to a woman. **PH**

Jeanette Winterson: *The Passion* (1987)

A French farmboy idolises Napoleon Bonaparte and becomes his personal cooker of chickens; a girl is born who can walk on water: realism and characterisation are not the point of this sinuous, casually brutal, often gorgeous novel, but Winterson's readers would not really expect that. Rather, it is a meditation on the human waste of war, on necessary risk, and, above all, on passion, which brooks no dissent, clothes the world in colour, and clarifies everything — except when it doesn't. **Aida Edemariam**

Texts you **CANNOT** use for your NEA:

Margaret Atwood	The Handmaid's Tale
Jane Austen	Persuasion
Pat Barker	Regeneration
Pat Barker	Life Class
Barry Sebastian	A Long, Long Way
William Blake	The Garden of Love
Charlotte Brontë	Jane Eyre
Emily Brontë	Wuthering Heights
Robert Burns	Song (Ae fond kiss)
Lord Byron	She Walks in Beauty
Kate Chopin	The Awakening
Caryl Churchill	Top Girls
Wendy Cope	After the Lunch
Richard Curtis and Ben Elton	Blackadder Goes Forth
John Donne	The Flea
Keith Douglas	Vergissmeinnicht
Ernest Dowson	Non Sum Qualis Eram Bonae sub Regno Cynarae
Daphne Du Maurier	Rebecca
Carol Ann Duffy	The Love Poem
Carol Ann Duffy	Feminine Gospels
Ben Elton	The First Casualty
Sebastian Faulks	Birdsong
F. Scott Fitzgerald	The Great Gatsby
E. M. Forster	A Room with a View
Michael Frayn	Spies
Brian Friel	Translations
Robert Frost	Love and a Question
Brian Gardner, ed.	Up the Line to Death
Robert Graves	Goodbye to All That
David Haig	My Boy Jack
Thomas Hardy	The Ruined Maid
Thomas Hardy	At an Inn
Thomas Hardy	Tess of the D'Urbervilles
Tony Harrison	Timer
Tony Harrison	Selected Poems (2013 edition)
L. P. Hartley	The Go-Between
Seamus Heaney	Punishment
Seamus Heaney	New Selected Poems (1966–1987)
Ernest Hemingway	A Farewell to Arms
Susan Hill	Strange Meeting
Ian Hislop and Nick Newman	The Wipers Times
Ted Hughes	Birthday Letters
Elizabeth Jennings	One Flesh
John Keats	La Belle Dame sans Merci
Ken Kesey	One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest
Philip Larkin	Wild Oats
Philip Larkin	Talking in Bed
Joan Littlewood	Oh! What a Lovely War
Richard Lovelace	The Scrutiny

Louis MacNeice	Meeting Point
Andrew Marvell	To His Coy Mistress
Ian McEwan	Atonement
Charlotte Mew	A quoi bon dire
Edna St. Vincent Millay	I, being born a woman and distressed
Arthur Miller	All My Sons
Paul Muldoon	Long Finish
Ian Hislop and Nick Newman	The Wipers Times
Sylvia Plath	Ariel
Catherine Reilly, ed.	Scars Upon My Heart
Erich Maria Remarque	All Quiet on the Western Front
Michael Symmons Roberts	To John Donne
Christina Rossetti	Remember
Arundhati Roy	The God of Small Things
Anne Sexton	For My Lover, Returning to His Wife
William Shakespeare	Othello
William Shakespeare	The Taming of the Shrew
William Shakespeare	Measure for Measure
William Shakespeare	The Winter's Tale
William Shakespeare	Sonnet 116
Owen Sheers	Skirrid Hill
R. C. Sherriff	Journey's End
Jon Stallworthy, ed.	The Oxford Book of War Poetry
Jon Stallworthy, ed.	The War Poems of Wilfred Owen
Kathryn Stockett	The Help
Graham Swift	Waterland
Alice Walker	The Color Purple
George Walter, ed.	The Penguin Book of First World War Poetry
Timberlake Wertenbaker	Our Country's Good
Rebecca West	The Return of the Soldier
Peter Whelan	The Accrington Pals
Tennessee Williams	A Streetcar Named Desire
Tennessee Williams	Cat on a Hot Tin Roof
John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester	A Song (Absent from thee)
Jeanette Winterson	Oranges are not the Only Fruit
Sir Thomas Wyatt	Whoso list to hunt I knowe where is an hynde
Richard Yates	Revolutionary Road