

# 2024-25 English Summer Reading Assignment - Grades 11 & 12

May 2024

## Required Summer Reading at GCS: Methodology and Purpose

Because Grace Christian School is committed to a strong reading program for its students, classic literature is assigned throughout the year that is specifically selected to coincide with other disciplines. To further our vision for strong readers, we believe in continuing reading expectations for the summer in preparation for life in general and specifically for success in high school, pre-college testing, and college itself.

The Grace Christian School English summer reading assignment is an important aspect of the academic program, especially considering the following, as studies reveal:

- The number of books read in summer is consistently related to academic gains.
- Significant vocabulary gains take place when students read in the summer.
- Significant fluency gains take place through summer reading programs.

When selecting books for summer reading, the GCS Language Arts faculty make choices based on the works’ literary merit, complexity, and contextual significance. It is for the following reasons that reading is assigned to students over the summer:

- to foster a lifelong love of reading.
- to provide the opportunity for students to keep literacy skills sharpened.
- to motivate students to read for pleasure while guiding them to make sound choices.
- to foster the correlation between reading and writing skills.
- to encourage students to discover and develop a sense of ownership in their reading lives.

### Assignment specifics:

- Each student must select works from the list below that they **have not read prior to this summer**.
- Students must read—not listen to a recording of—the entirety of unabridged (complete) versions of the books, not abridged or condensed versions. There is no need to purchase the books, unless that is preferred. ***This is a reading-only assignment and is not to be replaced with listening to audio recordings of the books.***
- **The assignment is due on the student’s first English class day of the week of August 19, 2024.**
- **Submission of the assignment consists of submitting to the English teacher a dated, completed hard copy of this page, signed by both parent and student.**
- This assignment grade is an English class Quarter 1 major grade. Completion of the reading of 3 books earns an A grade; 2 books a B; and 1 book a C.
- Questions about the assignment should be emailed to HS Language Arts Department Chair, Kathy Kilmer ([kkilmer@gcswarriors.org](mailto:kkilmer@gcswarriors.org)).

*New students who enroll in GCS for the 2024-25 school after July 31, 2024, are exempt from the assignment.*

I, \_\_\_\_\_, have read in full the following book(s) this summer:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student’s Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent’s Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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### READING OPTIONS: FICTION

#### ***Agnes Grey*, Anne Brontë**

“*Agnes Grey* by Anne Bronte is a trenchant expose of the frequently isolated, intellectually stagnant and emotionally-starved conditions under which many governesses worked in the mid-19th century. This is a deeply personal novel written from the author's own experience and as such *Agnes Grey* has a power and poignancy which mark it out as a landmark work of literature dealing with the social and moral evolution of English society during the last century.” - Description quoted from [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com).

#### ***Shirley*, Charlotte Brontë**

“The Shirley of the title is a woman of independent means; her friend Caroline is not. Both struggle with what a woman's role is and can be. Their male counterparts - Louis, the powerless tutor, and Robert, his cloth-manufacturing brother - also stand at odds to society's expectations. The novel is set in a period of social and political ferment, featuring class disenfranchisement, the drama of Luddite machine-breaking, and the divisive effects of the Napoleonic Wars. But Charlotte Brontë's particular strength lies in exploring the hidden psychological drama of love, loss and the quest for identity. Personal and public agitation are brought together against the dramatic backdrop of her native Yorkshire.” - Description quoted from [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com).

#### ***Villette*, Charlotte Brontë**

"Villette! Villette! Have you read it?" exclaimed George Eliot when Charlotte Brontë's final novel appeared in 1853. She continued, "It is a still more wonderful book than *Jane Eyre*. There is something almost preternatural in its power." Arguably Brontë's most refined and deeply felt work, *Villette* draws on her profound loneliness following the deaths of her three siblings. Lucy Snowe, the narrator of *Villette*, flees from an unhappy past in England to begin a new life as a teacher at a French boarding school in the great cosmopolitan capital of *Villette*. Soon Lucy's struggle for independence is overshadowed by both her friendship with a worldly English doctor and her feelings for an autocratic schoolmaster. Brontë's strikingly modern heroine must decide if there is any man in her society with whom she can live and still be free. #romanticism #19th century #gothic

#### ***Bulfinch's Mythology*, Thomas Bulfinch** (Counts as 2 books.)

For almost a century and a half, *Bulfinch's Mythology* has been the text by which the great tales of the gods and goddesses, Greek and Roman antiquity; Scandinavian, Celtic, and Oriental fables and myths; and the age of chivalry have been known. The stories are divided into three sections: The Age of Fable or Stories of Gods and Heroes (first published in 1855); The Age of Chivalry (1858), which contains King Arthur and His Knights, The Mabinogion, and The Knights of English History; and Legends of Charlemagne or Romance of the Middle Ages (1863). For the Greek myths, Bulfinch drew on Ovid and Virgil, and for the sagas of the north, from Mallet's Northern Antiquities. He provides lively versions of the myths of Zeus and Hera, Venus and Adonis, Daphne and Apollo, and their cohorts on Mount Olympus; the love story of Pygmalion and Galatea; the legends of the Trojan War and the epic wanderings of Ulysses and Aeneas; the joys of Valhalla and the furies of Thor; and the tales of Beowulf and Robin Hood. The tales are eminently readable. As Bulfinch wrote, "Without a knowledge of mythology much of the elegant literature of our own language cannot be understood and appreciated. . . . Our book is an attempt to solve this problem, by telling the stories of mythology in such a manner as to make them a source of amusement." #mythology #classicalmythology #kingarthur #norsemythology

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### ***Don Quixote*, Cervantes (Counts as 2 books.)**

Don Quixote has become so entranced by reading chivalric romances, that he determines to become a knight-errant himself. In the company of his faithful squire, Sancho Panza, his exploits blossom in all sorts of wonderful ways. While Quixote's fancy often leads him astray—he tilts at windmills, imagining them to be giants—Sancho acquires cunning and a certain sagacity. Sane madman and wise fool, they roam the world together, and together they have haunted readers' imaginations for nearly four hundred years. With its experimental form and literary playfulness, *Don Quixote* generally has been recognized as the first modern novel. The book has had enormous influence on a host of writers, from Fielding and Sterne to Flaubert, Dickens, Melville, and Faulkner, who reread it once a year, "just as some people read the Bible." #adventure #romance #spanishliterature

### ***The Amazing Adventures of Father Brown*, G.K. Chesterton**

Father Brown, one of the most quirkily genial and lovable characters to emerge from English detective fiction, first made his appearance in *The Innocence of Father Brown* in 1911. That first collection of stories established G.K. Chesterton's kindly cleric in the front rank of eccentric sleuths. This complete collection contains all the favorite Father Brown stories, showing a quiet wit and compassion that has endeared him to many, while solving his mysteries by a mixture of imagination and a sympathetic worldliness in a totally believable manner. #christian #detectivestories #shortstorycollection #mystery

### ***The Moonstone*, Wilkie Collins**

“At a party celebrating her eighteenth birthday, Rachel Verinder wears the stunning yellow diamond she unexpectedly inherited from her uncle, Colonel John Herncastle. She is not aware that the precious gem, known as the Moonstone, has been missing since it was plundered from a sacred Hindu shrine in southern India where her uncle had served with the British army fifty years ago. But someone knows the secret of the Moonstone and will go to desperate measures to retrieve it. When it goes missing later that night, suspicions are raised and accusations fly. As divergent accounts reveal more details, the diamond’s recovery is complicated by unexpected twists and turns. Sifting through a compelling list of suspects, the indomitable Sergeant Cuff must find the truth about the Moonstone and its mysterious disappearance.”

- Description quoted from [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com).

### ***The Divine Comedy*, Dante (Counts as 3 books.)**

This Renaissance epic of Dante’s descent into Hell (Inferno), journey through Purgatory (Purgatorio), and ascent into Heaven (Paradiso) is one of Western literature’s most important works. Each of the three sections is a complete work in itself, as the poet Dante wrestles with his mortality, sin, God’s love, and redemption. #renaissancechristianity #italianliterature #epic #classicliterature

### ***A Tale of Two Cities*, Charles Dickens**

After eighteen years as a political prisoner in the Bastille, the aging Doctor Manette is finally released and reunited with his daughter in England. There the lives of two very different men, Charles Darnay, an exiled French aristocrat, and Sydney Carton, a disreputable but brilliant English lawyer, become enmeshed through their love for Lucie Manette. From the tranquil roads of London, they are drawn against their will to the vengeful, bloodstained streets of Paris at the height of the Reign of Terror, and they soon fall under the lethal shadow of La Guillotine. #frenchrevolution #paris #london #redemption

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### ***Bleak House*, Charles Dickens**

*Bleak House* is a novel by Charles Dickens, published in 20 monthly installments between March 1852 and September 1853. It is held to be one of Dickens's finest novels, containing one of the most vast, complex and engaging arrays of minor characters and subplots in his entire canon. At the novel's core is long-running litigation in England's Court of Chancery, *Jarndyce v Jarndyce*, which has far-reaching consequences for all involved. The litigation, which already has taken many years and consumed between £60,000 and £70,000 in court costs, is emblematic of the failure of Chancery. Though Chancery lawyers and judges criticized Dickens's portrait of Chancery as exaggerated and unmerited, his novel helped to spur an ongoing movement that culminated in the enactment of legal reform in the 1870s. #victorianengland #socialsatire

### ***Crime and Punishment*, Fyodor Dostoevsky** (Counts as 2 books.)

Through the story of the brilliant but conflicted young Raskolnikov and the murder he commits, Fyodor Dostoevsky explores the theme of redemption through suffering. *Crime and Punishment* put Dostoevsky at the forefront of Russian writers when it appeared in 1866 and is now one of the most famous and influential novels in world literature. The poverty-stricken Raskolnikov, a talented student, devises a theory about extraordinary men being above the law, since in their brilliance they think “new thoughts” and so contribute to society. He then sets out to prove his theory by murdering a vile, cynical old pawnbroker and her sister. The act brings Raskolnikov into contact with his own buried conscience and with two characters — the deeply religious Sonia, who has endured great suffering, and Porfiry, the intelligent and discerning official who is charged with investigating the murder — both of whom compel Raskolnikov to feel the split in his nature. Dostoevsky provides readers with a suspenseful, penetrating psychological analysis that goes beyond the crime — which in the course of the novel demands drastic punishment — to reveal something about the human condition: The more we intellectualize, the more imprisoned we become. #russianliterature #classicliterature #redemption #humansuffering

### ***The Brothers Karamazov*, Fyodor Dostoevsky** (Counts as 2 books.)

*The Brothers Karamazov* is a passionate philosophical novel set in 19th century Russia, that enters deeply into the ethical debates of God, free will, and morality. It is a spiritual drama of moral struggles concerning faith, doubt, and reason, set against a modernizing Russia. Although written in the 19th century, *The Brothers Karamazov* displays a number of modern elements. Dostoyevsky composed the book with a variety of literary techniques. Though privy to many of the thoughts and feelings of the protagonists, the narrator is a self-proclaimed writer; he discusses his own mannerisms and personal perceptions so often in the novel that he becomes a character. Through his descriptions, the narrator's voice merges imperceptibly into the tone of the people he is describing, often extending into the characters' most personal thoughts. #russianliterature #classicliterature #redemption

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### ***Adam Bede*, George Eliot**

Hailed for its sympathetic and accurate rendering of nineteenth-century English pastoral life, *Adam Bede* was George Eliot's first full-length novel and a bestseller from the moment of publication. Eliot herself called it "a country story - full of the breath of cows and scent of hay." In the early days of the Napoleonic Wars, Adam Bede is a hardworking carpenter with enormous physical strength and considerable force of will. But Adam has a single flaw: his blind love of Hetty Sorrel, a vain, shallow dairymaid who spurns Adam but is easily seduced by the local squire. The bitter and tragic consequences of her actions shake the very foundations of their serene rural community. While *Adam Bede* represents a timeless story of seduction and betrayal, it is also a deeper, impassioned meditation on the irrevocable consequences of human actions and on moral growth and redemption through suffering. #19thcentury #romanticism #redemption

### ***Middlemarch*, George Eliot**

"We believe in her as in a woman we might providentially meet some fine day when we should find ourselves doubting of the immortality of the soul," wrote Henry James of Dorothea Brooke, who shares with the young doctor Tertius Lydgate not only a central role in *Middlemarch* but also a fervent conviction that life should be heroic. By the time the novel appeared to tremendous popular and critical acclaim in 1871-2, George Eliot was recognized as England's finest living novelist. It was her ambition to create a world and portray a whole community—tradespeople, middle classes, country gentry—in the rising provincial town of Middlemarch, circa 1830. Vast and crowded, rich in narrative irony and suspense, *Middlemarch* is richer still in character, in its sense of how individual destinies are shaped by and shape the community, and in the great art that enlarges the reader's sympathy and imagination. It is truly, as Virginia Woolf famously remarked, "one of the few English novels written for grown-up people." #19thcentury #romanticism #socialcriticism

### ***The Return of the Native*, Thomas Hardy**

One of Thomas Hardy's most powerful works, *The Return of the Native* centers famously on Egdon Heath, the wild, haunted Wessex moor that D. H. Lawrence called "the real stuff of tragedy." The heath's changing face mirrors the fortunes of the farmers, innkeepers, sons, mothers, and lovers who populate the novel. The "native" is Clym Yeobright, who comes home from a cosmopolitan life in Paris. He; his cousin Thomasin; her fiancé, Damon Wildevie; and the willful Eustacia Vye are the protagonists in a tale of doomed love, passion, alienation, and melancholy, as Hardy brilliantly explores that theme so familiar throughout his fiction: the diabolical role of chance in determining the course of a life. #victorianliterature #humanpurpose

### ***The Blithedale Romance*, Nathaniel Hawthorne**

"A group of Utopians, dispirited by a mid-19th-century America they view as dissolute, takes to the pastoral life, but finds little satisfaction in its socialist living experiments. Little by little, the members' hypocrisies, contradictions, and ideological and economic paradoxes are exposed — even as they attempt to create the ideal community. Among the group are Hollingsworth, an idealistic but egotistical reformer; Zenobia, an ardent feminist and exotic beauty; Priscilla, her frail and mysterious sister; Old Moodie, the sisters' manipulative father; Westervelt, a demonic mesmerist; and Miles Coverdale, whose narrative of the Blithedale experiment reveals the sexist and classist oppression permeating the Utopian group." - Description quoted from [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com).

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### ***Dune*, Frank Herbert**

Set in the far future amidst a sprawling feudal interstellar empire where planetary dynasties are controlled by noble houses that owe an allegiance to the imperial House Corrino, *Dune* tells the story of young Paul Atreides (the heir apparent to Duke Leto Atreides and heir of House Atreides) as he and his family accept control of the desert planet Arrakis, the only source of the 'spice' melange, the most important and valuable substance in the cosmos. The story explores the complex, multi-layered interactions of politics, religion, ecology, technology, and human emotion as the forces of the empire confront each other for control of Arrakis. Published in 1965, it won the Hugo Award in 1966 and the inaugural Nebula Award for Best Novel. *Dune* is frequently cited as the world's best-selling science fiction novel. #sciencefiction #classic

### ***Les Misérables*, Victor Hugo** (Counts as 2 books.)

Introducing one of the most famous characters in literature, Jean Valjean—the noble peasant imprisoned for stealing a loaf of bread. In *Les Misérables* Victor Hugo takes readers deep into the Parisian underworld, immerses them in a battle between good and evil, and carries them onto the barricades during the uprising of 1832. Within his dramatic story are themes that capture the intellect and the emotions: crime and punishment, the relentless persecution of Valjean by Inspector Javert, the desperation of the prostitute Fantine, the amorality of the rogue Thénardier and the universal desire to escape the prisons of our own minds. *Les Misérables* gave Victor Hugo a canvas upon which he portrayed his criticism of the French political and judicial systems, but the portrait which resulted is larger than life, epic in scope—an extravagant spectacle that dazzles the senses even as it touches the heart. #frenchliterature #frenchrevolution #romance #redemption

### ***Dubliners*, James Joyce**

James Joyce's *Dubliners* is a vivid and unflinching portrait of “dear dirty Dublin” at the turn of the twentieth century. These fifteen stories, including such unforgettable ones as “Araby,” “Grace,” and “The Dead,” delve into the heart of the city of Joyce's birth, capturing the cadences of Dubliners' speech and portraying with an almost brute realism their outer and inner lives. *Dubliners* is Joyce at his most accessible and most profound. The stories were written when Irish nationalism was at its peak, and a search for a national identity and purpose was raging; at a crossroads of history and culture, Ireland was jolted by various converging ideas and influences. They center on Joyce's idea of an epiphany (a moment where a character experiences a life-changing self-understanding or illumination). Many of the characters in *Dubliners* later appear in minor roles in Joyce's novel *Ulysses*. The initial stories in the collection are narrated by child protagonists, and as the stories continue, they deal with the lives and concerns of progressively older people. This is in line with Joyce's tripartite division of the collection into childhood, adolescence, and maturity. #shortstorycollection #ireland #modernistliterature

### ***Out of the Silent Planet (Space Trilogy, Book 1)*, C.S. Lewis**

In the first novel of C.S. Lewis's classic science fiction trilogy, Dr Ransom, a Cambridge academic, is abducted and taken on a spaceship to the red planet of Malacandra, which he knows as Mars. His captors are plotting to plunder the planet's treasures and plan to offer Ransom as a sacrifice to the creatures who live there. Ransom discovers he has come from the 'silent planet'—Earth—whose tragic story is known throughout the universe. #sciencefiction #spacetravel #christianallegory #socialsatire #adventure

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### ***Perelandra (Space Trilogy, Book 2), C.S. Lewis***

The second novel in Lewis's science fiction trilogy tells of Dr. Ransom's voyage to the planet of Perelandra (Venus). Dr Ransom is sent by the Elida to Perelandra (Venus) to battle against evil incarnate and preserve a second Eden from the evil forces present in the possessed body of his enemy, Weston.

### ***That Hideous Strength (Space Trilogy, Book 3), C.S. Lewis***

This final story is set on Earth and tells of a terrifying conspiracy against humanity. The story surrounds Mark and Jane Studdock, a newly married couple. Mark is a sociologist who is enticed to join an organization called N.I.C.E. which aims to control all human life. His wife, meanwhile, has bizarre prophetic dreams about a decapitated scientist, Alcasan. As Mark is drawn inextricably into the sinister organization, he discovers the truth of his wife's dreams when he meets the literal head of Alcasan which is being kept alive by infusions of blood. Jane seeks help concerning her dreams at a community called St. Anne's, where she meets their leader—Dr. Ransom (the main character of the previous two titles in the trilogy). The story ends in a final spectacular scene at the N.I.C.E. headquarters where Merlin appears to confront the powers of Hell.

### ***Moby Dick* by Herman Melville**

The book is sailor Ishmael's narrative of the obsessive quest of Ahab, captain of the whaling ship Pequod, for revenge on Moby Dick, the giant white sperm whale that on the ship's previous voyage bit off Ahab's leg at the knee. A contribution to the literature of the American Renaissance, its reputation as a Great American Novel was established only in the 20th century, after the centennial of its author's birth. William Faulkner said he wished he had written the book himself, and D. H. Lawrence called it one of the strangest and most wonderful books in the world and the greatest book of the sea ever written. Its opening sentence, Call me Ishmael, is among world literature's most famous.” - Description quoted from [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com).

### ***Paradise Lost*, John Milton**

In *Paradise Lost*, Milton produced a poem of epic scale, conjuring up a vast, awe-inspiring cosmos and ranging across huge tracts of space and time. And yet, in putting a charismatic Satan and naked Adam and Eve at the center of this story, he also created an intensely human tragedy on the Fall of Man. Written when Milton was in his fifties—blind, bitterly disappointed by the Restoration, and briefly in danger of execution—*Paradise Lost's* apparent ambivalence towards authority has led to intense debate about whether it manages to ‘justify the ways of God to men’, or exposes the cruelty of Christianity. #classicliterature #epic

### ***Lord Peter Wimsey novels, Dorothy Sayers* (Choose any of the complete novels in the series.)**

Dorothy L. Sayers is best known for her mysteries, a series of novels and short stories set between World War I and World War II that feature English aristocrat and amateur sleuth Lord Peter Wimsey. A dilettante who solves mysteries for his own amusement, Wimsey is an archetype for the British gentleman detective. Lord Peter is often assisted by his valet and former army colleague Mervyn Bunter, his good friend and future brother in law Inspector/Chief Inspector Charles "Parker Bird" Parker, and later by his future wife Harriet Vane.  
#mysterynovels

### ***Othello*, William Shakespeare** (Folger edition recommended.)

In Shakespeare's classic tragedy of jealousy and passion, the outsider Othello is played by his alleged friend Iago, leading to heartbreak, murder, and self-destruction. Themes of racial tension, class struggles, the nature of betrayal, and the battle of the sexes intermingle in this play which makes us examine the destructive nature of insecurity and doubt. #classic #drama #romance #tragedy

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### ***As You Like It*, William Shakespeare** (Folger edition recommended.)

In this comedy, heroine Rosalind is one of Shakespeare's most inspiring characters and has more lines than any of Shakespeare's female characters. Rosalind, the daughter of a banished duke, falls in love with Orlando, the disinherited son of one of the duke's friends. When she is banished from the court by her usurping uncle, Duke Frederick, Rosalind takes on the appearance of a boy calling herself Ganymede. She travels with her cousin Celia and the jester Touchstone to the Forest of Arden, where her father and his friends live in exile. Themes about life and love, including aging, the natural world, and death are included in the play. New friends are made and families are reunited. #classic #drama #comedy #romance

### ***The Taming of the Shrew*, William Shakespeare** (Folger edition recommended.)

The beautiful and gentle Bianca has no shortage of admirers (Lucentio, Gremio and Hortensio) but her father insists that she will not marry until her shrewish sister, Katharina, is betrothed. Bianca's suitors persuade fortune-seeker Petruchio to court her. The suitors pay for any costs involved and there is also the goal of Katharina's dowry. Petruchio marries Katharina and he carries Katharina off to his country house with his servant Grumio. Petruchio intends to browbeat Katharina into submission and he denies her food, sleep and her new clothes, whilst continuously singing her praises. Katharina is tamed. They return to Padua where Lucentio has won Bianca. At a banquet they wager on who has the most obedient wife. Each wife is issued with commands but only Katharina obeys and promptly lectures everyone on the importance of wifely submission. #classic #comedy #romance #battleofthesexes

### ***Saint Joan*, George Bernard Shaw**

Based on the life and trial of Joan of Arc and published in 1924, not long after the canonization of Joan of Arc by the Roman Catholic Church, the play dramatizes what is known of her life based on the substantial records of her trial. Shaw studied the transcripts and decided that the concerned people acted in good faith according to their beliefs. Shaw wrote the following in his preface to the play: "There are no villains in the piece. Crime, like disease, is not interesting: it is something to be done away with by general consent, and that is all [there is] about it. It is what men do at their best, with good intentions, and what normal men and women find that they must and will do in spite of their intentions, that really concerns us." #drama #historicalfiction #france #tragedy

### ***The Faerie Queene*, Edmund Spenser**

*The Faerie Queene* was the first epic in English and one of the most influential poems in the language for later poets from Milton to Tennyson. Dedicating his work to Elizabeth I, Spenser brilliantly united medieval romance and renaissance epic to expound the glory of the Virgin Queen. The poem recounts the quests of knights including Sir Guyon, Knight of Constance, who resists temptation, and Artegall, Knight of Justice, whose story alludes to the execution of Mary Queen of Scots. Composed as an overt moral and political allegory, *The Faerie Queene*, with its dramatic episodes of chivalry, pageantry and courtly love, is also a supreme work of atmosphere, color and sensuous description. #epic #romance

### ***Gulliver's Travels*, Jonathan Swift** (Counts as 2 books.)

Shipwrecked and cast adrift, Lemuel Gulliver wakes to find himself on Lilliput, an island inhabited by little people, whose height makes their quarrels over fashion and fame seem ridiculous. His subsequent encounters - with the crude giants of Brobdingnag, the philosophical Houyhnhnms and the brutish Yahoos - give Gulliver new, bitter insights into human behavior. Swift's savage satire view mankind in a distorted hall of mirrors as a diminished, magnified and finally bestial species, presenting us with an uncompromising reflection of



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ourselves. #satire #18thcentury #adventure #fantasy

### ***War and Peace, Leo Tolstoy*** (Counts as 3 books.)

Tolstoy's epic masterpiece intertwines the lives of private and public individuals during the time of the Napoleonic wars and the French invasion of Russia. The fortunes of the Rostovs and the Bolkonskys, of Pierre, Natasha, and Andrei, are intimately connected with the national history that is played out in parallel with their lives. Balls and soirees alternate with councils of war and the machinations of statesmen and generals, scenes of violent battles with everyday human passions in a work whose extraordinary imaginative power has never been surpassed. The prodigious cast of characters seem to act and move as if connected by threads of destiny as the novel relentlessly questions ideas of free will, fate, and providence. Yet Tolstoy's portrayal of marital relations and scenes of domesticity is as truthful and poignant as the grand themes that underlie them.

#russianliterature #classic #humannature

### READING OPTIONS: NON-FICTION

### ***Confessions, St. Augustine*** (Counts as 2 books.)

Augustine's *Confessions* is one of the most influential and most innovative works of Latin literature. Written in the author's early forties in the last years of the fourth century A.D. and during his first years as a bishop, they reflect on his life and on the activity of remembering and interpreting a life. Books I-IV are concerned with infancy and learning to talk, schooldays, sexual desire and adolescent rebellion, intense friendships and intellectual exploration. Augustine evolves and analyzes his past with all the resources of the reading which shaped his mind: Virgil and Cicero, Neoplatonism and the Bible. This volume, which aims to be usable by students who are new to Augustine, alerts readers to the verbal echoes and allusions of Augustine's brilliant and varied Latin, and explains his theological and philosophical questioning of what God is and what it is to be human. #classical #nonfiction #christianity #theology

### ***Foxe's Book of Martyrs, John Foxe***

Reformation-era England—John Foxe recounts the lives, sufferings, and triumphant deaths of dozens of Christian martyrs. Some were people of rank and influence. Some were ordinary folk. Some were even his friends. Four centuries later, these deeply moving accounts of faith and courage mark a path for modern Christians to measure the depth of their commitment. #christianity #humansuffering #faith #miracles

#nonfiction

### ***The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin, Benjamin Franklin***

Few men could compare to Benjamin Franklin. Virtually self-taught, he excelled as an athlete, a man of letters, a printer, a scientist, a wit, an inventor, an editor, and a writer, and he was probably the most successful diplomat in American history. David Hume hailed him as the first great philosopher and great man of letters in the New World. Written initially to guide his son, Franklin's autobiography is a lively, spellbinding account of his unique and eventful life. Stylistically his best work, it has become a classic in world literature, one to inspire and delight readers everywhere.

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### ***The Call, Os Guinness***

This continues to stand as a classic, reflective work on life's purpose. Best-selling author Os Guinness goes beyond our surface understanding of God's call and addresses the fact that God has a specific calling for our individual lives. "Why am I here? What is God's call in my life? How do I fit God's call with my own individuality? How should God's calling affect my career, my plans for the future, my concepts of success?" Guinness now helps the reader discover answers to these questions, and more, through a corresponding workbook—perfect for individual or group study. According to Guinness, "No idea short of God's call can ground and fulfill the truest human desire for purpose and fulfillment." With tens of thousands of readers to date, *The Call* is for all who desire a purposeful, intentional life of faith. #christianspirituality #nonfiction #purpose

### ***Letters to a Diminished Church, Dorothy Sayers***

What must a person believe to be a Christian? Dorothy Sayers lays out age-old doctrines without prettying-up or watering-down. She brings them vividly to life by showing how the Bible, history, literature, and modern science fit together to make religion not only possible but necessary in our time. So whether you are reading the great works of Western literature, thinking about your place in God's universe, or simply dealing with the thousand-and-one problems of daily living, this powerful book has words of both challenge and comfort for you. #essays #nonfiction #christianityandculture