

Novels:

1 ***Irena's Children*** by Tilar Mazzeo (story of brave Polish resistance Social Worker, Irena Sendler, who saved Jewish babies from the Nazis) **movie available:** *The Courageous heart of Irena Sendler*)

2 ***The Help*** by Kathryn Stockett (story is set in Mississippi, USA, in the early 1960s and focuses on the lives of black maids who work for rich white families) **also a movie:** *The Help*

3 ***Treasure Island*** by Robert Louis Stevenson. Swashbuckling adventure with Long John Silver, Israel Hands and young Jim Hawkins, who holds the treasure map which the pirates on board the ship want badly enough to mutiny against and fight for the treasure.

4 ***The Hiding Place*** by Corrie Ten Boom (True inspirational biography of the Dutch Ten Boom family who built a secret room to hide Jewish people during WWII. Themes of courage & heroism, survival, overcoming seeming unsurmountable odds. **Movie available. Also, follow up movie available:** *Return to the Hiding Place*

5 ***Unstoppable*** by Nick Vujicic (despite being born without limbs, Nick's challenges have not kept him from enjoying great adventures and living life to the max. Deals with **disability, prejudice, depression**. A story of overcoming life's challenges. (Documentary clips available on you-tube)

6 ***Dancing With thieves*** by Cally Magalhaes (inspirational true story of working with street children and young offenders)

7 ***The Bee-Keeper of Aleppo*** by ChristyLefteri (Flight of refugees from Syria to England, via a perilous European journey)

8 ***The Kite Runner*** by Khaled Hosseini (two boys growing up in Kabul, Afghanistan, Taliban culture, themes of the love & tension between fathers & sons, betrayal & the search for redemption, friendship)

9 ***A Thousand Splendid Suns*** by Khaled Hosseini (set in Afghanistan, under the Taliban regime.. Themes of suffering & perseverance; shame & reputation; love, loyalty & belonging; gender relations)

10 ***Pearl of China*** by Anchee Min (depicts the harshness of life in China under Chairman Mao's regime) set against the backdrop of a friendship between the child of American missionaries and a native Chinese subject.

11 ***Red Hugh of Ireland*** by Jeanette Covert Nolan. 1587 and the people of Ireland are being crushed by the iron fist of English rule under Queen Elizabeth. Young Hugh O'Donnell fights to help his country find freedom once again.

12 ***The Nightingale*** by Kristin Hannah. Themes of war, survival and sisterhood. Set in France

13 ***The King's Fifth*** by Scott O'Dell, Classic adventure story. A teenager's swash-buckling adventure with a band of conquistadors. Themes of loyalty and betrayal, friendship and challenge.

14 ***The Book Thief*** by Markus Zusak (Themes: WWII, death, language, good Vs. evil) Movie also available

15 ***The Invention of Wings***: by Sue Monk Kidd. A story of love, hope, pain, strength and courage. Based on true event, this is the story of the Grimke sisters, white privileged girls, who fight for the freedom of slavery, at a time where females had no voice.

16 ***Rebecca*** : by Daphne du Maurier (Thriller, character study, Jealousy, escaping the past, identity) movie also available

17 ***All Quiet On the Western Front*** by Erich Maria Remarque (Main theme: the effects of war on the human spirit and character, hypocrisy of older generation) also a **movie**.

18 ***Gulliver's travels*** by Jonathan Swift (Themes: Perspective · Moral vs. Physical Power · Society and the State · Knowledge · Truth and Deception) also **movie**

19 ***Midnight's Children*** by Salman Rushdie (India's journey after Independence)

20 ***The Light Between Oceans*** by M. L. Stedman (Themes: Grief, loss, nature, parenthood, the cost of love, moral dilemma)

21 ***The End of Time*** by Gavin Extence (Syrian Refugees' journey. Themes: triumph over adversity; seeing the good instead of the bad; putting yourself in somebody else's

shoes.;race, religion and alcoholism all feature strongly in this humorous, thought provoking, uplifting read)

22 ***The Bookseller of Kabul*** by Asne Seierstad (Gives an excellent perspective of how life is for Islamic women in particular in Afghanistan and reveals the continuing power exerted by males in families and the level of oppression experienced by women. It also displays the hierarchy of wealth within the society and the power that can be wielded over the weak and vulnerable).

23 ***Brave New World*** by Aldous Huxley. ( Classic. Dystopian, government-controlled world. A glimpse of the future; startling insights & predictions! Better choice for curriculum than 1984)

24 ***The Wall*** by William Sutcliffe ( moving story about a young boy whose curiosity leads him to the other side of the barrier wall erected to keep two communities separate. The main character, Joshua, discovers that his "enemies" on the other side of the wall are very much like himself.( The story could quite easily be about any split, war- torn community such as East/West Berlin before the wall came down, Israel/Palestine/West Bank and who knows - a Mexico/US of the future?)

25 ***Nineteen Minutes*** by Jodi Picoult (School shooting, bullying: the victim and the perpetrators; who is to blame?)

26 ***One Moment*** by Linda Green (Deals with bullying, mental health, poverty and grief and the tenacity of the human spirit, with humour and insight.

27 ***Safely Home*** by Randy Alcorn (based on true life stories of persecuted Christians in China, where Christianity is outlawed. Two college friends' lives re-connect in unexpected circumstances, when American businessman, Ben Fielding, travels to China and discovers some shocking truths.( Themes: Human rights, moral dilemma, first world guilt)

27 ***The Fountains of Silence*** by Ruth Sepetys (Love story set against the backdrop of Spain's hidden history during and in the aftermath of, the Civil War when Franco ruled with an iron fist)

28 ***The Salt to the Sea*** by Ruth Sepetys ( Four children fleeing Stalin's Red Army through Nazi territory, hoping to find salvation on-board an evacuation ship. Based on a true story. Themes of: fear, fate, shame, survivor's guilt, resilience)

29 ***Where the Sun Rises*** by Suzanne Strong. (Story of young female Kurdish Freedom Fighters, who fight side by side in Syria, against Islamic State (Daesh))

30 ***A Chance to Die***: Biography of Amy Carmichael by Elisabeth Elliot.

(Amy Carmichael, from N.Ireland, rescued young baby girls in India and established orphanages Amy was a contemporary of World Wars I and II and the events of the book shed a light on the political and social turmoil of those days and clearly describes the social segregation and "caste" dictates in India at the time the British Empire ruled the world.

(31) ***American Dirt*** by Jeanine Cummins

*American Dirt* is a brilliantly written, compelling page-turner, dealing with the subject matter of the harrowing life conditions and journey to freedom, undertaken by a disparate group of illegal migrants, crossing from Mexico into the USA, in a bid to escape the clutches of the murderous cartels which control the barrios of Mexico. Cummins succeeds in combining important facts with engaging, credible, vulnerable yet strong, characters, a strong storyline and beautiful, taut, sometimes raw writing. This book is an education and, in the words of one reviewer "a must read for people committed to justice and maintenance of civil society....illustrates what can happen when societies and their political leaders turn a blind eye to the actions of the corrupt and criminal few which erode the rule of law."

Suitable to be read at senior (higher) level but parental discretion advised as the book contains upsetting scenes of/references to murder, one brief description of a disturbing dream of mutilated body parts and an attempted rape. However, unlike many books, the author is clearly attempting to inform and educate, rather than indulge the reader in any gratuitous experience.

(32) ***Amazing Grace: Biography of William Wilberforce*** by Eric Metaxas (Abolitionist who fought in parliament for many years to bring about the abolition of the slave trade)

(33) ***Pride and Prejudice*** by Jane Austen. Humorous 19th century story which centers on the conflict between marrying for love and marrying for economic reasons. ... None of Mr. Bennet's five daughters can inherit his estate, so they are pressured into finding security in "good" marriages. Themes: role of women in society, wealth, reputation, class, family.

(34) ***Empire of the Sun*** by J.G. Ballard (autobiographical novel about his life as a boy in Shanghai during the second world war, and in the civilian camp at Lunghua, under Japanese command, where he was interned with his parents). **Also a movie**

(35) **Jane Eyre** by Charlotte Bronte. 1800's gothic novel which follows a young orphan who becomes a woman who knows her own mind, is strong in morals and courage and refuses to settle for the path in life she is expected to take. Movie adaptations available.

(36) ***Remains of the Day*** by Kazuo Ishiguro is an insightful look into the heart and mind of a loyal butler who hides his affection for Miss Kenton, the housekeeper he loves, and is open in his misplaced loyalty to his anti-semitic employer, Lord Darlington. Ishiguro is a masterful writer who says so much with so few words. Also a movie.

(37) ***Emma*** by Jane Austen is a comedic 1800's tale of Emma, a young aristocratic woman, who sets about matchmaking for her simple friend, Harriet, with disastrous results, which cause Emma to re-evaluate how she sees herself, her friends, and her world. Emma gives good insight into the attitudes of, and towards, women of the 1800's. Movie adaptations available.

(38) ***A Gentleman in Moscow*** by Amor Towles

Count Alexander Rostov, a Russian aristocrat, finds himself escorted out of the Kremlin and sentenced to house arrest, indefinitely, in the cosmopolitan Hotel Metropol. Instead of his usual elegantly proportioned and decorated suite, he must now live in a cramped attic room with a window the size of a chessboard.

Unexpectedly his reduced circumstances offer him a doorway into a wider and rich world of emotional discovery, whilst outside the revolving doors of the Metropole some of the most tumultuous years of Russian history are unfolding.

Towles' novel is witty, insightful and offers a sense of hope and joy in the most straitened of circumstances. This is lockdown par excellence!

**Themes for discussion include:** A sense of purpose in what seems a purposeless environment; Freedom versus imprisonment; Limited space and limitless time; Friendship; loyalty; love; family; Wealth and luxury – do they equate with happiness and fulfilment

### **Suitable films for Senior Level:**

1 ***Amistad*** directed by Stephen Spielberg (True story of a shipful of African slaves who mutiny against the Captain but are taken back to America to face murder charges in the court)

2 ***The One Hundred Foot Journey*** Basic storyline: An Indian family emigrate to France to set up an Indian restaurant. They choose a building which is situated exactly opposite a fancy, posh French restaurant which serves expensive haute cuisine and is run by the equally posh, fancy "Madame Malorie" (acted by Helen Mirren). An intense professional rivalry ensues between the two restaurants and their pig-headed owners which only subsides when ugly racism rears its head and causes harm, serious enough to make the staff of the French restaurant reconsider their behaviour. This sumptuous, often comedic, sometimes romantic movie is beautifully filmed with a variety of angle shots, and close ups, in slow motion, of tasty dishes and scenery and is complemented by a gorgeous soundtrack. A stellar cast (Helen Mirren, Om Puri, Charlotte Le Bon) with universal themes like: Ambition, rivalry, jealousy, family, racism, culture clash with a dash of two romances (a young couple AND an older couple), combined with the love of good food, make this a fantastic choice for study in the classroom.

**Also a book by Richard Morais**

3 ***Amazing Grace*** directed by Michael Apted (Inspirational true story of British Abolitionist, William Wilberforce, who fought a tough battle to abolish slavery and won)

4 ***The Longest Day***, directed by Darryl Zanuck (the Allied Forces and the US Army plan an invasion landing in Normandy when general Eisenhower gives them the permission to do so.

5 **Hacksaw Ridge**, directed by Mel Gibson (True inspirational story of Desmond Doss, a pacifist, serving as a medic during the Battle of Okinawa, who overcame extreme **bullying** and ridicule, to ultimately become the hero who saved the lives of all his tormentors)

6 **Sophie Scholl: The Final Days**, directed by Marc Rothemund. (True inspirational story of Sophie Scholl, a young student in Munich in 1943, who joins the resistance White Rose movement to oppose the Nazi regime. She is ultimately captured and executed but her courage and integrity are admirable)

7 **Exodus**, directed by Otto Preminger, starring Paul Newman. (Tells the story of Israeli Commander, Ari Ben Canaan's daring rescue of 611 Jewish prisoners from Cypriot detention camps)

8 **Gandhi**, directed by Richard Attenborough. (True inspirational story of Mahatma Gandhi who campaigned for Indian Independence during the early 20th century)

9 **Invictus**, directed by Clint Eastwood. (True story. Following the aftermath of the Apartheid in South Africa, President Mandela decides to unite his people by supporting a **rugby** team in their bid to win the 1995 rugby World Cup) Themes of Sport, determination and forgiveness.

10 **Mao's Last Dancer**, directed by Bruce Beresford (True story of Li Cunxin, who at age 11, was forcibly taken from his home in rural China, to be trained as a ballet dancer in Beijing. Li eventually defects to the USA but suffers the consequences)

11 **Hidden Figures**, directed by Theodore Melfi (True story of three female African-American Mathematicians who played a key role in helping to launch astronaut, John Glenn, into orbit in 1962. Katherine Johnson is the protagonist in the story and has to overcome both **racial and gender discrimination**).

12 **Mandela, Long Walk to Freedom**, directed by Justin Chadwick (true story of anti-apartheid revolutionary in South Africa who spent 27 years in prison only to see his dream realised upon release)

13 **Escape From Saudi**, directed by Sophie McNeill. Documentary following an 18 yr old's desperate flight to **freedom**.

14 **The Fourth World**. Documentary by Mark Volkers (Deals with slums and poverty of undocumented people)

15 ***On the Basis of Sex***, directed by Mimi Leder. The true story of Ruth Bader Ginsburg, her struggles for equal rights, and the early cases of a historic career that lead to her nomination and confirmation as U.S. Supreme Court Associate Justice.

16 ***Skin***: (The Sandra Laing story, directed by Anthony Fabian) **Sandra Laing** (born 26 November 1955) is classified as Coloured by authorities during the **apartheid** era, due to her skin colour and hair texture, although she was the child of at least three generations of ancestors who had been regarded as white. At the age of 10, she was expelled from her all-white school, and the authorities' decisions based on her appearance disrupted her family and adult life. Sandra's family fight to have the courts reverse the decision, but eventually, Sandra herself, identifies as a black woman.

17 ***Older Than Ireland*** (documentary directed by Alex Fegan. Numerous Old people are asked to give their opinions on subjects such as old age; relationships; marriage; widowhood; racism; loss; sectarianism; politics)

18 ***The Forest Man of India*** (various documentary films available on you-tube about Jadav Payeng, "Forest Man of India", who has been planting trees, single handedly, for decades and turning a desert area into a lush forest. Themes: Environment, poverty, determination.

19 ***Joy*** directed by David Russell (True story of how Joy Mangano overcame family troubles and financial hardship in order to invent the "Miracle Mop" which catapulted her from poverty to becoming a successful entrepreneur, in the days before Dragon's Den/Shark Tank). Themes: Never give up on your dream, persistence and resilience.

20 ***Last of the Mohicans*** (In the 1750s, the French and the British fight colonial wars over ownership of Native American soil and the Native American "Indians" are caught up in the conflict. ***Last of the Mohicans*** tells the story of the French attack on Fort William Henry, a British outpost commanded by Colonel Munro, whose two daughters are escorted through dangerous forest country, betrayed by their Indian scout and kidnapped. Munro's elder daughter falls in love with Hawkeye (a white scout who was raised by a Mohican tribesman) and the film alternates between heart-stopping attacks and tender moments. Great themes of loyalty, family, identity, betrayal, bravery, self-sacrifice etc.

Cinematic and epic. Worm - eye film shots and angle shots add much to this cinematic production.



**21 *My Left Foot*** directed by Jim Sheridan (True story of Christy brown, a spastic quadriplegic, born into a working class family, whose Mother fights to have his voice heard: themes of family, alcoholism, depression and overcoming adversity)

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### **Suitable plays for Senior Level:**

- (1) ***An Inspector Calls*** by J.B. Priestley (Themes: Wealth, Power, and Influence. Blame and Responsibility. **Class** Politics, Morality and Legality)
- (2) ***Journey's End*** (WW1) explores War and its effects, Courage and Cowardice, human relationships.
- (3) ***Black Watch*** by Gregory Burke (Portrayal of soldiers in the Black Watch Scottish regiment; explores modern-day warfare in Iraq, 2004, and human relationships) Contains some offensive language which the soldiers use amongst themselves.
- (4) ***All My Sons*** by Arthur Miller (parental expectations, family, grief, forgiveness, war, morality & consequences, wealth & accumulation, culpability & guilt)
- (5) ***Touching the Void*** by David Greig (based on Joe Simpson's book which tells the story of the perilous and near-fatal climb of Siula Grande in the Peruvian Andes in 1985, by Simpson and fellow climber, Simon Yates)
- (6) ***A Man for All Seasons*** by Robert Bolt (Based on the life of Sir Thomas More, British Statesman in the 1530's, who refused to side with King Henry VIII, in his battle against the Pope. Themes: Standing up for your principles, no matter the cost; moral dilemma, ambition Vs conscience)

- (7) ***The Glass Menagerie*** by Tennessee Williams. The play is about a struggling single-parent family and the necessity of living in the real world without illusions and the struggle of a young man to break away from his domineering mother in order to find his own way in the world. (Themes of family, deception, memory, illusion, abandonment, loneliness, escape)
- (8) ***Macbeth*** by William Shakespeare Themes of Kingship, power, The Corrupting Power of Unchecked **Ambition**; the Relationship between Cruelty and Masculinity; the difference Between Kingship and Tyranny. ...
- (9) ***King Lear*** by William Shakespeare Themes of: **Justice**; human cruelty; Authority versus Chaos; political authority; family dynamics; Reconciliation; Nihilism; Self-knowledge.
- (10) ***Othello*** by William Shakespeare Themes: Prejudice; .Appearance vs. Reality; Jealousy; Manhood and Honor; Womanhood and Sexuality.
- (11) ***Hamlet*** by William Shakespeare **Themes**: Madness; Revenge; Religion; Subversion of Relationships; Delay; Honor; Ambiguity of Language; Human Beings.
- (12)