

1. ***Interpreter of Maladies* by Jhumpa Lahiri** Nine tales are set in India, others in the United States, and most concern characters of Indian heritage. Yet the situations Lahiri's people face, from unhappy marriages to civil war, transcend ethnicity. Jhumpa Lahiri sums up a universal experience, one that applies to all who have grown up, left home, fallen in or out of love, and, above all, experienced what it means to be a foreigner, even within one's own family. --Alix Wilber --

2. ***In Cold Blood* by Truman Capote** Truman Capote contributed to a style of writing in which the reporter gets so far inside the subject, becomes so familiar, that he projects events and conversations as if he were really there. Capote combined painstaking research with a narrative feel to produce one of the most spellbinding stories ever put on the page. Two two-time losers living in a lonely house in western Kansas are out to make the heist of their life, but when things don't go as planned, the robbery turns ugly. From there, the book is a real-life look into murder, prison, and the criminal mind.

3. ***Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen** In a remote Hertfordshire village, far off the good coach roads of George III's England, Mr. and Mrs. Bennet -- a country squire of no great means and his scatterbrained wife -- must marry off their five vivacious daughters. At the heart of this all-consuming enterprise are the headstrong second daughter Elizabeth and her aristocratic suitor Fitzwilliam Darcy, two lovers in whom pride and prejudice must be overcome before love can bring the novel to its magnificent conclusion.

4. ***Dracula* by Bram Stoker** The aristocratic vampire that haunts the Transylvanian countryside has captivated readers' imaginations since it was first published in 1897. Hindle asserts that Dracula depicts an embattled man's struggle to recover his "deepest sense of himself as a man", making it the "ultimate terror myth".

5. ***The Once and Future King* by T.H. White** The world's greatest fantasy classic is the magical epic of King Arthur and his shining Camelot, of Merlyn and Guinevere, of beasts who talk and men who fly, of wizardry and war. It is the book of all things lost and wonderful and sad.

6. ***The Agony and The Ecstasy* by Irving Stone** Celebrating the 500th anniversary of Michelangelo's David, New American Library releases a special edition of Irving Stone's classic biographical novel-in which both the artist and the man are brought to life in full. A masterpiece in its own right, this novel offers a compelling portrait of Michelangelo's dangerous, impassioned loves, and the God-driven fury from which he wrested the greatest art the world has ever known.

7. ***Atonement* by Ian McEwan** On the hottest day of the summer of 1934, thirteen-year-old Briony Tallis sees her sister Cecilia strip off her clothes and plunge into the fountain in the garden of their country house. Watching her is Robbie Turner, her childhood friend who, like Cecilia, has recently come down from Cambridge. By the end of that day, the lives of all three will have been changed forever. Robbie and Cecilia will have crossed a boundary they had not even imagined at its start, and will have become victims of the younger girl's imagination. Briony will have witnessed mysteries, and committed a crime for which she will spend the rest of her life trying to atone.

8. ***The Fountainhead* by Ayn Rand** The Fountainhead has become an enduring piece of literature, more popular now than when published in 1943. On the surface, it is a story of one man, Howard Roark, and his struggles as an architect in the face of a successful rival, Peter Keating, and a newspaper columnist, Ellsworth Toohey. But the book addresses a number of universal themes: the strength of the individual, the tug between good and evil, the threat of

fascism. The confrontation of those themes, along with the amazing stroke of Rand's writing, combine to give this book its enduring influence.

9. ***A Long Way Gone* by Ishmael Beah** In *A Long Way Gone*, Beah, now twenty-five years old, tells a riveting story: how at the age of twelve, he fled attacking rebels and wandered a land rendered unrecognizable by violence. By thirteen, he'd been picked up by the government army, and Beah, at heart a gentle boy, found that he was capable of truly terrible acts. This is a rare and mesmerizing account, told with real literary force and heartbreaking honesty.

10. ***Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* by Robert Louis Stevenson** Spawned by a nightmare that Stevenson had, this classic tale of the dark, primordial night of the soul remains a masterpiece of the duality of good and evil within us all.

11. ***The Time Machine* by H.G. Wells** When a Victorian scientist propels himself into the year a.d. 802,701, he is initially delighted to find that suffering has been replaced by beauty, contentment, and peace. Entranced at first by the Eloi, an elfin species descended from man, he soon realizes that these beautiful people are simply remnants of a once-great culture—now weak and childishly afraid of the dark. They have every reason to be afraid: in deep tunnels beneath their paradise lurks another race descended from humanity—the sinister Morlocks. And when the scientist's time machine vanishes, it becomes clear he must search these tunnels if he is ever to return to his own era.

12. ***The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood** – Parental Discretion In a startling departure from her previous novels (*Lady Oracle* , *Surfacing*), respected Canadian poet and novelist Atwood presents here a fable of the near future. In the Republic of Gilead, formerly the United States, far-right Schlafly/Falwell-type ideals have been carried to extremes in the monotheocratic government. The resulting society is a feminist's nightmare: women are strictly controlled, unable to have jobs or money and assigned to various classes: the chaste, childless Wives; the housekeeping Marthas; and the reproductive Handmaids, who turn their offspring over to the "morally fit" Wives. The tale is told by Offred (read: "of Fred"), a Handmaid who recalls the past and tells how the chilling society came to be.

13. ***The Bell Jar* by Sylvia Plath** *The Bell Jar* tells the story of a gifted young woman's mental breakdown beginning during a summer internship as a junior editor at a magazine in New York City in the early 1950s. The real Plath committed suicide in 1963 and left behind this scathingly sad, honest and perfectly-written book, which remains one of the best-told tales of a woman's descent into insanity.

14. ***Looking for Alaska* by John Green** Miles "Pudge" Halter's whole life has been one big non-event. Then he heads off to the sometimes crazy, possibly unstable, and anything-but boring world of Culver Creek Boarding School, and his life becomes the opposite of safe. Because down the hall is Alaska Young. The gorgeous, clever, funny, sexy, self-destructive, screwed-up, and utterly fascinating Alaska Young pulls Pudge into her world, launches him into a new life, and steals his heart. After. Nothing is ever the same.

*** All summaries are Amazon.com editorial reviews ***