

20TH CENTURY CLASSICS

[Waiting for Godot](#) by Samuel Beckett

An unremitting picture of despair and futility. It established a new direction for modern theater and made Samuel Beckett one of the foremost dramatists of that new trend in theater. In each act, two tramps, Vladimir and Estragon appear at twilight on a desolate country road in the middle of nowhere to wait for an obscure figure named Godot, whom they have never seen, but whom they believe will rescue them from their otherwise empty and banal lives.

[A Clockwork Orange](#) by Anthony Burgess

Told by the central character, Alex, this brilliant, hilarious, and disturbing novel creates an alarming futuristic vision of violence, high technology, and authoritarianism.

[Naked Lunch](#) by William S. Burroughs

This novel's publication in the United States in 1962 was met with seizure by the U.S. Postal Service and U.S. Customs on the grounds it was pornographic. It's a disjointed account of the horrors of a junkie's addiction, withdrawal and cure: Burroughs tells his story metaphorically through a series of episodes, visions and myths, all of which work to describe a state of mind rather than create a traditional narrative.

[Absalom, Absalom!](#) by William Faulkner

When Thomas Sutpen returns from the war, he tries to continue his family name and complete his design to be a Southern aristocrat, but his children thwart his plan.

[A Farewell to Arms](#) by Ernest Hemingway

An unforgettable story of an American ambulance driver on the Italian front and his passion for a beautiful English nurse.

[Brave New World](#) by Aldous Huxley

A world of tomorrow in which capitalist civilization has been reconstituted through the most efficient scientific and psychological engineering, where the people are genetically designed to be passive, consistently useful to the ruling class.

[Ulysses](#) by James Joyce

Joyce's Ulysses is a novel of 18 "episodes," all set in Dublin, Ireland, between 8:00 a.m. and 3:00 a.m., June 16-17, 1904. The three main characters are a young school teacher and aspiring writer named Stephen Dedalus, a middle-aged Jewish advertising salesman named Leopold Bloom, and Leopold's wife, Molly.

[The Metamorphosis](#) by Franz Kafka

Gregor Samsa wakes up one morning and discovers that, over the course of the night, he's been transformed into a giant insect. The rest of this novella deals with Gregor's attempts to adjust to his new condition without burdening his parents.



[Women in Love](#) by D.H. Lawrence

Widely regarded as Lawrence's greatest novel, *Women in Love* undermines conventional distinctions between realism and symbolism, poetry and prose; moreover, it scandalized critics and readers with its frank approach to sexuality.

[One Hundred Years of Solitude](#) by Gabriel Garcia Marquez

At the center of this extraordinarily vast, yet oddly claustrophobic, novel is the Buendia family, whose fortunes – or, more commonly, misfortunes – Garcia Marquez chronicles for the one hundred years of the title and whose story ultimately encapsulates the entire history of mankind, from genesis to apocalypse.

[Of Human Bondage](#) by W. Somerset Maugham

Because it is the most direct, thorough and personal of his works, *Of Human Bondage* is generally considered to be his masterpiece, and its hero, Philip Carey, to be a thinly disguised portrait of the author. In it, Maugham sees three forces impinging upon Philip, shaping and influencing his life, forces that the novel emphasizes strongly: passion, disillusionment and the quest for purpose in life.

[Palace Walk](#) by Naguib Mahfouz

This novel provides a close look into Cairo society at the end of WWI. Mahfouz's vehicle is the family of al-Sayyid Ahmad, a middle-class merchant who runs his family strictly according to the Qur'an and directs his own behavior according to his desires. Consequently, while his wife and daughters remain cloistered at home and his sons live in fear of his harsh will, al-Sayyid Ahmad nightly explores the pleasures of Cairo.

[Tropic of Cancer](#) by Henry Miller

One of the most notorious novels of the 20th century and occupies a central place in the legal battle against censorship. Banned from almost the moment it was printed in Paris in 1934, it was not legally available in the United States until Grove Press challenged U.S. obscenity laws by openly publishing it in 1961. It's an episodic tale in 15 loosely-connected sections that reflect the author's indebtedness to, among others, Walt Whitman.

[Lolita](#) by Vladimir Nabokov

A novel that studies the moral disintegration of a man whose obsessive desire to possess his stepdaughter destroys the lives of those around him.

[V.](#) by Thomas Pynchon

Just released from the Navy, Benny Profane is content to lead a slothful existence with his friends, with the only real ambition being a dupe and where "responsibility" is a dirty word. Among his pals is Slab, an artist who can't seem to paint anything other than cheese danishes. But Profane's life changes dramatically when he befriends Stencil, a young man with an intriguing mission: to discover the identity of V., a woman who knew Stencil's father but suddenly and mysteriously disappeared.

[American Pastoral](#) by Philip Roth

A novel concerning Seymour "Swede" Levov, an all-around good guy whose life is ruined by the "indigenous American berserk." The novel won the Pulitzer Prize in 1998 and was included in "All-TIME 100 Greatest Novels."

[Blindness](#) by José Saramago

José Saramago's eerie story of an epidemic in a contemporary city begins with the scene of a man sitting in a car at a traffic light. The light turns green but the car does not move, even when the drivers in the cars behind it begin honking their horns. The man has suddenly gone blind; his world has turned to a milky whiteness. Gradually, others in the city are overcome by the same strange condition, and slowly social order breaks down...