Classics

1 Classic: 1984

George Orwell, Classic, Science Fiction, Dystopia, 368 pages.

This novel by George Orwell is the major work towards which all his previous writing has pointed. Critics have hailed it as his "most solid, most brilliant" work. Though the story of Nineteen Eighty-Four takes place thirty-five years hence, it is in every sense timely. The scene is London, where there has been no new housing since 1950 and where the city-wide slums are called Victory Mansions. Science has abandoned Man for the State. As every citizen knows only too well, war is peace.

To Winston Smith, a young man who works in the Ministry of Truth (Minitru for short), come two people who transform this life completely. One is Julia, whom he meets after she hands him a slip reading, "I love you." The other is O'Brien, who tells him, "We shall meet in the place where there is no darkness." The way in which Winston is betrayed by the one and, against his own desires and instincts, ultimately betrays the other, makes a story of mounting drama and suspense.

https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/61439040-1984?from_search=true&fro m_srp=true&qid=UGihijN0HY&rank=1

2 Classic: David Copperfield

Charles Dickens. Classic. Historical Fiction. 882 pages.

David Copperfield is the story of a young man's adventures on his journey from an unhappy and impoverished childhood to the discovery of his vocation as a successful novelist. Among the gloriously vivid cast of characters he encounters are his tyrannical stepfather, Mr Murdstone; his brilliant, but ultimately unworthy school-friend James Steerforth; his formidable aunt, Betsey Trotwood; the eternally humble, yet treacherous Uriah Heep; frivolous, enchanting Dora Spenlow; and the magnificently impecunious Wilkins Micawber, one of literature's great comic creations. In David Copperfield - the novel he described as his 'favourite child' - Dickens drew revealingly on his own experiences to create one of the most exuberant and enduringly popular works, filled with tragedy and comedy in equal measure. This edition uses the text of the first volume publication of 1850, and includes updated suggestions for further reading, original illustrations by 'Phiz', a revised chronology and expanded notes. In his new introduction, Jeremy Tambling discusses the novel's autobiographical elements, and its central themes of memory and identity.

https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/58696.David_Copperfield?ref=nav_sb_ss_1_17

3 Classic: Grapes of Wrath

John Steinbeck, Classic, Historical Fiction, 479 pages.

Steinbeck's Pulitzer Prize-winning epic of the Great Depression chronicles the Dust Bowl migration of the 1930s and tells the story of one Oklahoma farm family, the Joads—driven from their homestead and forced to travel west to the promised land of California. Out of their trials and their repeated collisions against the hard realities of an America divided into Haves and Have-Nots evolves a drama that is intensely human yet majestic in its scale and moral vision, elemental yet plainspoken, tragic but ultimately stirring in its human dignity. A portrait of the conflict between the powerful and the powerless, of one man's fierce reaction to injustice, and of one woman's stoical strength, the novel captures the horrors of the Great Depression and probes into the very nature of equality and justice in America. At once a naturalistic epic, captivity narrative, road novel, and transcendental gospel, Steinbeck's powerful landmark novel is perhaps the most American of American Classics.

https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/18114322-the-grapes-of-wrath?from_search=true&from_srp=true&qid=h4nypplLwz&rank=1

All Other Recommendations

1. All Over But the Shoutin'

Rick Braggs, Memoir, 329 pages

This haunting, harrowing, gloriously moving recollection of a life on the American margin is the story of Rick Bragg, who grew up dirt-poor in northeastern Alabama, seemingly destined for either the cotton mills or the penitentiary, and instead became a Pulitzer Prize–winning reporter for The New York Times. It is also the story of Bragg's father, a hard- drinking man with a murderous temper and the habit of running out on the people who needed him most.

But at the center of this soaring memoir is Bragg's mother, who went eighteen years without a new dress so that her sons could have school clothes and picked other people's cotton so that her children wouldn't have to live on welfare alone. Evoking these lives—and the country that shaped and nourished them—with artistry, honesty, and compassion, Rick Bragg brings home the love and suffering that lie at the heart of every family. The result is unforgettable.

https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/470495.All_Over_But_the_Shoutin_?ref=nav_sb_ss_1_ 12

2. Amazing Grace Adams

Fran Littlewood, Literary Fiction, Sep 2023, 273 pg

Grace Adams gave birth, blinked, and now suddenly she is 45 and stuck in traffic. She has had enough. She gets out of her car and simply walks away. She used to be amazing. But everyone seems to have forgotten. Grace is about to remind them... and most importantly, remind herself.

https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/143372703-amazing-grace-adams?from_search=true&f rom_srp=true&qid=WLcLCnkami&rank=2

3. An Elderly Lady is Up to No Good

Helene Tursten. 178 Pages.

Crime fiction. Maud is an irascible 88-year-old Swedish woman with no family, no friends, and...no qualms about a little murder. This funny, irreverent story collection by Helene Tursten, author of the Irene Huss investigations, features two-never-before translated stories that will keep you laughing all the way to the retirement home.

https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/40104741-an-elderly-lady-is-up-to-no-good?r ef=nav_sb_ss_1_12

4. Empire Falls

Richard Russo Apr 2002 483 pg

Pulitzer Prize winning novel. In a blue collar town full of abandoned mills, citizens surround themselves with the comforts and feuds provided by lifelong friends and neighbors who find humor and hope in the most unlikely places.

https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/187020.Empire_Falls?from_search=true&fro m_srp=true&gid=TY00US7vgK&rank=1

5. Facing the Light

Adele Geras, 416 pages

Set in a splendid country house in England, this rich and absorbing novel begins as Leonora, daughter of a famous Edwardian painter, is about to throw herself a huge house party to celebrate her 75th birthday. Guests will include her two grown daughters and their spouses (and lovers), a film crew making a movie about Leonora's father, and numerous family legends. Even happy families have their secrets, and Leonora's stunning revelations make for thrilling reading.

https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/43294.Facing_the_Light?ref=nav_sb_ss_1_16

6. Flying Solo

Linda Holmes, 320 pages

A woman returns to her small Maine hometown, uncovering family secrets that take her on a journey of self-discovery and new love, in this warm and charming novel from the *New York Times* bestselling author of *Evvie Drake Starts Over*.

https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/59089710-flying-solo?from_search=true&from_srp=true &qid=kKkprJmx5g&rank=1

7. Lessons in Chemistry

Bonnie Garman, 390 pages

Chemist Elizabeth Zott is not your average woman. In fact, Elizabeth Zott would be the first to point out that there is no such thing as an average woman. But it's the early 1960s and her all-male team at Hastings Research Institute takes a very unscientific view of equality. Except for one: Calvin Evans; the lonely, brilliant, Nobel–prize nominated grudge- holder who falls in love with—of all things—her mind. True chemistry results.

But like science, life is unpredictable. Which is why a few years later Elizabeth Zott finds herself not only a single mother, but the reluctant star of America's most beloved cooking show Supper at Six. Elizabeth's unusual approach to cooking ("combine one tablespoon acetic acid with a pinch of sodium chloride") proves revolutionary. But as her following grows, not everyone is happy. Because as it turns out, Elizabeth Zott isn't just teaching women to cook. She's daring them to change the status quo. Laugh-out-loud funny, shrewdly observant, and studded with a dazzling cast of supporting characters, Lessons in Chemistry is as original and vibrant as its protagonist.

https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/58065033-lessons-in-chemistry?ref=nav_sb_noss_l_11

8. March

Geraldine Brooks, 280 pages

From the author of the acclaimed *Year of Wonders*, a historical novel and love story set during a time of catastrophe, on the front lines of the American Civil War. Acclaimed author Geraldine Brooks gives us the story of the absent father from Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*—and conjures a world of brutality, stubborn courage and transcendent love. An idealistic abolitionist, March has gone as chaplain to serve the Union cause. But the war tests his faith not only in the Union—which is also capable of barbarism and racism—but in himself. As he recovers from a near-fatal illness, March must reassemble and reconnect with his family, who have no idea of what he has endured. A love story set in a time of catastrophe, March explores the passions between a man and a woman, the tenderness of parent and child, and the life-changing power of an ardently held belief.

https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/13529.March?ref=nav_sb_ss_1_6

9. Only the Beautiful

Susan Meissner, Apr 2023, 400 pg

A heartrending story about a young mother's fight to keep her daughter, and the winds of fortune that tear them apart by the New York Times bestselling author of The Nature of Fragile Things and The Last Year of the War. <u>https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/56687771-only-the-beautiful?ref=nav_sb_noss_l_13</u>

10. River Sing Me Home

Elanor Shearer, Historical Fiction, 322 pages

The book takes place in the 1860's and is about a woman who was enslaved in the Carribbean and once freed went back to find her stolen children after the abolition of slavery in 1834. A "celebration of motherhood and female resilience" (*The Observer*). GOOD MORNING AMERICA BOOK CLUB PICK.

https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/61111298-river-sing-me-home?ref=nav_sb_noss_l_11

11. Sing You Home

Jodi Piccoult, 466 pages

Music has set the tone for most of Zoe Baxter's life. There's the melody that reminds her of the summer she spent rubbing baby oil on her stomach in pursuit of the perfect tan. A dance beat that makes her think of using a fake ID to slip into a nightclub. A dirge that marked the years she spent trying to get pregnant. For better or for worse, music is the language of memory. It is also the language of love. In the aftermath of a series of personal tragedies, Zoe throws herself into her career as a music therapist. When an unexpected friendship slowly blossoms into love, she makes plans for a new life, but to her shock and inevitable rage, some people—even those she loves and trusts most—don't want that to happen.

Sing You Home is about identity, love, marriage, and parenthood. It's about people wanting to do the right thing for the greater good, even as they work to fulfill their own personal desires and dreams. And it's about what happens when the outside world brutally calls into question the very thing closest to our hearts: family.

https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/8554005-sing-you-home?ref=nav_sb_noss_l_13

12. Someone Else's Shoes

Jojo Moyes, Feb 2023, 449 pg

A story of mix-ups, mess-ups, and making the most of second chances.

https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/62971668-someone-else-s-shoes?ref=nav_sb_noss_l_ 10

13. The Book of Longings

Sue Monk Kidd. Historical Fiction. 416 pages.

Grounded in meticulous historical research and written with a reverential approach to Jesus's life that focuses on his humanity, *The Book of Longings* is an inspiring account of his wife Ana and her bold struggle to realize the passion and potential inside her, while living in a time, place, and culture devised to silence her. Goodreads Choice Award, Nominee for Best Historical Fiction (2020).

https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/52698452-the-book-of-longings?from_searc h=true&from_srp=true&gid=UxZOvMCGqY&rank=1

14. The Double Bind

Chris Bohjalian, 368 pages

In Chris Bohjalian's astonishing novel, nothing is what it at first seems. Not the bucolic Vermont back roads college sophomore Laurel Estabrook likes to bike. Not the savage assault she suffers toward the end of one of her rides. And certainly not Bobbie Crocker, the elderly man with a history of mental illness whom Laurel comes to know through her work at a Burlington homeless shelter in the years subsequent to the attack.

https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/126807.The_Double_Bind?ref=nav_sb _ss_1_11

15. The Lager Queen of Minnesota

J. Ryan Stradal. 350 pages.

A novel of family, Midwestern values, hard work, fate and the secrets of making a world-class beer. A family is split when their father leaves their shared inheritance entirely to Helen, his younger daughter. Despite baking award-winning pies at the local nursing home, her older sister, Edith, struggles to make what most people would call a living. Meanwhile Helen builds, with the proceeds from the farm, one of the most successful light breweries in the country, and makes their company motto ubiquitous: "Drink lots. It's Blotz." Where Edith has a heart as big as Minnesota, Helen's is as rigid as a steel keg -- but eventually Helen needs Edith.

https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/42203363-the-lager-queen-of-minnesota?ref =nav_sb_noss_l_9

16. The Lions of 5th Avenue

Fiona Davis. Historical Fiction. 386 pages.

One of a series of books by nationally bestselling author Fiona Davis. About a series of book thefts roils the iconic New York Public Library, leaving two generations of strong-willed women to pick up the pieces. Interesting forays into Greenwich

Village's new bohemia and the Heterodoxy Club--a radical, all-female group in which women are encouraged to loudly share their opinions on suffrage, birth control, and women's rights.

https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/48814109-the-lions-of-fifth-avenue?ref=nav_sb_ss_2_1 3

17. The Magnificent Lives of Marjorie Post: A Novel

Allison Pataki, 400 pages

So begins another average evening for Marjorie Merriweather Post. Presidents have come and gone, but *she* has hosted them all. Growing up in the modest farmlands of Battle Creek, Michigan, Marjorie was inspired by a few simple rules: always think for yourself, never take success for granted, and work hard—even when deemed American royalty, even while covered in imperial diamonds. Marjorie had an insatiable drive to live and love and to give more than she got. From crawling through Moscow warehouses to rescue the Tsar's treasures to outrunning the Nazis in London, from serving the homeless of the Great Depression to entertaining Roosevelts, Kennedys, and Hollywood's biggest stars, Marjorie Merriweather Post lived an epic life few could imagine.

https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/57792084-the-magnificent-lives-of-m arjorie-post?ref=nav_sb_noss_l_17

18. The Measure

Nikki Erlick, June 2022, 368 pg

A sweeping, ambitious, uplifting story about family, love, hope, and destiny that encourages us to live life to the fullest.

https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/58884736-the-measure?from_search=true&from_srp=tr ue&qid=D0GR4LOfuk&rank=1

19. The Second Life of Mirielle West

Amanda Skenadore, 384 pages

n an intoxicating story of resilience, repulsion, and the Roaring 20's, the glamorous world of a silent film star's wife abruptly crumbles when she's forcibly quarantined at America's only leper colony in Carville, Louisiana...

Based on the little-known true story of America's only leper colony, *The Second Life of Mirielle West* by RUSA Award-winning author Amanda Skenandore brings vividly to life the Louisiana institution known as Carville, where thousands of people were stripped of their civil rights, branded as lepers, and forcibly quarantined throughout the entire 20th century.

- * A 2023 Silicon Valley Reads Selection *
- * Reader's Digest Editor's Choice *

https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/55841940-the-second-life-of-miriellewest?ref=nav_sb_noss_l_8

20. The Secret Book of Flora Lea

Patti Callahan Henry, 355 pages

When a woman discovers a rare book that has connections to her past, long-held secrets about her missing sister and their childhood spent in the English countryside during World War II are revealed.

In the war-torn London of 1939, fourteen-year-old Hazel and five-year-old Flora are evacuated to a rural village to escape the horrors of the Second World War. Living with the kind Bridie Aberdeen and her teenage son, Harry, in a charming stone cottage along the River Thames, Hazel fills their days with walks and games to distract her young sister, including one that she creates for her sister and her sister alone—a fairy tale about a magical land, a secret place they can escape to that is all their own.

But the unthinkable happens when young Flora suddenly vanishes while playing near the banks of the river. Shattered, Hazel blames herself for her sister's disappearance, and she carries that guilt into adulthood as a private burden she feels she deserves.

https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/61964751-the-secret-book-of-flora-lea ?from_search=true&from_srp=true&gid=uTTUBleovd&rank=1

21. The Sounds of Glass

Karen White, 432 pages

Two years after the death of her husband, Merritt Heyward receives unexpected news—Cal's family home in Beaufort, South Carolina, bequeathed by his reclusive grandmother, now belongs to Merritt.

In Beaufort, the secrets of Cal's unspoken-of past reside among the pluff mud and jasmine of the ancestral Heyward home on the Bluff. This unknown legacy, now Merritt's, will change and define her as she navigates her new life—a life complicated by the arrival of her too young stepmother and ten-year-old half brother.

Soon, in this house of strangers, Merritt is forced into unraveling the Heyward family past as she faces her own fears and finds the healing she needs in the salt air of the Lowcountry.

https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/23398961-the-sound-of-glass?ref=nav_sb_noss_l_17

22. Tom Lake

Ann Patchett, 309 pages

This is a story about Peter Duke who went on to be a famous actor. This is a story about falling in love with Peter Duke who wasn't famous at all. It's about falling so wildly in love with him – the way one will at twenty-four – that it felt like jumping off a roof at midnight.

There was no way to foresee the mess it would come to in the end.

https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/63241104-tom-lake?from_search=true &from_srp=true&qid=xQoHAWURat&rank=1

23. Trust

Hernan Diaz, 402 pages

Even through the roar and effervescence of the 1920s, everyone in New York has heard of Benjamin and Helen Rask. He is a legendary Wall Street tycoon; she is the daughter of eccentric aristocrats. Together, they have risen to the very top of a world of seemingly endless wealth—all as a decade of excess and speculation draws to an end. But at what cost have they acquired their immense fortune? This is the mystery at the center of *Bonds*, a successful 1937 novel that all of New York seems to have read. Yet there are other versions of this tale of privilege and deceit.

Hernan Diaz's *TRUST* elegantly puts these competing narratives into conversation with one another—and in tension with the perspective of one woman bent on disentangling fact from fiction. The result is a novel that spans over a century and becomes more exhilarating with each new revelation.

https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/58210933-trust?from_search=true&fro m_srp=true&qid=bl1lCBT1oB&rank=1

24. We Must Not Think of Ourselves: A Novel

Lauren Grodstein, Nov 2023, 304 pg

An underground group keeps an archive to insure that the lives of the Jewish occupants of the Warsaw ghetto were not lost to history. A heart-wrenching novel of love and defiance.

"This book is a masterpiece: profound, gripping, urgent, and beautiful." —Madeline Miller, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Circe* and *The Song of Achilles*

A heart-wrenching story of love and defiance set in the Warsaw Ghetto, based on the actual archives kept by those determined to have their stories survive World War II

https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/64005941-we-must-not-think-of-ourselves?ref=nav_sb_ noss | 12

25. Where Coyotes Howl

Sandra Dallas Apr 2023 320 pg

1910. The two-street town of Wallace is not exactly what Eileen Webster had in mind when she accepted a teaching position in Wyoming, but within 2 years time she's fallen in love with the High Plains and a handsome cowboy.

Beautifully rendered, *Where Coyotes Howl* is a vivid and deeply affecting ode to the early twentieth century West, from master storyteller Sandra Dallas.

Except for the way they loved each other, they were just ordinary, everyday folks. Just ordinary.

https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/60784526-where-coyotes-howl?ref=n av_sb_noss_l_9

26. Zelda

Anne Fowler, 426 pages

I wish I could tell everyone who thinks we're ruined, Look closer...and you'll see something extraordinary, mystifying, something real and true. We have never been what we Seemed. When beautiful, reckless Southern belle Zelda Sayre meets F. Scott Fitzgerald at a country club dance in 1918, she is seventeen years old and he is a young army lieutenant stationed in Alabama. Before long, the "ungettable" Zelda has fallen for him despite his unsuitability: Scott isn't wealthy or prominent or even a Southerner, and keeps insisting, absurdly, that his writing will bring him both fortune and fame. Her father is deeply unimpressed. But after Scott sells his first novel, This Side of Paradise, to Scribner's, Zelda optimistically boards a train north, to marry him in the vestry of St. Patrick's Cathedral and take the rest as it comes. What comes, here at the dawn of the Jazz Age, is unimagined attention and success and celebrity that will make Scott and Zelda legends in their own time. Everyone wants to meet the dashing young author of the scandalous noveland his witty, perhaps even more scandalous wife. Zelda bobs her hair, adopts daring new fashions, and revels in this wild new world. Each place they go becomes a playground: New York City, Long Island, Hollywood, Paris, and the French Riviera where they join the endless party of the glamorous, sometimes doomed Lost Generation that includes Ernest Hemingway, Sara and Gerald Murphy, and Gertrude Stein. Everything seems new and possible. Troubles, at first, seem to fade like morning mist. But not even Jay Gatsby's

parties go on forever. Who is Zelda, other than the wife of a famous sometimes infamous husband? How can she forge her own identity while fighting her demons and Scott's, too?

https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/12334.Zelda?ref=nav_sb_ss_2_5