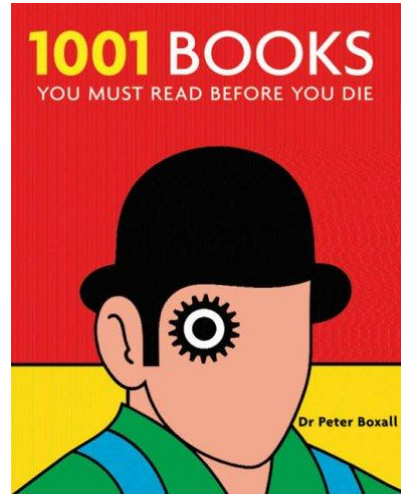


English Literature Summer Task

As part of the A Level English Literature course, you will have to form clear opinions and develop the necessary skills to support them. You will also need to show evidence of independent reading.

Wide reading is vital, and as part of 'Heads Up', we (would!) have explored some of the *1001 Books to Read Before you Die*. Your task now is to decide on just **one** book you believe everyone should read at some point in their life, and create an A4 page that explains this. The format should mirror that of the book (example provided).



The piece of writing you produce should focus on **explanation** and **justification** of your choice; you may choose a text from any genre provided that you feel it has sufficient literary merit to be read by a wide audience.

Please include the following information:

- A brief synopsis (but no spoilers please)
- Your reasons for selecting this text
- Its relevance to a range of readers (include at least two) eg. men; women; children; the elderly; teenagers; the poor; the rich; immigrants
- A quotation from a third party (eg a literary critic or reviewer) or the writer themselves about the text

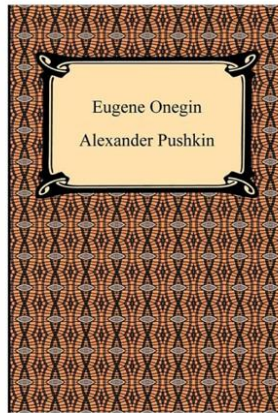
Responses will be assessed (equivalent A Level grade awarded) in September and will then be collated and distributed to members of the A Level English Literature group as stimulus for wider reading during Year 12.

If you have any concerns about the appropriacy of your choice of text, please contact Mrs O'Loughlin via email clare.oloughlin@hessleacademy.com

Example (please format this way)

Nineteenth century

Eugene Onegin Alexander Pushkin



Lifespan
b. 1799 (Russia), d. 1837

First Published
1833

Written and Serially Published
1823–31

Original Title
Yevgeniy Onegin

“In fact, nothing disturbs me tue dunt nis eugueros ipit vendi”

Described by Gorki as “the beginning of all beginnings,” and written, in the words of Gogol, by “the most singular manifestation of the Russian spirit,” Pushkin’s novel in verse occupies a crucial place in the Russian literary canon. It is about the jaded sophisticate Eugene Onegin—who spurns the love of the simple provincial girl Tatiana, only relenting when it is too late—who kills his friend in a duel provoked by himself.

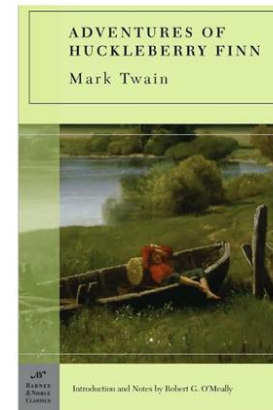
The reasons for the novel’s success are disputed. According to Vladimir Nabokov, it lies in its language, “verse melodies the likes of which had never been known before in Russia.” If Nabokov is right, an intuitive appreciation of Eugene Onegin’s seminal significance will be difficult for those who are unable to read the novel in the original; but without it, any understanding of Russian literary culture will miss a vital reference point. Yet even in translation, the way Pushkin achieves a sense of seriousness through irony and playfulness is striking. Narrative convention is subverted, the literary project itself refracted in a series of delightful digressions, inventions, and jokes. Not despite but because of all this richness, the tale acquires a depth of meaning that is hard to account for given the simplicity of its plot of spurned love and sacrificed friendship.

Extremely funny and deeply serious, Pushkin’s lightness of touch combines with an astonishing, funambulist freedom of language within a sophisticated, strictly executed poetic form. Even if you choose not to take Nabokov’s advice and learn Russian before beginning the novel, it is certainly worth reading the work in more than one translation, preferably with the benefit of Nabokov’s detailed commentary. *DG*

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Nineteenth century

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn Mark Twain



Lifespan
b. 1835 (U.S.), d. 1910

First Published
1885

First Published by
Dawson (Montreal)

Given Name
Samuel Langhorne Clemens

“The silence of snow... lit nonum quisl at auguer”

Like many of the titles found in the “Children’s Classics” section of bookstores, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is not a children’s book as we understand the term these days, and it is not surprising that adaptations of Twain’s work aimed at children are usually quite heavily edited. Sharing with *Tom Sawyer* (1876) a vivid portrayal of Mississippi small-town life, replete with colorful characters, superstitions, slang, and river lore, these adventures are of a different kind. The contrast becomes clear quite early on, when the bloodthirsty boys’ game of “highwaymen” and ransom organized by Tom is echoed in Huck’s escape from his drunken, violent father. In order to avoid being followed, Huck fakes his own murder. Early on in his flight, he links up with the escaped slave Jim, and together they travel down the Mississippi. Along the way they meet an assortment of locals, river folk, good and bad people, and get mixed up with a pair of con men. Many of their adventures are comic, and Huck’s naivety in describing them is frequently used to humorous effect. However, the straightforwardness with which Huck relates his experiences allows the narrative to shift unexpectedly from absurdity into much darker terrain, as when he witnesses a young boy of his own age die in a pointless and ridiculous feud with another family.

It is these sudden shifts and the contrasts they produce that make this more than an adventure novel. Huck is not necessarily an innocent, but in telling his story he tends to take conventional morals and social relations at face value. By doing so, he brings a moral earnestness to bear on them which exposes hypocrisy, injustice, falsehood, and cruelty more subtly and more scathingly than any direct satire could. *DM*

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