

# Annotations

English/EAL prescribed texts — from 2023 to the end of 2025

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## Text selection

These annotations are provided to assist schools in making decisions about text selection for their contexts and cohorts. There are many valid ways of interpreting the texts on this list, and these annotations are not intended to promote a particular interpretation or preferred way of reading a text.

Teachers should be aware that some texts on this list contain explicit strong language and/or content that may be of a sensitive nature for certain students and school contexts. Teachers are advised to consider this prior to introducing the text to students. No single text on the list is compulsory for schools to use.

### Cultural notice on spellings

The QCAA acknowledges that there are alternative spellings of the First Nations language groups and community names represented in this resource. Respectfully, the QCAA has tried to use the spelling preferred by the people who are referred to when describing themselves and will continue to engage in this consultation process. Where the names are generally used, the QCAA has taken the most commonly used spelling, and in some cases noted a common alternative.

## Text categories

The year of introduction or retirement of a text is indicated below each text's title where relevant. Titles are listed alphabetically within the following text categories:

- [External assessment texts — p. 2](#)
- [Novels and prose texts — p. 6](#)
- [Plays and drama texts — p. 15](#)
- [Film and television/multimodal texts — p. 20](#)
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# External assessment texts

Texts are listed in order of year they first appear on the external assessment (EA) list.

## ***Burial Rites* — Hannah Kent**

**Retires from EA list, moves to general list — end of 2025**

Set in the early 19th century against the stark beauty of the Icelandic landscape, and written by contemporary Australian writer Hannah Kent, *Burial Rites* (2013) is an absorbing work of historical fiction which brings to life the story of Agnes Magnúsdóttir, the last woman to be executed in Iceland. At the beginning of the novel, Agnes is placed in home detention with the family of a small-town official as she awaits her beheading for the alleged murder of her employer.

The story offers multiple narrative perspectives. The first-person perspective of Agnes is dominant, but other perspectives, such as those of an inexperienced, young clergyman and a callous, self-important district commissioner, are woven into the story.

## ***Hamlet* — William Shakespeare**

**Retires from EA list — end of 2023**

Regarded as one of Shakespeare's greatest tragedies, *Hamlet* deals with the efforts of a young prince to avenge the death of his father at the hands of his conniving uncle. The play was written at the beginning of the 17th century — a time of political, intellectual and cultural tumult.

The protagonist of the play, Prince Hamlet, is a deeply philosophical and contemplative individual who delivers some of the most memorable lines in Shakespeare's works. His desire to avenge his father's death drives the play's plot, but this desire is regularly thwarted by paralysing uncertainty and a distrust of all those around him, with the exception of good friend, Horatio.

## ***Jane Eyre* — Charlotte Brontë**

**Retires from EA list, moves to general list — end of 2023**

Penned under her male pseudonym, Currer Bell, *Jane Eyre*, first published in 1847, is considered to be Charlotte Brontë's most famous and engaging work. Unaware that the author was a woman, the book's eventual publisher, George Smith, was so enamoured by the manuscript that he devoured it in just one sitting.

As the novel's title indicates, this is the story of Jane Eyre. It deals with her struggle, as a young woman from lowly origins, to find a place of connection and security in a society characterised by class and gender inequality.

## ***Macbeth* — William Shakespeare**

**Retires from EA list, moves to general list — end of 2025**

Shakespeare's tragedy, *Macbeth*, charts the rapid demise of a once-heroic and valiant soldier who succumbs to dangerous desires, fuelled by dark forces.

The play is set in medieval Scotland and written following the ascension to the throne of James I.

Imbued with unsettling and evocative imagery, the play offers an absorbing study of two memorable characters, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, prepared to sacrifice all for the chance to rule Scotland.

## ***Never Let Me Go* — Kazuo Ishiguro**

**Introduced to EA list for first time — start of 2023**

Nobel Prize-winning author Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* is a dystopian novel published in 2005. A selection of characters, referred to as 'students', are raised by guardians in the special facilities at a boarding school in England, where, sectioned away from the wider world, they are bred to donate organs. There are three distinct sections in the novel, each providing insight into the lives of the three central characters — Tommy, Ruth and Kathy.

Teachers should be aware that this text contains content that may be of a sensitive nature for certain students and school contexts, and are advised to consider this prior to introducing the text to students. No single text on the list is compulsory for schools to use.

## ***The White Earth* — Andrew McGahan**

**Retires from EA list, moves to general list — end of 2024**

Australian author Andrew McGahan's Miles Franklin Award-winning novel, *The White Earth* (2004), is a multilayered novel that draws on a number of literary traditions.

Offering dual perspectives through the two central characters, the novel is set in the 1990s and focuses on the checkered history of a decaying rural property in the Darling Downs region of Queensland, and its reclusive owner, John McIvor. When McIvor's young nephew comes to live with him, following the death of his father in a fire, McIvor's preoccupation with inheritance becomes increasingly apparent.

## ***The Yield* — Tara June Winch**

**Introduced to EA list for first time — start of 2023**

Wiradjuri author Tara June Winch's highly acclaimed 2019 novel *The Yield* won the 2020 Miles Franklin Award, the 2020 Prime Minister's Literary Award for fiction and the 2020 Voss Literary Prize. The novel, which draws upon the geographical areas in Wiradjuri Country in New South Wales and Australia's colonial history, tells the story of the Gondiwindi family through three narrative voices: August Gondiwindi, who returns home after ten years abroad; August's grandfather, Albert 'Poppy' Gondiwindi, who revitalises the Wiradjuri language by compiling a dictionary of Wiradjuri words; and Reverend Greenleaf, a missionary in the area in the 1800s.

Prosperous, the town on Massacre Plains where both August and Poppy grew up, is now at risk of being repossessed by a mining company. At the heart of the novel is August's search for Poppy's dictionary of Wiradjuri words.

Teachers should be aware that this text contains content that may be of a sensitive nature for certain students and school contexts, and are advised to consider this prior to introducing the text to students. No single text on the list is compulsory for schools to use.

## ***We Are All Completely Beside Ourselves* — Karen Joy Fowler**

**Retires from EA list, moves to general list — end of 2024**

When Karen Joy Fowler's *We Are All Completely Beside Ourselves* (2013) opens, readers are immediately introduced to the novel's sardonically humorous narrator and central character, twenty-two-year-old University of California student, Rosemary Cooke.

Beginning her narrative account mid action, Rosemary gradually reveals the story of her highly unusual upbringing and the negative impact that this upbringing has had on her and the various members of her dysfunctional family.

## ***Othello* — William Shakespeare**

**Introduced to EA list for first time — start of 2024**

Shakespeare's tragedy *Othello* begins in the cosmopolitan Venetian state of the late sixteenth century and then moves to the 'warlike isle' of Cyprus where the dramatic action unfolds with grave consequences for the central characters. The play focuses on the love between Othello, a 'noble Moor' and celebrated General in the Venetian military, and Desdemona, daughter of nobleman and friend of Othello, Brabantio. The dramatic action charts the circumstances in which Othello and Desdemona's courtship began, their subsequent elopement, and the manner in which Iago, Othello's trusted but duplicitous ensign, ruthlessly and successfully plots to undermine and destroy Othello's faith in Desdemona to such an extent that he is provoked into the terrible act of murdering his wife.

## ***Pride and Prejudice* — Jane Austen**

**Introduced to EA list for first time — start of 2024**

Arguably, Jane Austen's most widely read and adapted novel is her 1813 comedy of manners, *Pride and Prejudice*. Set in Georgian England, it is filled with memorable characters such as Mr Collins, the formidable Lady Catherine de Bourgh, and Mr Fitzwilliam Darcy. The novel follows the story of Elizabeth Bennet, one of the five unmarried daughters of the Bennet family. The world Elizabeth inhabits is one of country walks, rural villages, the companionship of siblings and friends, great houses, entailed estates, wealthy suitors, clergymen, regimental officers, the joy and heartbreak of romance, the pressures of avoiding family scandal and disgrace — all underpinned by the dependency of women on men for social respectability and financial security.

## ***All the Light We Cannot See* — Anthony Doerr**

**Introduced to EA list for first time — start of 2025**

*All the Light We Cannot See*, is American writer Anthony Doerr's award-winning 2014 novel, set in Europe and spanning approximately 80 years, although the majority of the novel is focused on a ten-year period immediately before and during World War II. Two teenage protagonists — the blind Marie-Laure and the clever Werner — are on opposite sides of the war in France and Germany where they encounter dangerous situations.

# ***The Dry* — Jane Harper**

**Introduced to EA list for first time — start of 2025**

Australian author Jane Harper's 2016 debut novel *The Dry*, is set in the drought-ridden town and farming district of Kiewarra in Victoria. When protagonist Aaron Falk returns home to attend the funeral of three members of the same family, one of them his childhood friend, his subsequent investigation of the circumstances of their violent deaths exposes the community's complex relationships. Falk is now a Federal Police officer, and the murder mystery that unfolds is told through flashbacks that entwine the past with the present.

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# Novels and prose texts

## ***After Darkness* — Christine Piper**

**Introduced to list for first time — start of 2023**

Australian writer Christine Piper's award-winning 2014 novel *After Darkness* alternates between years and settings. The protagonist and first-person narrator, Toakazu Ibaraki, transports readers across eight years and three primary locations — Tokyo, Broome and the Loveday internment camp in Australia where Japanese, Italians, Germans and other nationalities are interred during World War II. Dr Ibaraki, who is arrested and interned as an enemy alien while working in a hospital in Broome, relates a story that takes readers into conflicts away from the battlefield, where characters struggle to navigate tensions and uncertainty, competing cultural loyalties and allegiances, and friendship. Key to the Japanese doctor's story and his personal tragedy is what lies in his past.

Overall, this novel is a tale of a world at war, and it is one that offers perspectives on many concepts, including nationalism, biological warfare, ethics, justice, Australian cultural identity, and the nature of honour and loyalty.

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## ***Behind the Beautiful Forevers* — Katherine Boo**

Katherine Boo is an American journalist whose body of work has focused on the plight of impoverished people in developing countries.

*Behind the Beautiful Forevers* (2012) is a non-fictional account of the lives of the people of Annawadi, a slum alongside the Mumbai airport. The author details the daily lives of a range of individuals as a way of chronicling the difficulties associated with poverty, hunger, conflict with other residents, the ever-present threat of violence — both internal and external — and the ongoing concern of these former migrant workers that Indian authorities will remove their homes and, as a culmination of this process, deport them.

## ***Cat's Eye* — Margaret Atwood**

The adult narrator in this Atwood novel written in 1988 is Elaine Risley, a renowned artist who returns to Toronto, Canada for a retrospective of her work. Coming back to her hometown awakens memories in Elaine of her traumatic school years. At the heart of these recollections is her complex relationship with a trio of girls, led by the powerful Cordelia.

Using her characteristic acerbic wit, and linguistic and narrative skill, Atwood explores the tangled and problematic relationship between our past and present lives, and the impact that this can have on our sense of self.

## ***Do Not Say We Have Nothing* — Madeleine Thien**

**Introduced to list for first time — start of 2023**

*Do Not Say We Have Nothing* (2016) is a novel written by Chinese–Canadian author, Madeleine Thien, who combines an extended family saga with a commentary on the history of China since the accession of Mao Zedong to power in 1949. The family story begins with the arrival of a young Chinese girl, Ai-Ming, who comes to live for a short period of time with a relative, Marie, and her mother in Vancouver, Canada. Ai-Ming has had to leave China at the time of the Tiananmen Square massacre in 1989. The story then expands greatly as Marie, provided with information from Ai-Ming, recounts the stories of family members from the time of the Cultural Revolution in China to the present. Their stories are quite tragic as they fall victim to a totalitarian government that wants to exert total control over its citizens.

Thien deliberately chose to tell this story, which is partly based on her family history, through creative writing rather than as an autobiography or as a factual history. She believes that historical fiction allows a writer to use imagination to explore the shadowy gaps in history.

## ***Fahrenheit 451* — Ray Bradbury**

American author Ray Bradbury's novel *Fahrenheit 451*, written in 1953, focuses on the wholesale burning of books in a society as a way of eradicating certain views of life that challenge the dominant culture of the time. The main character is a 'fireman' whose job is to seize works of literature and other serious cultural texts and burn them. These books encourage critical thinking and offer knowledge and ideas that threaten or, at least, challenge the views, and the authority, of the leaders of this particular society. The novel does not identify who employs him and his colleagues to do this but it is presumably a power elite of politicians, businesspeople, religious leaders or others who want to close down dissent to their ways of thinking.

The novel raises the issue of the value of the books that are being burnt. The reader is invited to see that practical books, such as those about house construction or mechanical engineering, may be important in an environment that promotes a utilitarian view of life, but they do not offer knowledge about the possibilities of life, the world or the human condition. They do not contribute to the meaningfulness of human life or the value of individual lives in the way that the books chosen to be burned do.

This novel might inspire readers to reflect on the personal value of at least one literary or cultural text that they have read recently and which has had a lasting effect on their view of life.

## ***Frankenstein* — Mary Shelley**

English writer Mary Shelley's 1818 Gothic novel, *Frankenstein*, belongs to both the science and horror fiction genres. The novel's protagonist, Victor Frankenstein, uses the emerging energy source of electricity to bring to life a human-like creature that seeks acceptance and love from its creator but seeks terrible revenge when rejected. As a Romantic, Shelley was resistant to the ongoing scientific and medical revolution that began early in the nineteenth century. She feared the effects of these developments on the Romantic view of what it means to be fully human and was particularly aware of how medical scientists of the time believed that electricity could be used to reanimate dead creatures — including human beings. The subtitle of the novel, *The Modern Prometheus*, is a clear indication of her attitude toward humans seeking to play the role of God. (In the Greek myth Prometheus steals fire from the gods and pays a heavy price for doing so.)

Although her novel was not particularly popular when it was first published, it has become the basis for many adaptations, especially films and art works. The creators of these adaptations

change aspects of the original text to reflect the way in which they think that Shelley’s novel is still relevant to the effects of scientific and technological developments on humans over the last 300 years. The novel can be seen, most of all, as an assertion of Mary Shelley’s idea of what it means to be human and relate fully to the humanity of others.

## ***Growing Up Aboriginal in Australia — Anita Heiss***

**Introduced to list for first time — start of 2023**

*Growing Up Aboriginal in Australia* is a 2018 anthology of 50 memoirs edited by well-known Wiradjuri writer and activist, Anita Heiss. The writers range from a famous sportsman (Adam Goodes), writer (Tony Birch) and film star (Miranda Tapsell) to ordinary people who took the opportunity to contribute to the collection. Each account is a recollection of a significant event in the writer’s life which, taken together, express a wide range of the experiences felt by contemporary First Nations Australians. These include an awareness of the Australian history of colonisation, a memory of The Stolen Generations, examples of daily racism, the continuance of outdated stereotypes and a search for identity.

## ***Growing Up Asian in Australia — Alice Pung***

**Introduced to list for first time — start of 2023**

Alice Pung, who has written her own memoir, *Unpolished Gem*, about growing up as a young Asian woman in Australia is the editor of a collection of memoirs by other Asian–Australians about their experiences growing up in Australia. This collection, *Growing Up Asian in Australia*, published in 2008, gives voice to a diverse group of people of Asian background, from chef and publisher Kylie Kwong to writer and journalist Benjamin Law, who were born in Australia or migrated to Australia and added to its social and cultural quality and complexity. The wide range of stories in this anthology shows what it is to be both Asian and Australian. The memoirs are focused on the contributors’ early experiences of coming of age in Australia.

## ***Into Thin Air — Jon Krakauer***

**Introduced to list for first time — start of 2023**

Jon Krakauer is an American mountaineer and writer of non-fiction who, in 1996, joined a group which aimed to climb Mt Everest. *Into Thin Air* is his account of that ill-fated expedition, which claimed eight lives.

Presented as a memoir, Krakauer writes the adventure narrative in first person, relating impressions of people and places as he saw them and only occasionally diverting into judgment or commentary. *Into Thin Air* also operates as an adjunct to investigative journalism. Krakauer is candid in his depiction of the commercialisation and resultant desecration of the mountain. His acknowledgment of the conflict faced by the Sherpa people in trying to both protect a sacred space and appease the Western tourist industry provides an important cultural perspective.

## ***Island: The complete stories* (collection of short stories) — Alistair MacLeod**

Canadian author and academic, Alistair MacLeod (1936 – 2014), was a meticulous literary craftsman. He wrote only sixteen short stories over 30 years but is still regarded as one of the great exponents of short fiction. He was born in Saskatchewan but at the age of ten moved with



his family to Cape Breton Island in Nova Scotia. MacLeod maintained a close association with the island for the rest of his life and his stories all focus on its people and its harsh but beautiful environment. The stories deal with isolation, loss, change, tradition, family, love and the ever-present sea. Evocative and often moving, the stories in *Island* all reveal the importance of place in shaping human experience.

## ***March* — Geraldine Brooks**

**Introduced to list for first time — start of 2023**

Geraldine Brooks is an Australian journalist and writer of nonfiction and historical fiction who lives in America. *March* (2005), her fourth novel, is a narrative intervention of Louisa May Alcott's classic work, *Little Women* (1868), a largely autobiographical tracing of the lives of the March sisters as they move from childhood to adulthood. Brooks adds conjectural layers to Alcott's domesticated narrative by writing from the point of view of Mr March, the girls' father, who is serving as a Union army chaplain during the American Civil War. March is a conflicted character, struggling to reconcile his patriotic idealism with the horrors of war and his civic roles as a father and husband.

Brooks includes letters as a way of internalising the narrative voice. The intercutting of other perspectives, including that of March's wife, allows for a more nuanced exploration of concepts. The novel is steeped in contextual representations, especially the struggle of the abolitionists to eradicate slavery, and March's belief, radical for the day, in free and equal education.

## ***Nineteen Eighty-Four* — George Orwell**

In this compelling novel, published in 1949, George Orwell imagines a dystopian London under the totalitarian rule of the Party. Placing the populace under constant surveillance and systematically eliminating free thought, the Party is led by the omnipresent Big Brother. Order is imposed by the Thought Police, who torture and eliminate subversive Party members.

The story follows Winston Smith, a low-ranking Outer Party member working in the Ministry of Truth, the government propaganda arm responsible for controlling language and rewriting history so that it accords with Party views and actions. Engaging in a series of illicit activities, Smith quickly discovers the horrifying lengths to which the Party will go to maintain conformity and control.

## ***Persepolis: The story of a childhood* (graphic novel) — Marjane Satrapi**

Iranian writer, Marjane Satrapi sets her graphic novel in a time and place of conflict, Tehran during the Islamic Revolution of the 1970s, and explores what it means to live in a fragmented and fracturing world. Deeply loyal to her uncle Anoosh and her parents, and strongly aware of the dangers of their activist views in such a world, Satrapi — as storyteller in written and visual forms — establishes a poignant, honest narrative about survival. The child's point of view is used to tell the story, and this technique both softens and intensifies much of the inherent brutality of the world she inhabits. The novel, first published in 2000, explores the challenges for individuals of sustaining loyalty to their inner world while surviving in the outer world. This rich text explores the concept of freedom and offers perspectives on family, gender and hope.

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## ***Schindler's Ark* (also known as *Schindler's List*) — Thomas Keneally**

Australian author Thomas Keneally's 1982 novel *Schindler's Ark* belongs to the genre of historical fiction, based on a true story but embellished with added fictional detail by the author. It features a real person, Oskar Schindler, a German Nazi businessman and industrialist who, despite his personal and political affiliations, saved the lives of over a thousand European Jews by employing them in his factory in the Polish city of Krakow so that they could not be taken to death camps during World War II.

Thomas Keneally used the word 'ark' in the title of his novel to link the 'hero' of his story, Oskar Schindler, to the Jewish patriarch Noah who, in an Old Testament biblical Flood story, rescues all the creatures of the world at the time of a catastrophic flood produced by the Jewish god of Israel to punish the corruption of human beings.

## **Short stories by Frank O'Connor**

Michael O'Donovan, who wrote under the pen name Frank O'Connor (1903–1966), was one of Ireland's most celebrated writers, known for the time he spent crafting and revising his writing. An essayist, critic and teacher, he was best known for his memoirs and short stories. He eschewed what he perceived as the elitism of Joyce and Yeats and wrote stories in a beguiling conversational tone about the Ireland he loved. From the delightful *My Oedipus Complex* to the harrowing *Guests of the Nation*, his works are always immediately engaging and have earned him a reputation as Ireland's Chekhov. As the author of over 150 works, he left a rich and memorable literary legacy.

## **Short stories by Katherine Mansfield**

New Zealand writer Katherine Mansfield (1888–1923) is considered a pioneer of the modern short story. She produced three memorable collections before her untimely death at just 34 years of age. Additional stories were published posthumously. Like fellow modernist writers such as Woolf, Joyce and Eliot, Mansfield's work was inventive, innovative and highly influential. Her stories convey the subjective inner worlds of her characters and cleverly critique the often contradictory and eccentric aspects of human behaviour. Her slice-of-life approach, her enigmatic endings, and her ability to convey meaning through nuanced description and dialogue make her stories engaging examples of modernist writing.

## ***Talking to My Country* — Stan Grant**

Stan Grant is a celebrated Australian journalist who has, over the course of his career, worked for many well-known media organisations in Australia and overseas. However, his feelings of personal success have always been dampened by his knowledge of the effect upon First Nations peoples (including his own family) of the colonisation of the land, now known as Australia, by the British. Pre-colonial Australia comprised over 500 nations, each with its own languages, cultures, and fundamentally important connections to Country. The colonisation of Australia began with

dispossessing First Nations peoples of their land, and included sending people to government reserves where administrators controlled every aspect of their lives.

Stan Grant's *Talking to My Country* is a personal memoir in which he links aspects of his own life with the broader issue of how First Nations peoples are still treated today. Interestingly, the title of his book suggests that Grant is not just focusing on the Wiradjuri Country of his own people, but addressing the people of modern Australia.

## ***The Arsonist* — Chloe Hooper**

**Introduced to list for first time — start of 2023**

Chloe Hooper's 2018 work of non-fiction *The Arsonist: A Mind on Fire* focuses on the fire that was deliberately lit in Victoria's Central Gippsland on what is known as Black Saturday, 7 February 2009 when Victoria suffered cataclysmic bushfires — the worst in Australia's history up to that point. Written using a range of tenses, including present tense, Hooper's book captures the immediacy of events with vivid descriptions of the fires themselves, depictions of firestorms ravaging the Latrobe Valley, testimonies of survivors sharing harrowing stories (including the loss of loved ones) and the details of Detective Henry's investigation into finding the arsonist. The book recounts how the fire cells were so extraordinarily hot that they created their own weather patterns, destroying, killing, and trapping. Statistics included emphasise the widespread destruction of this event — four hundred separate fires burned in Victoria (the equivalent of 500 atomic bombs) and 173 people died.

The book explores the difficulties of finding the culprit and then of navigating the justice system, through three distinct and connected sections: 'The Detectives', 'The Lawyers', and 'The Courtroom'. It examines the convicted arsonist's background and possible motivations, his treatment by the media, and the larger social context for these events. Hooper's book offers perspectives on many issues and topics, including the environment, historical contexts for the use of fire, culpability, the burden of proof, the vulnerability of the intellectually disabled, social disadvantage, the criminal justice system and notions of justice, and the lasting effects of grief and loss.

Teachers should be aware that this text contains explicit strong language and content that may be of a sensitive nature for certain students and school contexts, and are advised to consider this prior to introducing the text to students. No single text on the list is compulsory for schools to use.

## ***The Cellist of Sarajevo* — Steven Galloway**

In his 2008 novel *The Cellist of Sarajevo*, Canadian writer Steven Galloway contrasts the horrors of ethnic hatred and the cynicism of particular national leaders with the heroic value of the Arts in maintaining, against all odds, the artefacts of civilisation and culture. The novel is set in the siege of what is now the capital city of the state of Bosnia, Sarajevo, during the Bosnian War, which started in 1992 as a result of the breakup of the Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia.

The novel tells the stories of a number of citizens of Sarajevo, who suffer the bombing of the city by the enemy army in the surrounding hills and snipers based within the city itself. Their lives are fraught yet their spirits are sustained by the heroism of a musician who plays his cello in a public square during the siege to express bereavement at the killing of 22 citizens by a mortar bomb. Three characters, including a young woman who has unwillingly become a sniper, are especially shored up by the bravery of the cellist and the power of his music.

Again, as in a number of novels, the humanising and enlightening power of music, literature and other artforms is set against the destructiveness of national leaders who intensify and exploit hatred and distrust between different groups of people for their own political ends.

One of the uplifting elements of the novel is Galloway's choice of Tomaso Albinoni's *Adagio in G Minor* as the musical piece that the cellist plays. It is a beautiful composition that takes listeners from the often-grim reality of the world into a realm of quiet reflection about the nature of human life.

## ***The Color of Water* — James McBride**

**Introduced to list for first time — start of 2023**

*The Color of Water* is an engaging work by US writer, journalist and musician, James McBride. First published in 1995, the book, part memoir and part biography, offers readers two parallel accounts. The first of these is told from the perspective of McBride's remarkable mother, Ruth. It deals with her two interracial marriages and her efforts to raise the twelve children that came from these unions. The second account, told from McBride's perspective, deals with his formative years as he seeks to find his place in a confusing world. By interviewing his mother and writing this book, McBride was able to fill crucial gaps in his family's history, leading to a better understanding of his mother and himself. His book is a reminder of the important place of life writing in respected literature.

## ***The Great Gatsby* — F Scott Fitzgerald**

*The Great Gatsby* (1925) by F Scott Fitzgerald is essentially an allegorical story about how various characters in the novel behave in relation to the values and beliefs of what is called the American Dream, a belief that the new world of the American republic could offer humans a new beginning, released from the darkness of the Old World of Europe. The main protagonist, Jay Gatsby, is a mysterious character that readers learn very little about until towards the book's conclusion. However, it becomes obvious as the story unfolds that he is a living symbol for this national myth. As a young man, he fights in the American army in Europe during World War I and subsequently becomes very wealthy, a primary goal of the Dream. However, the American Dream includes not just material wealth but even more so Romantic values such as the importance of individualism and the transcendent spiritual quality of the nation. In Jay's case, this pursuit of something beyond the material is his almost courtly love for Daisy, now the wife of Tom Buchanan, a very wealthy businessman.

Gatsby is courageous and prepared to fight for Daisy's love. Unfortunately, he is made vulnerable by his naïve illusions about his country's past and the motives of other characters in the novel. Jay himself is revealed as a Prohibition Era gangster. The novel does, in fact, reveal many unattractive events in the lives of other characters in the story including class poverty (during the prosperous Roaring Twenties), marital infidelity and male violence against women. These characters see the world in all its raw reality. The only other character in the novel who admires Jay Gatsby's personal qualities is Nick Carraway, the first-person narrator, who gradually comes to understand and sympathise with him, perhaps because of his idealism (no matter how misguided).

## ***The Hound of the Baskervilles* — Arthur Conan Doyle**

**Introduced to list for first time — start of 2023**

This crime novel, first published in 1902, heralded the return of British writer Arthur Conan Doyle's psychologically ingenious detective, Sherlock Holmes, after the sleuth was controversially killed off in a previous work. *The Hound of the Baskervilles* is more Gothic in style than earlier

Holmes's stories, including familiar tropes such as a mysterious and lonely setting, a family curse, grisly deaths and emotionally driven characters.

*The Hound of the Baskervilles* pays homage to the Victorian fascination with the supernatural, offering varying perspectives in terms of how we might perceive the nexus between reality and non-reality. Schematically, the narrative is inverted monster fiction. Holmes sets out to prove that, rather than being an externalised and, therefore, uncontrollable threat, the true monster emanates from the self-serving desires that lie within the hearts and minds of the human characters. As always, the protagonist of this classical detective novel is enigmatic, courageous and brilliant as he picks apart the plot and exposes failings of the characters.

## ***The Martian* — Andy Weir**

**Introduced to list for first time — start of 2023**

American author, Andy Weir was a software engineer when in 2011 he first published *The Martian* as a serial on a blog before it metamorphosed into a novel, audiobook and film. The story's plot operates from a recognisable literary premise: the main character, having, through no fault of his own, been isolated within a hostile environment — Mars in 2035 — must devise methods for his survival and rescue.

Weir's science fiction novel features the linear narrative arc of the 'hero's journey' story. Mark Watney is a warm and often humorous protagonist, and the author provides a suspenseful plot and significant technical detail, often key tropes in speculative fiction. *The Martian* unfolds as a series of journal entries, and offers perspectives on the human capacity for hope and our innate desire to survive, no matter the circumstances. Scientific endeavour and ingenuity are also key representations in this fast-paced genre novel.

Teachers should be aware that this text contains explicit strong language and content that may be of a sensitive nature for certain students and school contexts, and are advised to consider this prior to introducing the text to students. No single text on the list is compulsory for schools to use.

## ***The Namesake* — Jhumpa Lahiri**

**Introduced to list for first time — start of 2023**

*The Namesake* by English-born American writer Jhumpa Lahiri is a novel published in 2003, and explores experiences of immigration as people adapt to life in a new country with a different culture while holding onto aspects of their past life. The novel spans several generations of an Indian family, the Gangulis, originally from Bengal, whose adult members, Ashima and Ashoke have moved to Massachusetts, USA. Here, Ashoke, having won a university scholarship, embarks on an academic career. Their children, Gogol and Sonia, are both born in Boston and so their experience of growing up in America is quite different from that of their parents. The novel also deals with other ideas such as the range of lifestyles experienced by Gogol through his romantic relationships with three young women, one of whom he marries. The novel is told from the perspectives of these various characters.

Another important idea in the novel is that of identity crisis attached to naming (hence the title of the novel), especially experienced by Gogol. He has been given this Russian name by his father who does not, until later, explain the importance to him of the name of a Russian writer, Nikolai Gogol. Interestingly, this is a similar experience to a character in VS Naipaul's novel, *Half A Life*, published in 2001. The protagonist in that novel is a young Indian man, Willie Somerset Chandran, whose middle name is derived from that of British novelist Somerset Maugham. Willie goes to Britain to live and has great difficulty finding an authentic identity for himself. Gogol on the

other hand, in *The Namesake*, takes the initiative and as he enters university, he takes on the new name of Nikhil and moves forward with his new life.

## ***The Turning* (collection of short stories)**

### **— Tim Winton**

Highly esteemed Australian author Tim Winton presents readers with unromanticised versions of reality, retaining the brutal, quirky, painful, inexplicable elements of life in his work.

In *The Turning*, a 2005 anthology of seventeen loosely connected short stories, Winton offers readers flawed individuals, navigating their way through pivotal moments in time, brought about by chance, circumstance and choice. The inescapability of the past, the impact of decisions, the complexity of human relationships, and the urge for redemption are some of the big concepts that weave their way through this compelling anthology.

Teachers should be aware that some stories in this anthology contain content that may be of a sensitive nature for certain students and school contexts, and are advised to consider this prior to introducing these stories to students. No single text on the list is compulsory for schools to use.

# Plays and drama texts

## ***As You Like It* — William Shakespeare**

**Introduced to list for first time — start of 2023**

Shakespeare's *As You Like It* is a comedy that takes audiences into a world where brother turns against brother, young women take on disguises, and love stories are complicated. Set mostly in the English Forest of Arden, this is a play about family, friendship, love, power, loyalty, treachery, injustice, and forgiveness. There is the unjust banishment and disinheritance of Duke Senior from court by the tyrannical Duke Frederick, and the loyal followers who join him in the Forest of Arden to create their own community where he serves as an honest and fair leader. There is Rosalind who is banished for being Duke Senior's daughter, disguises herself as a boy, and is accompanied to the Forest by her cousin Celia who also happens to be Duke Frederick's daughter. There is the noble Orlando's stalwart commitment to his father, regardless of the consequences, and there is the compassion of his brother Jacques. There is Adam who dedicates his life to Orlando, and then there are the men who burn down Orlando's house because he wins a wrestling match.

The play provides opportunities to explore many ideas, including perspectives on gender.

## ***Away* — Michael Gow**

Framed by excerpts from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *King Lear*, Gow's Australian play, *Away*, first performed in 1986, incorporates the grand Shakespearean themes of suffering and personal reconciliation.

The focus of the work is on three families on coastal holidays during the Christmas period of 1968. All three families are contending with significant personal and relational issues. English immigrants, Harry and Vic, are dealing with the terminal illness of their son, Tom. Jim and Gwen are dealing with uncomfortable truths about their relationship, raised by their increasingly headstrong daughter, Meg. Roy and Coral are dealing with the death of their only son in Vietnam and the impact that this has had on their relationship.

Daggy humour, a teenage holiday romance, and a playful approach to serious topics, all make this drama a particularly appealing text.

## ***Black Diggers* — Tom Wright**

In writing *Black Diggers*, dramatist Tom Wright collaborated closely with researcher and ex-serviceman, David Williams, and fellow dramatist, Nunukul Ngugi man Wesley Enoch — the initial director of the work which was first performed at the Sydney Opera House in 2014. Throughout the creative and research process, all three men were very conscious of the fact that First Nations Australian history has too often been ignored, effaced, or misappropriated. *Black Diggers* was, in part, an attempt to redress this issue.

The play is composed of a series of thematically linked vignettes. These vignettes deal with the pre-war, war, and post-war experiences of some of the thousand Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander servicemen who defied the racism of the military establishment and their nation to fight in World War I. The play pays tribute to the sacrifice and legacy of these Australian servicemen.

## ***Così* — Louis Nowra**

*Così*, by Australian playwright Louis Nowra was first performed in 1992. It is set in Melbourne in 1971, a time characterised by anti-Vietnam War protests, the rise of feminism, and dramatic social and political change. The central character of the play is Lewis Riley, a recent university graduate who has been offered the opportunity to direct Mozart's opera *Così Fan Tutte* for the patients of a local psychiatric hospital.

Lewis's developing relationships with the cast members of the opera over the course of the play are contrasted with his increasingly fraught relationships with girlfriend, Lucy, and roommate, Nick. This contrast allows Nowra to challenge negative and narrow representations of the mentally ill, and to highlight the arbitrariness of the line societies often draw between those who are 'sane' and those who are not.

Teachers should be aware that this text contains explicit strong language and content that may be of a sensitive nature for certain students and school contexts, and are advised to consider this prior to introducing the text to students. No single text on the list is compulsory for schools to use.

## ***Counting and Cracking* — S Shaktidharan**

**Introduced to list for first time — start of 2023**

*Counting and Cracking* (2019) by Australian–Sri Lankan–Tamil playwright S Shaktidharan tells the story of four generations of the one Tamil family and takes place between 1956 and 2004 in a range of settings in Australia and Sri Lanka, including Sydney, Coogee Beach, the Villawood Detention Centre, and Colombo. A story of home and exile, and the connections between the past and the present, it begins with Siddhartha throwing his grandmother's ashes into the Georges River in Australia and ends with Siddhartha and Rhada planning the funeral rites for Siddhartha's great-grandfather in Sri Lanka. This is a journey involving healing and renewed understanding of family, history, heritage and restoration. It is also one that offers an exploration of the political nature of language, the effects of trauma, injustice and discrimination, and the possibility of forgiveness.

Teachers should be aware that this text contains explicit strong language and content that may be of a sensitive nature for certain students and school contexts, and are advised to consider this prior to introducing the text to students. No single text on the list is compulsory for schools to use.

## ***Inheritance* — Hannie Rayson**

**Introduced to list for first time — start of 2023**

Hannie Rayson is an Australian playwright whose work explores contemporary issues such as national identity and the impacts of social change on the individual, often through the prism of family-based drama.

*Inheritance* (2003) follows this pattern. The play is a saga set in country Victoria. Rayson uses an 80th birthday party and the rivalry of two long-established families, the rural Delaneys and the urban Hamiltons, to explore the tensions that can occur around inheritance, and the desire for continuance.

The play is structured episodically. Humour underscores the conflict as a picture is formulated of how family jealousy, disagreements and self-interest can colour our capacity to negotiate our relationships successfully. The disadvantages of living in rural Australia amid national perceptions of urban favouritism is a crucial aspect of the narrative as Rayson explores the dichotomy that can exist between a family's financial and spiritual attachment to their home. The play offers



further perspectives on gender, as well as racism, land ownership and the alienation of family members who have ‘sold out’ by moving to the city.

*Inheritance* is a powerful, microcosmic exploration of key Australian issues, with a specific focus on the divisions that exist between the city and the bush, and between duty and freedom.

Teachers should be aware that this text contains explicit strong language and content that may be of a sensitive nature for certain students and school contexts, and are advised to consider this prior to introducing the text to students. No single text on the list is compulsory for schools to use.

## ***Lady Windermere’s Fan* — Oscar Wilde**

Displaying Wilde’s characteristic wit and charm, *Lady Windermere’s Fan* offers audiences an engaging social commentary on the manners and conventions of the ruling elite of late 19th century England.

First performed in 1892, the play deals with the tribulations of Lady Windermere as she seeks to determine the faithfulness of her husband, while simultaneously contemplating an affair of her own.

Although clearly written as an entertaining comedy, *Lady Windermere’s Fan* at the same time highlights some of the less glamorous aspects of upper class Victorian society. The obsessive preoccupation with social standing, the ever-present risk of social humiliation (something Wilde himself would soon experience) and the double standards that existed for men and women are all on view.

## ***Switzerland* — Joanna Murray-Smith**

First performed in 2014, *Switzerland*, by prolific Australian writer, Joanna Murray-Smith, has been described as a psychological thriller. Set in the Swiss Alps in 1995, the play focuses on an encounter between reclusive writer, Patricia Highsmith (author of *The Talented Mr Ripley*), and a young New York publishing assistant, seeking to convince Highsmith to write one more novel.

The Highsmith in the play, as she was in life, is a complex, cynical, bigoted, contrary character with a gift for caustic humour and vicious put-downs. The publishing assistant, Edward Ridgeway, initially appears callow and awe-struck but, in classic Ripplian fashion, evolves unsettlingly into someone much more sinister.

This absorbing one-act play provides opportunity for fascinating exploration of the interrelationship between reality and fiction, and the complex relationship of artists with their creations.

## ***The 7 Stages of Grieving* — Wesley Enoch and Deborah Mailman**

First performed in the mid-1990s, *The 7 Stages of Grieving* is the product of a collaboration between Nunukul Ngugi man Wesley Enoch and Bidjara and Māori woman Deborah Mailman. As the title suggests, the play primarily deals with the collective grief experienced by First Nations Australians as a result of colonisation.

The work is performed by a lone actor, speaking on behalf of her people. On a highly symbolic stage and using a variety of modes of communication, she shares stories about community, cultural heritage, loss, trauma, injustice, and systemic racism.

Although *The 7 Stages of Grieving* necessarily deals with pain and suffering, it also deals with remarkable resilience in the face of that suffering. It promotes awareness and empathy but, more importantly, fosters in the audience a desire to act for change.

## ***The Appleton Ladies' Potato Race* — Melanie Tait**

**Introduced to list for first time — start of 2023**

Set in the fictitious, rural, tidy town of Appleton, Melanie Tait's *The Appleton Ladies' Potato Race* introduces audiences to five forthright female characters from various backgrounds and of different ages, who are at the heart of this 2021 Australian comedy.

Central to the story is the potato race, an annual highlight for the townspeople, where the male race winner is awarded \$1000 and the female race winner \$200. Incensed by the disparity in prize money, the new GP, Penny Anderson, rallies the townspeople to raise additional funds for the winners to equalise the prize pool, only to be confronted by deeply held chauvinism and resistance to change. This begins a highly entertaining and heart-warming contest that exposes the town's cultural differences and entrenched ways of thinking.

This is a play that offers interesting perspectives on many issues and concepts, including notions of Australian identity, gender equality, women in sport, the power of solidarity, cultural diversity, and the complexities of country town communities.

Teachers should be aware that this text contains instances of coarse language use, and are advised to consider this prior to introducing the text to students. No single text on the list is compulsory for schools to use.

## ***The Crucible* — Arthur Miller**

Arthur Miller's play, *The Crucible* is a particularly powerful text that continues to resonate nearly seven decades after it was first performed. Written in the context of the Cold War and America's McCarthy trials, the play deals with the extraordinary Salem witch trials of 1692 and 1693.

One of the many strengths of this play is its dramatic intensity, each of the four acts ending in an emotion-charged crescendo. Memorable characterisation is another feature of Miller's work. From the austere, unbending Danforth, to the oft-demonised Abigail Williams, to the agonisingly conflicted Johns of the play, Proctor and Hale, the characters of this work linger in the memory long after the last lines of the text are read.

## ***The Drover's Wife* — Leah Purcell**

Based on Henry Lawson's short story of the same name, Australian writer Leah Purcell's award-winning play, *The Drover's Wife* (2016), explores the stoicism, courage and independence of a woman raising her children in a remote homestead while her husband is off droving. Setting her work in the Snowy Mountains in 1893, Purcell — a Goa-Gunggari-Wakka Wakka Murri woman — reimagines Lawson's tale, introducing new characters and adding layers of complexity absent from the original.

The central complication in Purcell's version is not the arrival of a snake to her remote homestead, but the arrival of a fugitive accused of killing a white woman and her children. Over the nine scenes of the play the lives of the drover's wife, Molly, and her son, Danny, begin to intertwine with the fugitive as the three of them deal with a series of tense and frightening encounters.

In Purcell's hands, Lawson's brief tribute to a pioneering woman morphs into something much more substantial and much more confronting. This dramatically powerful work deals with the loss of cultural identity, the effects of entrenched racism, and the trauma of domestic violence.

Teachers should be aware that this text contains explicit strong language and content that may be of a sensitive nature for certain students and school contexts, and are advised to consider this prior to introducing the text to students. No single text on the list is compulsory for schools to use.

# Film and television/multimodal texts

The text title is followed by director/creator.

## ***2001: A Space Odyssey* — Stanley Kubrick**

At the centre of American director Stanley Kubrick's 1968 epic science fiction film *2001: A Space Odyssey* is a black, alien monolith that appears either to cause or predict evolutionary leaps forward. In the first part of the film, the monolith is found by a group of apish hominids who soon develop the ability to use tools and to eat meat. The second part of the film is set millions of years into the future, where Dr Heywood Floyd travels to the moon to investigate a monolith that has been unearthed on the lunar surface and which emits a high-pitched signal into outer space. The film then cuts to eighteen months later to the Discovery One, an American spaceship piloted by Dr David Bowman and Dr Frank Poole, which is on a mission to Jupiter to follow the signal emitted by the black monolith. The final part of the film involves Bowman entering the monolith floating near Jupiter and journeying through some form of portal where he eventually confronts a fourth monolith in person.

Kubrick's film makes distinctive use of classical music, slow-paced and realistic shots of space flight, and repetitive inclusion of symmetrical framing and shapes. It is a film that offers perspectives on topics such as science and technology, harmony in the universe, humanity, and artificial intelligence, and its ambiguities allow for many possible interpretations.

## ***A Beautiful Mind* — Ron Howard**

**Introduced to list for first time — start of 2023**

American director Ron Howard's 2001 biographical film, *A Beautiful Mind*, opens in 1947 at Princeton University where a professor asserts that the most important historical events and significant inventions and discoveries are attributed to maths, and by default, mathematicians. Only then is the audience introduced to the protagonist, John Nash, a mathematical genius determined to discover an original topic for his doctorate.

The film follows Nash's story across 50 years as he moves from pre-schizophrenia to the post-schizophrenia stage of his life, and its depiction of how his illness shapes the lives of the patient, his wife and colleagues, is deeply affecting. This is a film that invites reflections on the need to contribute, the desire for purpose, the haunting nature of the past, the value of loyalty, and the instinct to belong. The film's compelling exploration of mental illness in a brilliant mind also prompts questions about notions of success, the nature of bias, and society's attitudes towards people with mental illness.

## ***Ali's Wedding* — Jeffrey Walker**

**Introduced to list for first time — start of 2023**

This 2017 Australian autobiographical film is based on the real-life experiences of Iranian-born Australian writer, actor and stand-up comedian, Osamah Sami, who wrote the critically acclaimed book *Good Muslim Boy*, and co-wrote and stars as Ali in the film. *Ali's Wedding* is a romantic comedy that provides a joyous exploration of the life of a young man navigating his way between the worlds of two cultures. Ali, son of an Iraqi Shia cleric who has left his war-torn country and settled in Melbourne with his family, is caught between wanting to make his father proud by meeting his family and community's expectations — that he become a doctor and go through with

an arranged marriage — and being the person he wants to be and following his heart with the young woman he loves. At the centre of the film’s drama and comedy is the complicated lie Ali tells his family at the start of the film, and his increasingly desperate and ultimately unsuccessful efforts to stop it from unravelling.

This highly engaging and enjoyable film offers perspectives on community and culture, family and duty, identity, representations of Australian cultural and religious diversity, and invites explorations of the concepts of love and marriage.

Teachers should be aware that this text contains instances of coarse language use, and are advised to consider this prior to introducing the text to students. No single text on the list is compulsory for schools to use.

## ***Amelie* — Jean-Pierre Jeunet**

*Amelie* (2001) is a quirky, romantic comedy directed by Jean-Pierre Jeunet. It follows the exploits of a likable if mischievous French waitress whose hobby of engaging in secret projects to bring happiness to others eventually results in her finding true love.

After her mother dies when she is quite young, Amelie spends most of her childhood being home schooled by her father. This friendless, isolated existence leads to her developing an overactive imagination and an appreciation for small pleasures in life. One day, Amelie discovers in her apartment a box of toys and memorabilia belonging to a boy who used to live there. She tracks down the owner of the box, and seeing how much joy it brings him, decides to devote her life to secretly doing things for others that will make them happy. In the course of her escapades, she meets and falls in love with Nino, a man who collects discarded passport photos. When Amelie finds a photo album that Nino has lost, her resolution to return the album turns into a quest to achieve her own happiness.

*Amelie* is notable for its fast-paced, colourful, and enchanting presentation of Paris, its landmarks and its people — one that blurs the line between the everyday and the fantastical. At the centre of the film is Amelie’s generous and attentive appreciation of her world and the people with whom she interacts every day. By following her escapades, we come to appreciate the small, important details of our experiences and the quirks of the people around us that we tend to take for granted. The film’s clever, imaginative script and its wide array of characters make this an appealing film.

## ***Australian Story* (documentary series) — ABC**

*Australian Story* has won many professional accolades, including Walkley and Logie awards, and provides compelling insights into the lives and experiences of Australians both well-known and previously unknown. The challenges these Australians have faced, and the ways they have worked through them are pivotal to the concepts and ideas presented. The predominant voice of each story is of the person themselves, and this narrative thread is a key feature of each thirty minute standalone episode. Viewers are taken to urban, regional and remote locations as the subjects share both their story and their reflections on it. *Australian Story* explores an enormous range of perspectives relevant to modern life.

Teachers should be aware that some episodes of this documentary series contain content that may be of a sensitive nature for certain students and school contexts, and are advised to consider this prior to introducing these episodes to students. No single text on the list is compulsory for schools to use.

## ***Billy Elliot* — Stephen Daldry**

**Introduced to list for first time — start of 2023**

Set in a working class community in County Durham in the United Kingdom during the mid-1980s, English director Stephen Daldry's *Billy Elliot* (2000) explores gender stereotypes associated with this community's perceptions of masculinity and femininity — where boys box and girls dance. Elliot, a coalminer's 11-year-old son, lives in a challenging world as his family must endure the loss of his mother and the financial hardship generated by a lengthy coal strike. In dance, Elliott finds joy, and ways to explore his complex emotions. Importantly, he also finds a way to earn the admiration of others. The film establishes the centrality of family in the lives of individuals, and invites audiences to examine the limitations society places on individuals and the challenges, and benefits, of breaking out of these. Additionally, the film explores ideas about resilience, fear and forgiveness, and the idea of living authentically.

## ***Blade Runner* — Ridley Scott**

English director Ridley Scott's brooding, atmospheric, neo-noir film, *Blade Runner* (1982), is widely regarded as one of the most important science fiction films of all time. The film opens in Los Angeles in 2019 — a dystopian future where over-industrialisation has resulted in an overcrowded, sprawling city covered in a thick smog that leaves its inhabitants in a perpetual darkness.

This grim, urban landscape provides the ideal stage for the struggle of the cynical and world-weary protagonist of the film, Rick Deckard (Harrison Ford), to retain some sense of authenticity and humanity. Deckard is a retired Blade Runner — a police officer whose job it is to hunt down and kill 'replicants', which are incredibly human-like androids created by the Tyrell corporation. At the beginning of the film, Deckard accepts the assignment of tracking and killing four Nexus-6 replicants who have escaped to earth from an off-world colony. The Nexus-6 models are distinctive, because, unlike their predecessors, they have been created to have emotions.

Scott breaks with genre conventions by creating a sympathetic presentation of the plight of the replicants which invites the audience to question what it means to be human, and to critically examine the alienating tendencies of modern life. In the final scene, Scott notoriously includes a hint that Deckard himself might be a replicant — a proposition that is still debated today by the film's cult following.

Teachers should be aware that this text contains content that may be of a sensitive nature for certain students and school contexts, and are advised to consider this prior to introducing the text to students. No single text on the list is compulsory for schools to use.

## ***Brooklyn* — John Crowley**

Irish director John Crowley's period drama *Brooklyn* (2015) is an adaptation of the novel by the same name written by Irish novelist Colm Tóibín. It tells the story of Ellis Lacey, a young Irish woman who moves to Brooklyn, New York to seek out better opportunities, and eventually has to choose between returning and staying in Ireland or starting a new life and family in America.

Ellis lives with her sister, Rose, and her mother in Enniscorthy, a small Irish town where there are few opportunities for employment. Ellis, though feeling guilty about leaving her sister alone with her mother, embarks on a journey to the new job in Brooklyn arranged by her sister. In New York, Ellis eventually adapts to her new life, making close friends in her all-female boarding house, becoming skilled in her job at the department store, excelling in her night classes in bookkeeping, and falling in love with an Italian-American, Tony Fiorello. When her sister unexpectedly dies,

Ellis decides she must return to Ireland to be with her mother, but not before marrying Tony secretly in City Hall. Once she returns home, she sees that life in Ireland does offer her an opportunity of finding happiness, and has to choose between staying home in Ireland with her mother and her new love interest, Jim, or returning to her husband in the new world of Brooklyn.

*Brooklyn* is a carefully realistic, old-fashioned coming-of-age film that captures the excitement and heartbreak of the female immigrant experience in the post-war era. Ellis's navigation of the competing obligations of her relationships with friends, family and lovers in Ireland and New York is presented in an understated and intelligent manner. Ultimately, we see Ellis become a mature, assertive woman who has the courage to decide for herself the course her life will take.

## ***Cleverman* (TV series) — Ryan Griffen**

This groundbreaking six-part Australian drama series, conceived by Aboriginal creator, director and producer Ryan Griffen and developed by a team of collaborative writers and contributing directors, including Wayne Blair and Leah Purcell, effectively merges Dreaming characters with speculative fiction, elements of science fiction and the superhero genre. Set in an imagined future, the visually rich narrative explores an Australia divided into hairy people (or hairies) and humans, where non-conforming hairies are shunned and 'shavers' attempt to fit in. The Cleverman, who provides a link between this future and the Dreaming, is the unlikely hero in the stories of this place, which play out in urban settings and the natural environment.

The series explores many political, social and environmental issues in a complex and layered narrative. Offering perspectives on community, identity, personal agency and leadership, this series provides many opportunities for discussion and reflection.

Teachers should be aware that this text contains explicit strong language and content that may be of a sensitive nature for certain students and school contexts, and are advised to consider this prior to introducing the text to students. No single text on the list is compulsory for schools to use.

## ***Four Corners* (documentary series) — ABC**

*Four Corners* is a documentary series which has aired continuously on the ABC network in Australia since 1961. The program runs in an hour-long format, and its detailed investigative journalism has earned it many accolades and awards during its time on air. Episodes vary in structure and content, but are generally of a mixed style, making use of a combination of interviews, real and archival footage, and narration. *Four Corners* focuses on pertinent issues of interest to Australian audiences, which can be social, political or environmental in nature. Over time, *Four Corners* has been involved in breaking many high-profile stories, and has provided insights into many events in Australian life and the perspectives people have on them.

Teachers should be aware that some episodes of this documentary series contain content that may be of a sensitive nature for certain students and school contexts, and are advised to consider this prior to introducing these episodes to students. No single text on the list is compulsory for schools to use.

## ***Good Night and Good Luck* — George Clooney**

**Introduced to list for first time — start of 2023**

*Good Night and Good Luck*, set in the United States of the 1950s during the McCarthy era, and directed by George Clooney, explores a critical time in the nation's history, where the constitutional rights of United States' citizens were under threat. This critically acclaimed 2005

historical drama presents the public battle between Edward Murrow (a CBS newsman) and Senator Joseph McCarthy, an avowed anti-communist, who led Senate investigations into people perceived to be involved in 'anti-American' activities. This film incorporates authentic historical footage, showing Murrow championing the rights of the individual and the importance of free choice in the lives people wish to lead. Interestingly, the film also establishes Murrow's concerns about the pervasive infiltration of television in society, as he questions the integrity of broadcasters in light of their attacks on individuals and institutions. This film masterfully explores ideology and the body politic, but it also offers opportunities to consider the concepts of truth, media responsibility and personal courage.

## ***Hero* — Zhang Yimou**

*Hero* (2002) is a Chinese martial arts film directed by Zhang Yimou which is based on the story of Jing Ke's assassination attempt on King of Qin in 227 BC. It was the first Chinese-language movie to place first at the American box office.

The film opens with a man called Nameless arriving at the capital city of Qin to meet with the king of Qin. Nameless has been invited to see the king (Qin) because he has successfully killed three assassins who have made an attempt on Qin's life: Long Sky, Flying Snow, and Broken Sword. Nameless retells the story of how he killed the three assassins in view of Qin's own men, but Qin is not convinced. Qin then says that he suspects that Nameless is an assassin himself who has staged the duels with each of the assassins to gain Qin's trust so that he can kill him at ten paces with a special technique he has mastered. Nameless admits that Qin is correct, and then tells the true story of what occurred, explaining that Sword had actually come to accept Qin's vision of a peaceful, unified China. Qin now no longer fears Nameless and gives him his own sword. Nameless, also now convinced of Qin's project for a unified China, decides not to kill Qin, and allows himself to be executed for his assassination attempt, giving his life for the greater purpose of China's peace and prosperity.

Yimou memorably uses different colours in a symbolic manner through each of the retellings. Nameless's first account of his killing of the three assassins is told in red — implying violence, passion, and lust — while Qin's retelling of the same event is in grey and black — implying disinterest and ruthless objectivity. This technique not only creates a visually stunning film, but one that explores how history is always coloured by the perspective and desires of its narrator. The film also explores through its use of the symbolism of swords and calligraphy the twin forces of violence and knowledge in political rule.

## ***Hidden Figures* — Theodore Melfi**

American director Theodore Melfi's *Hidden Figures* (2016) is a historical drama, set in the 1960s in America, which is based on the book by the same name by Margot Lee. The film tells the true story of three African-American female mathematicians — Katherine Johnson, Mary Jackson, and Dorothy Vaughan — who worked for NASA in Virginia, Langley, during the space race in Cold War America.

The film recounts how these three women who work as 'computers' — a job which entails doing mathematical calculations — in the 'coloured' section of the NASA complex overcome considerable obstacles involving gender and racial prejudice to make important contributions to the space program. Katherine is promoted to become the only African-American woman in the Space Task Group when they need an expert in analytic geometry. Mary, who has a talent for engineering, helps design the heat shield for the space capsules and through her persistent pursuit of higher education, which includes her appealing to a judge in court to be allowed to enrol in night classes at an all-white school, becomes the first African-American female engineer



at NASA. Dorothy, who is the manager of the ‘coloured computers’ team, leads her group in learning computer programming and eventually becomes a lead programmer and NASA’s first African–American manager.

The film’s sobering portrayal of the lives of African–American women in segregation-era America focuses on the way racism is encoded in everyday practices: separate bathrooms, separate coffee machines, and separate sections on the bus. This racism is perpetuated because it is accepted by people as ‘the way things have always been’. The film is also notable in its portrayal of the way the three women rely on friendship and community as much as on their own resourcefulness and resilience to achieve success.

## ***Howl’s Moving Castle* — Hayao Miyazaki**

**Introduced to list for first time — start of 2023**

Acclaimed Japanese director Hayao Miyazaki’s 2004 animated fantasy film *Howl’s Moving Castle* is influenced by his opposition to the United States invasion of Iraq in 2003. The film tells the story of multiple characters who are caught in a mythical kingdom at war. This is a tale which incorporates many elements of storytelling — there is a curse which needs to be broken, and the quest to achieve that is challenging and complex. The characters must navigate the path between friends and enemies, and one of the central ideas underpinning the film is that characters can transform, something that invites reflections about the masks we adopt in our interactions in the wider world. The notion of honour is at the heart of the tale: the young wizard Howl must find a way to save Sophie from a spell, but he must not do that at the cost of his integrity. In the course of his quest, Howl becomes a stronger person, echoing many elements of the heroic narrative. Sophie, too, is steadfast in her dedication to her own moral view. Visually rich and highly evocative, this film provides opportunities to explore the concepts of pacifism, courage, duty and compassion, and connections between age, physical frailty and wisdom.

## ***JoJo Rabbit* — Taika Waititi**

**Introduced to list for first time — start of 2023**

*JoJo Rabbit* is a 2019 Oscar-nominated film adapted from New Zealand–Belgian writer Christine Leunens’s novel *Caging Skies*. Directed by New Zealand filmmaker Taika Waititi, and set in Germany during World War II, this satiric comedy opens with a combination of real footage of historical scenes and dramatic moments intercut with the anachronistic sounds of German Beatlemania.

Ten-year-old German boy Johanne is growing up under the Third Reich and dreams of becoming an Aryan war hero, engaging in conversations with his imaginary friend, his own version of the Führer. When he discovers that his mother, who turns out to be a covert anti-fascist, is hiding Jewish girl Elsa in the attic of their home, he gradually begins to rethink his allegiances, and this becomes the film’s narrative frame.

Taika Waititi’s fast-paced, energetic, and thought-provoking film, told from the perspective of a child, explores the complexities of many concepts and ideas, including innocence and corruption, loyalty and conformity, notions of ‘otherness’, bravery and integrity.

Teachers should be aware that this text contains content that may be of a sensitive nature for certain students and school contexts, and are advised to consider this prior to introducing the text to students. No single text on the list is compulsory for schools to use.

## ***Little Miss Sunshine*** **— Jonathon Dayton and Valerie Faris**

*Little Miss Sunshine* (2006), directed by American husband-and-wife team Jonathan Dayton and Valerie Faris, is an ultimately feel-good dark comedy written by Michael Arndt about a dysfunctional family who reconnect on a disaster-prone, eight-hundred-mile road trip from Albuquerque to Redondo, California.

Olive, a seven-year-old girl who is the youngest member of the Hoover family, qualifies for the finals of the Little Miss Sunshine beauty pageant, and her family, so as not to crush her dreams, decide to drive together to the finals of the competition in California. Early on in the film, we are introduced to each of the character's personal struggles.

Through the journey to help Olive get to the competition, the family are forced to work together to get through a series of unfortunate events. Each is compelled to confront their failures and their limitations to learn that there are no neat formulas or solutions for 'winning' at life, and that having family who will always love you and accept you unconditionally is more important than being successful.

Teachers should be aware that this text contains explicit strong language and content that may be of a sensitive nature for certain students and school contexts, and are advised to consider this prior to introducing the text to students. No single text on the list is compulsory for schools to use.

## ***Little Women* — Greta Gerwig**

**Introduced to list for first time — start of 2023**

American director Greta Gerwig's *Little Women* (2019) — the seventh film adaptation of Louisa May Alcott's 1868 novel of the same name — is a coming-of-age period drama set in 19th century Concord, Massachusetts. The film follows the March family's four sisters — Jo, Meg, Amy, and Beth — as they negotiate life's joys, challenges, and tragedies and come to make momentous decisions about their futures.

Each of the four sisters has a distinctive talent and temperament. Gerwig paints a portrait of a group of sisters full of energy and passion who — apart from the occasional falling out — constitute a busy household distinguished by its unconditional love, intelligent conversation and artistic endeavour. The sisters' two main role models represent competing life options: Mrs March ('Marmee'), teaches her daughters the importance of social justice and civic responsibility, while the more worldly-wise Aunt March presents the practical and economic advantages of making decisions with one's head rather than one's heart.

Gerwig eschews the chronological telling of the March family sisters' lives to create a film that cuts back and forward in time, presenting the sisters' lives as an interweaving tapestry of events, memories, and expectations in which character and circumstance both play important roles in shaping outcomes. Gerwig also emphasises the stark contrast between the talent, determination and resilience of the four sisters and the restrictions of their freedom that come with their class and gender.

## ***Mabo* (TV film) — Rachel Perkins**

This 2012 docudrama film by Arrernte and Kalkadoon director Rachel Perkins depicts Eddie 'Koiki' Mabo's campaign for native title as a significant turning point in Australia's journey towards reconciliation, while offering perspectives on marriage, family, identity, passion and justice. Born on Mer (Murray) Island in the Torres Strait, Mabo faces lengthy set-backs and personal costs in

his mission to refute the claim of terra nullius. Supported by his wife, Bonita, Eddie drives the legal case to its ultimate conclusion — the 1992 High Court of Australia decision in his favour.

## ***Park Avenue: Money, Power and the American Dream* (documentary) — Alex Gibney**

Alex Gibney's 2012 documentary *Park Avenue: Money, Power and the American Dream* explores how the American political system has come to be dominated by wealthy interest, undermining the legitimacy of the ideal of the American Dream.

Gibney opens his documentary by comparing the residents of 740 Park Avenue, New York, the home of some of the wealthiest people in the United States, to the residents who live on the same street in the South Bronx. In the decades leading up to the making of this documentary, the people living in 740 Park Avenue had seen their share of national wealth increase significantly, whereas those living in the South Bronx had seen opportunities, services and incomes decrease. Gibney asks the audience to imagine being invited to join a game of monopoly where other players already have a lot of money and all the property: even though you are being allowed to participate, you are not given an equal chance at winning.

Gibney goes on to explore how the richest members of American society have come to acquire a disproportionate amount of the country's wealth. The documentary then explores how the mega-rich residents of 740 Park Avenue have used their money to influence politics and spread neo-conservative beliefs.

This documentary offers perspectives on a range of issues, including the spread of popular ideals, the influence of myths like the American Dream on people's beliefs, and what constitutes a fair society.

## ***Rear Window* — Alfred Hitchcock**

**Introduced to list for first time — start of 2023**

*Rear Window*, set in New York City's Greenwich Village in 1954, is the creation of celebrated English director Alfred Hitchcock. This suspenseful mystery drama invites the viewer into the world of a man trapped in his wheelchair after an accident — and this becomes the focus of the film. Through the clever use of the motif of watching, Hitchcock establishes a sense of angst, as the injured Jeff must try to convince his friend, Lisa, that there is something wrong in the apartment opposite his window. Juxtaposition is used powerfully throughout the film — trust is posed against doubt, fear against courage, action against inaction, and dependence against agency. This all serves to build strong dramatic tension.

Filled with scenes of apartment buildings where people peer into each other's lives through rows of windows, but without meaningful interaction, audiences are invited to consider whether privacy is an illusion in the urban setting. Additionally, viewers can explore ideas of alienation, connectedness, and curiosity.

## ***Reindeer in my Saami Heart* — Janet Merewether**

**Introduced to list for first time — start of 2023**

Australian documentary-maker Janet Merewether's *Reindeer in my Saami Heart* (2016) describes how the nomadic Saami, one of the last remaining Indigenous cultures of Europe, herd reindeer in the Arctic region in the northern areas of Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia. Motivated by

the effects of years of European contact and assimilation policies, the documentary provides an opportunity for Saami poet and community activist Inghilda Tapio (born Inger Valkeapaa) to relate her childhood and the richness of her community's culture and traditional way of life. The centrality of the natural landscape to Saami culture and how it provides a dependable and reliable source of sustenance, is explored in the striking visual layering of the film.

Tapio talks about her innate need to write poetry given her connection to her environment and culture, and her poems are woven throughout the documentary. The film provides opportunities to explore social identity, community, belief, and the valuing of traditional cultural practices. Thought-provoking and moving, this documentary takes the audience to a unique place, and introduces them to the Saami's customs in an affirming and powerful way.

## ***Sherlock* (TV series)**

### **— Mark Gatiss and Steven Moffatt**

Equipped with skills honed in the battlefields of Afghanistan, war veteran Dr John Watson is the pivotal character of this contemporary retelling of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's crime investigation novel, *Sherlock Homes*. The characters of the original story reappear in this 2010 BBC production created by Mark Gattiss and Stephen Moffat, and in it, the audience discovers a new Moriarty and a new Sherlock. Addresses and places from the original classic also re-emerge, and the episodes explore with some humour, and significant suspense, crimes which need to be solved in 21st century London.

Mysteries abound in the series, and they are layered with modern views of personality profiles and relationships. The series explores views of masculinity and belonging, and the concepts of trust, manipulation, and vanity. Audiences are also invited to consider the interesting question of whether we are the products of our genetic potential or our experiences.

Teachers should be aware that this text contains content that may be of a sensitive nature for certain students and school contexts, and are advised to consider this prior to introducing these poems to students. No single text on the list is compulsory for schools to use.

## ***Stranger Things* season one (TV series)**

### **— the Duffer Brothers**

Created by Matt Duffer and Ross Duffer and a collection of skilled writers, this 2016 eight-part television series establishes a nostalgic 'hometown' atmosphere in its setting, which is rich with objects and activities from a time when *The Clash* ruled the airwaves. Hawkins, Indiana in the 1980s is this place, and soon, the viewer understands that this is a place that is about to be menaced by a dark and terrible secret.

The series sets at its core a group of young friends who love riding their bicycles and playing *Dungeons and Dragons* — Will, Dustin, Mike and Lucas. Although grappling with their unfolding entry into adulthood, and the pressures of balancing family responsibilities with the opportunity of friendship, these young men possess a powerful sense of justice, and this is what leads them to befriend a 'changeling' who enters their world — Elle. Balancing humour with drama, the series meshes the natural world with the complex world of sci-fi, and presents to its audiences a multi-dimensional exploration of the concepts of acceptance and belonging, courage and teamwork.

Teachers should be aware that this text contains content that may be of a sensitive nature for certain students and school contexts, and are advised to consider this prior to introducing the text to students. No single text on the list is compulsory for schools to use.

## ***The Australian Dream* — Daniel Gordon**

**Introduced to list for first time — start of 2023**

Directed by Daniel Gordon, *The Australian Dream* explores belonging, race and identity in Australian society by casting a microscope on sport in Australia. While a range of voices (Gilbert McAdam, Stan Grant, Michael O’Loughlin, John Longmire and others) illuminate life in the limelight as First Nations Australians, the primary focus is on Adam Goodes, a Brownlow medallist and the 2014 Australian of the Year who is an Adnyamathanha and Narungga man whose mother was one of the Stolen Generations. In this documentary film, Goodes shares his story about his time as a national sportsman and his experiences of living a public life in Australia. Scenes are woven tighter by interviews with a range of Australians, news footage and coverage of sporting events. This documentary explores more than football and sport, as it invites audiences to consider concepts of justice, belonging, race, identity, and humanity, and the role of sport in Australian life.

## ***The King’s Speech* — Tom Hooper**

**Introduced to list for first time — start of 2023**

*The King’s Speech* (2010), directed by British–Australian Tom Hooper, is set near the end of the reign of King George V of the United Kingdom, and explores the pressures of expectation and responsibility. This Oscar-winning historical drama introduces the viewer to the Duke of York, who is tortured by a speech impediment, which embarrasses him publicly and incites humiliation at the hands of his father. He seeks help, and through the efforts of his wife, eventually employs an unorthodox, Australian speech therapist, Lionel Logue.

Using humour, candour and insight, Logue explores the duke’s personal experiences as possible psychological triggers for the speech stammer. This painful idea is something the duke wishes to avoid, but historical circumstances force him to confront those ideas following the abdication of his brother. The film represents Logue as providing an everyman role in the life of a future king, in whose world social obligation and class shape every interaction. The film invites viewers to see that although Logue gently encourages the duke to consider other ways of being, it is the duke’s family that sustains him and gives him the courage to tackle the challenges of his role. This film offers perspectives on duty, loyalty and expectation, and also explores understandings about resilience and compassion.

Teachers should be aware that this text contains an instance of coarse language use, and are advised to consider this prior to introducing the text to students. No single text on the list is compulsory for schools to use.

## ***Tsotsi* — Gavin Hood**

Set in a slum in Johannesburg, South African director Gavin Hood’s *Tsotsi* (2005) was the winner of the 2006 Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film. It is an adaptation of the novel of the same name by South African writer Athol Fugard, which tells the story of a young, hard-hearted, aggressive criminal whose life is transformed by his encounter with a defenceless baby.

The main character, David, is a young man who, as a child, ran away from home after the death of his mother to escape an abusive father. He has grown up with other children on the streets, and as an adult goes by the name of Tsotsi ('thug'). He leads a small gang who roam Johannesburg streets looking for vulnerable people to rob. There is a falling out in the group when one of them murders a man during a routine mugging on a train, which ends with Tsotsi severely beating his oldest and most loyal follower. On his own and determined to prove the legitimacy of his title, Tsotsi goes to the richer suburbs of the city for his next score. Here he shoots a young woman, wounding her, and steals her car, only to find when he has driven some distance that there is a baby in the back seat. Tsotsi, in a panic, takes the baby home to his shack in the slums. Tsotsi's struggle to look after the small boy and his encounter with a young mother who helps him feed the child awaken in him memories of his own childhood, and eventually make him risk his own freedom to return the baby boy to his parents.

As well as being a portrayal of life in a South African slum, the film explores the causes of anti-social behaviour. Ironically, it is the helplessness and innocence of the baby that undermines Tsotsi's strength and offers him an opportunity of redemption.

Teachers should be aware that this text contains content that may be of a sensitive nature for certain students and school contexts, and are advised to consider this prior to introducing the text to students. No single text on the list is compulsory for schools to use.

# Poetry

Options by poet.

## Ali Alizadeh

Iranian-born writer and academic Ali Alizadeh migrated to Australia with his family as a teenager. His poems have been widely anthologised and, at least to some degree, are coloured by his formative years in the Islamic Republic of Iran and the challenges he faced adjusting to a new language and culture as an adolescent migrant. In poems such as 'Your Terrorist' and 'We', for example, he powerfully conveys the perspective of outsiders and their struggle to move from the margins in societies where inequality is perpetuated and 'foreigners' are demonised. Alizadeh has a wonderfully inventive and original turn of phrase, and his work offers fresh perspectives on a wide range of subjects.

Teachers should be aware that some poems by this poet contain explicit strong language and content that may be of a sensitive nature for certain students and school contexts, and are advised to consider this prior to introducing these poems to students. No single text on the list is compulsory for schools to use.

## Ali Cobby Eckermann

Like her mother before her, award-winning Australian writer and Yankunytjatjara woman, Ali Cobby Eckermann, grew up separated from her people and her culture. Her poetry has a moving, elegiac quality and deals poignantly with cultural dislocation and loss of identity. Connecting past and present, it highlights the continuity of Aboriginal cultures and their unique connections to place and land. Eckermann's first collection of poetry was published in 2009. Since that time, she has produced an important body of work that has received both national and international attention.

## Bruce Dawe

Like Judith Wright, Australian poet Bruce Dawe's extensive writing career spanned six decades. Occasionally referred to as the suburban poet, his work has been a staple in the English classrooms of Australia for its accessibility and variety. In the minutiae of the everyday, Dawe always manages to find surprising meaning. Whether his focus is on a planeload of dead Aussie soldiers returning from Vietnam, a jaded Roman soldier, the Victorian obsession with AFL, a repressed housewife, or a comically awkward funeral, Dawe unerringly captures the essence of human experience.

## Carol Ann Duffy

The gift of former British Poet Laureate, Scottish writer Carol Ann Duffy, like all exceptional writers, is her ability to offer readers new ways of viewing the world. In doing so, she challenges fixed modes of thinking, entrenched bigotries, and historical inequalities. Whether she is inhabiting the voice of Anne Hathaway (wife of William Shakespeare), or fondly reminiscing about a class with her teacher Mrs Tilscher, Duffy captures the human condition with great insight, wit, compassion and honesty. Her work is accessible, relevant, and highly engaging.

## Emily Dickinson

American poet, Emily Dickinson, like Sylvia Plath, was a creative trailblazer. A fiercely independent thinker, she experimented with voice, form and style to produce an extraordinary body of work. Over her lifetime, she wrote nearly 1800 poems. Interestingly, only a handful were ever given titles. Instead, most of her works are known by their delightfully quirky and memorable opening lines: 'Because I could not stop for Death', 'I felt a Funeral, in my brain', 'I heard a Fly buzz when I died', 'My Life had stood a Loaded Gun', 'I'm Nobody! Who are you?'. Dealing with identity, desire, nature, suffering and death, Dickinson writes with stunning originality.

## John Donne

The study of metaphysical poet, John Donne, brings rich cognitive reward. A contemporary of Shakespeare, the English Donne was writing at a time of great social, political, religious and cultural change. His experiences as a scholar, diplomat, parliamentarian, and, finally, clergyman enabled him to bring a rich reservoir of knowledge and experiences to his writing. Combining intellect, wit and passion, with inventive language, Donne explores the complexities and paradoxes of life. His body of work provides a wonderful insight into the cultural attitudes, values and beliefs of the time.

## John Keats

English Romantic poet, John Keats, was an individual attuned to the beauty and suffering of the rapidly changing world around him. From the age of 19, to his untimely death at 25, he produced some of the most lyrical and memorable poetic works in English literature. His verse celebrates artistic endeavour, the power of the imagination, and the wonders of the natural world, but it also highlights the harshness of human existence at that time, and the brevity of life for so many. Intensely personal and exquisitely crafted, the poems of Keats offer the opportunity to study some remarkable writing by a young man whose literary legacy, sadly, remained unrecognised for many years.

## Judith Wright

Deservedly acknowledged as one of Australia's literary icons, Judith Wright produced an extensive and eclectic body of work over her lifetime. Her diverse range of poems served many purposes. They celebrated the natural world, highlighting the distinctive beauty of the geography, flora and fauna of the Australian landscape. They spoke for women, offering an incisive female perspective on relationships, love and intimacy. They also highlighted the terrible injustices faced by Australia's First Nations People. As an insightful critic, social activist and writer, Wright made an invaluable contribution to the intellectual and social fabric of our country.

## Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner

Born in the Marshall Islands, Kathy Jentil-Kijiner is a contemporary young poet, performer and educator. Often bringing her poems to life through multimedia presentations, she shares the stories and legends of her culture, conveys the horrifying legacy of US nuclear testing, and warns of the already encroaching impacts of climate change. A passionate advocate for the nations of Oceania, and for the environment, she matches words with actions, serving as a Climate Envoy for the Marshall Islands Ministry of the Environment, speaking at international climate



conferences, and running a not-for-profit organisation supporting Marshallese youth as they undertake environmental activism.

## Kirli Saunders

### Introduced to list for first time — start of 2023

Chosen as New South Wales Aboriginal Woman of the Year in 2020, Gunai woman Kirli Saunders is a multi-talented writer, artist, speaker and educator. Her beautiful and evocative verse deals with connection, love, identity, language, cultural heritage, and nature. Saunders has also been involved in creative educational initiatives such as a collaborative visual poetry project — showcasing paintings, drawings, film, photography and poems — with the unifying theme of decolonising identity. Another project facilitates first language experiences for students. With a personal connection to five First Nations Australian languages, Saunders recognises the critical importance of protecting, promoting and celebrating the mother tongues of First Nations peoples.

## Luka Lesson

### Introduced to list for first time — start of 2023

Born and raised in Brisbane, Greek–Australian performance poet, rapper and hip-hop artist, Luka Haralampou (Luka Lesson) has been showcasing the power of spoken word poetry for well over a decade. Lesson's connection with his audience, both on and off the stage, is charismatic and tangible. He is a highly engaging performer and recognises the enormous potential of his art to empower, to question, to challenge, to teach, and to liberate. The focus of his work is wide-ranging, one moment affectionately celebrating the life of his delightful Yiayia and, in another, powerfully speaking for the oppressed.

## Robert Browning

A master exponent of the dramatic monologue, popular Victorian English writer Robert Browning produced a significant body of work in his lifetime, including an epic 21 000-line poem, titled *The Ring and the Book*. Reflecting the Victorian predilection for horror, his most recognised poems, 'The Laboratory', 'Porphyria's Lover' and 'My Last Duchess', capture the unsettling voices of nefarious individuals, driven by dark desires. In these, and other similar works, Browning artfully combines compelling storytelling, gothic elements and verse.

## Robert Frost

Winner of the Pulitzer Prize on four occasions, New England poet, Robert Frost, became and remains one of America's most revered writers. Works such as 'The Road Not Taken' and 'Mending Wall' are deeply embedded in the American psyche. His affinity with nature, his skill as a life observer, his conversational style, and his ability to find profound meaning in everyday events, enabled Frost to appeal to a wide audience. Simultaneously accessible and enigmatic, Frost's poetry is richly rewarding to study.

## Samuel Wagan Watson

Born into a family of writers and activists, Samuel Wagan Watson is an award-winning Australian writer and speaker who is of Munanjali, Birri Gubba, German and Irish descent. He was exposed to an eclectic mix of social, cultural and political influences in his formative years, growing up in South East Queensland during the Bjelke-Petersen era. His poetry deals with identity, politics, place, childhood, heritage, love, and life in contemporary Australia. Infused with lived experience, it is unpretentious, unrestrained, direct and memorable. Like fellow social commentator, Luka Lesson, Watson has always been aware of the powerful relationship between words and music. In 2004, he collaborated with composers, William Barton and Stephen Leek to produce an opera, and in 2013 his collection of poems, *Smoke Encrypted Whispers*, was set to music.

## Sylvia Plath

There is a transparency, vulnerability and fearlessness about the poetry of American writer Sylvia Plath that draws people to her work. She was a gifted writer who courageously blazed a unique poetic trail at a time when the literary world on both sides of the Atlantic was still dominated by men. Her gift was taking the intensely personal and private and turning it into compelling, cathartic art. From the lulling cadences of 'Tulips' to the unsettling, angry sarcasm of 'Lady Lazarus', Plath's poetry still reverberates across the decades.

## WB Yeats

Like many great writers, Nobel Prize-winning Irish poet and dramatist William Butler Yeats spent a lifetime responding to shifting personal and sociocultural-historical influences. In 'An Irish Airman Foresees His Death' the forces of Irish nationalism are evident. In the 'Second Coming' the impact of modernist thinking is apparent. In 'Sailing to Byzantium', Yeats's fascination with mysticism is clearly on display. As he evolved as a writer, he became an increasingly important literary figure, both nationally and internationally. A study of his poetry exposes readers to masterful linguistic skill and a wide range of ideas.

## Wilfred Owen

Like Keats, a writer he greatly admired, English anti-war poet, Wilfred Owen, produced an extraordinary body of work in a very brief period. Arriving on the Western Front at the beginning of 1917, he quickly realised his generation had been cynically deceived about the reality of war. He was appalled by the jingoistic, out-of-touch works of writers such as Pope and Seaman, and sought to counteract their facile pro-war sentiments by giving voice to the psychologically debilitating fear, horror and sense of abandonment frontline soldiers experienced daily. His poems, characterised by heart-rending honesty and indelible imagery, still speak so powerfully and poignantly for a generation of young men whose lives were recklessly squandered.



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