

# Annotations

English/EAL prescribed texts — from 2026 to the end of 2029

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

While the QCAA considers all texts on the list suitable for study, teachers should be aware that some texts include content that may be of a sensitive nature for certain students and school contexts. Teachers should consider these issues prior to selecting texts and introducing them to students for study.

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 First Nations language groups and community names in this resource. Respectfully, the QCAA has tried to use the spelling the people represented prefer when describing themselves and will continue to engage in this consultation process. Where the names are generally used, the QCAA has used the most common spelling, and in some cases noted a common alternative.

## Text categories

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

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# External assessment texts

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

**Moves from EA to general list — end of 2028**

American writer Anthony Doerr's novel was published in 2014, winning the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction and several other major awards. It was released by Netflix as a four-part miniseries in 2023.

The novel is set in Europe and spans approximately 80 years, although most of the story takes place over 10 years, immediately before and during World War II. Two teenage protagonists, a blind French girl, Marie-Laure LeBlanc, and a clever German boy, Werner Pfennig, are on opposing sides of the war facing a range of dangerous situations. Doerr uses a nonlinear structure to depict these events and highlights how the brutal and anarchic nature of conflict can coerce ordinary people into making decisions and acting beyond their usual moral scope.

*All the Light We Cannot See* offers perspectives on intergenerational trauma — individuals shaped by their ancestors' difficult experiences. The ethics of technology in our lives and the importance of family, knowledge and learning are also key concepts in this complex and engaging narrative.

## ***Edenglassie* — Melissa Lucashenko**

**Introduced to EA list — start of 2028**

*Edenglassie* is a multi-award winning novel that is set in the Brisbane area in the mid-1800s and 2024. Linking two love stories and mixing fictional characters with notable historical figures, Lucashenko highlights the interconnectivity that exists between the past and the present. She incorporates a wealth of information about Aboriginal culture and realistic, often brutal, depictions of frontier life. Despite this, the novel remains warm, amusing and often uplifting.

In early Brisbane, before Queensland became an independent colony, the settlement was known as Edenglassie. Mulanyin meets Nita and dreams of taking her home to Country. In 2024, as Granny Eddie Blanket recovers in hospital after a fall, her granddaughter Winona meets Eddie's doctor, Johnny. The influence of colonial attitudes and behaviours on both relationships allows Lucashenko to highlight fiction's role in enhancing our historical understandings. The author's brush is broad. The harshness of a frontier community and the complex, often tenuous truce that existed between Aboriginal people and white settlers impacts Mulanyin and Nita's relationship. Winona and Johnny must negotiate their partnership within a milieu of cultural appropriation, and societal and government indifference to First Nations people's lives.

This tragicomic novel offers students the opportunity to better understand Australia's frontier history and how the events of that time continue to impact people today. Lucashenko's unique narrative structure and style are also worthy of close literary analysis.

## ***Frankenstein* — Mary Shelley**

**Introduced to EA list — start of 2027**

English writer Mary Shelley's 1818 Gothic novel belongs to both the science and horror fiction genres. As a Romantic, Shelley resisted the ongoing scientific and medical revolution that began early in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. She feared the effects of these developments on the Romantic view of

what it meant to be fully human. She was particularly aware that medical scientists believed electricity could be used to reanimate the dead, including human beings. The subtitle of the novel, *The Modern Prometheus*, is a clear indication of her attitude towards humans seeking to usurp God.

The novel is epistolary, told principally through explorer Robert Walton's letters to his sister about his friend Victor Frankenstein, a scientist with an interest in alchemy and natural philosophy. Frankenstein has used the emerging energy source of electricity to bring to life a human-like creature that subsequently seeks acceptance and love from its creator, but enacts a terrible revenge when it is rejected.

*Frankenstein*, while not especially popular when published, has been adapted into films and art works, reflecting the scientific and technological developments effecting humans over the last 300 years. Shelley's novel can be seen principally as asserting the author's idea of what it means to be human and relate fully to others' humanity.

## ***Go, Went, Gone* — Jenny Erpenbeck**

### **Introduced to EA list — start of 2029**

Erpenbeck, an internationally acclaimed author and opera director, has written a provocative novel set in post-reunified Germany with universal implications.

Richard, a widow and former Professor of Classical Philology, lives in Berlin. His life is disrupted when he meets and becomes actively involved with a group of African asylum seekers. Initially he desires to simply learn their stories. As the relations progress, however, Richard becomes increasingly aware of the difficulties inherent in the refugees' lives, then party to their renewed aspirations. The novel is a personal portrait of a man who is sincere in his efforts to bridge the gap between his own traditional, privileged existence and his new acquaintances' precarious lives. It is also an ideological critique of Western attitudes towards the refugee crisis in Europe.

Erpenbeck writes with empathy and from a position of deep research to provide a measure of dignity to those who are displaced. The novel poses many questions around laws and institutions that protect those already protected, the role of language as an empowerment tool, the arbitrary nature of borders, and our ethical obligation to assist those in need. *Go, Went, Gone* is also about storytelling. Erpenbeck argues it is only through honestly sharing our personal narratives that we can aspire to change the world for the better. An understanding of classical mythology and modern German history, especially events leading up to reunification, will enhance studying this rewarding novel.

## ***Julius Caesar* — William Shakespeare**

### **Introduced to EA list — start of 2028**

Written around 1599, *Julius Caesar* is a fast-moving drama that explores the nature of power. The play features Brutus, a tragic hero who sacrifices his integrity at the whims of others and their dissembling appeals to his patriotism. The well-rounded characters embrace a wide but recognisable range of human conflicts and emotions.

The plot, mostly taken from Plutarch's *Lives*, may have reflected concerns in England about who would succeed Elizabeth I to the throne. Julius Caesar has returned triumphantly from war and is being feted by the citizens of Rome. This evokes envy in the senators, especially Casca and Cassius, who suspect Caesar's success and ambition may lead to autocracy. They recruit Brutus to their cause and persuade him that Caesar must be eliminated. The subsequent murder enrages the public, rallied by the statesman Mark Antony, and results in the conspirators' exile.

Convening an army to fight against Antony, they are defeated at Philippi. Cassius and, as a matter of honour, Brutus, famously remembered by Antony as ‘the noblest Roman of them all’, suicide.

*Julius Caesar* is a serious play that explores concepts that cross eras and civilisations: fate and self-determination in our lives, how we reconcile our private desires with our public behaviours, and questions of honour and political power. A working historical knowledge of the Ancient Romans and access to information about their mythologies would positively supplement the study experience.

## Never Let Me Go — Kazuo Ishiguro

### Moves from EA to general list — end of 2026

Nobel Prize-winning author Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* is a dystopian novel set in the 1990s and published in 2005. The book garnered numerous awards and was later released as a feature film.

There are three distinct sections in the story, each providing insight into the lives of the central characters, Tommy, Ruth and Kathy, students at Hailsham, an elite boarding school in England. Their teachers, known as guardians, closely monitor their health and encourage them to create art. It is later revealed that the students are clones, bred to donate organs. However, their school — since shut down — was part of an initiative to make people think of clones as human beings with a soul.

*Never Let Me Go* is a domestic story that explores universal ideas, especially the nature of human identity. The ethics of cloning is central to the narrative, for example, whether clones are entitled to basic human exigencies such as having friendship groups or being in a loving, sexual relationship. Ishiguro builds a world in which power structures determine not just life expectancy but the very existence of life, which gives *Never Let Me Go* considerable prescience at a time when scientific and medical advances occur rapidly and seemingly without restraint.

## Othello — William Shakespeare

### Moves from EA to general list — end of 2028

Shakespeare's tragedy *Othello* begins in the cosmopolitan Venetian state of the late 16<sup>th</sup> century then moves to the ‘warlike isle’ of Cyprus, where the 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, the daughter of Brabantio, a nobleman who is also Othello's friend. The dramatic action charts Othello and Desdemona's courtship, their subsequent elopement, and Othello's trusted but duplicitous ensign Iago's ruthless plot to destroy Othello's faith in Desdemona. Iago's success provokes Othello into the terrible act of murdering his wife.

The isolation and insularity of the island setting allows Shakespeare to pit the characters against each other and explore universal concepts such as how social structures can determine behaviour, the brittle demarcation between loyalty and jealousy, the influence of external factors such as racial and familial heritage on human perceptions, and the fragile nature of love.

## ***Persuasion* — Jane Austen**

### **Introduced to EA list — start of 2027**

This novel, the last Austen completed before her death in 1817, is her shortest and tightest work. The narrative focuses on the conventions that were associated with love and relationships in Regency England, in particular the pressures placed on young men and women to make a 'suitable' match.

As with her other works, Austen presents an engaging social satire that uses humour and irony to make observations about the mores of the time. Set in the counties of southwest England, including fashionable Bath, the novel abounds with memorable characters and dialogue. Through Anne Elliot, her distinctive protagonist, Austen highlights the roles of economic status, family loyalty and social reputation in shaping life choices.

While the historical setting may be foreign to students, the message about maintaining personal integrity and being faithful to one's ideals is certainly accessible. The novel offers perspectives on concepts such as gender roles, both past and present, the nature of social hierarchies, the construction and interactions of families, the power of language to influence people, and love as a motivating force in people's lives.

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

### **Moves from EA to general list — end of 2026**

*Pride and Prejudice*, Jane Austen's 1813 comedy of manners, is arguably her most widely read and adapted work. Set in Georgian England, the novel reverberates with wit and wisdom, and contains memorable characters such as the Bennet family, pompous Mr Collins, formidable Lady Catherine de Bourgh and the overly proud romantic hero, Mr Fitzwilliam Darcy.

Austen's story centres around Elizabeth Bennet, one of five unmarried daughters. Elizabeth's world is one of country walks, rural villages, the companionship of siblings and friends, great houses, wealthy suitors, clergymen, regimental officers, the joy and heartbreak of romance, and the pressures of avoiding family scandal and disgrace. This is all underpinned by women having to rely on men for social respectability and financial security. Elizabeth is feisty and independent enough to see through the artifice of this mannered world. As the story progresses, however, her strong heart eventually gravitates towards Darcy in one of literature's best-known love matches.

As with all of Austen's novels, *Pride and Prejudice* offers an acute rendering of a time and place where reputation was everything, and family, class and gender were the principal determinants of a person's future. Georgian England's rigid social framework, customs and expectations are depicted with biting, satiric humour. Students would benefit from developing a historical and social overview of Austen's world prior to reading the novel.

## ***Station Eleven* — Emily St. John Mandel**

### **Introduced to EA list — start of 2028**

Canadian writer Mandel's fourth novel was published in 2014, winning the prestigious Arthur C. Clarke Award for best science fiction novel. Interestingly, Mandel has openly rejected her work as belonging to that genre, preferring to see *Station Eleven* as literary fiction.

An epidemic has devastated the world, killing 99 percent of the population. A group, or 'symphony', of actors and musicians, including the novel's protagonist Kirsten, travels the wastelands, seeking

survivor settlements where they can perform Shakespearean plays. But in this post-apocalyptic world there are some who refuse to re-civilise and others who seek to become dominant, such as the character known as the Prophet. As members of the Travelling Symphony begin to disappear, Kirsten and the Prophet's conflict is resolved as part of deciding the world's future.

Mandel weaves several storylines through her nonlinear narrative to create a message of hope. The novel is imbued with a sense of human decency and embraces concepts such as how we might define and ensure the future, the role of faith in our lives, especially in times of great disruption, art as an enduring testimony to human resilience and creativity, and books as crucial to the memory and establishment of civilisation. The author's spare but evocative writing adds significant power to this story of relationships that thrive beyond desolation. Teachers should be aware the ten-part television series of the same name is an adaptation, with some variations from the source material.

## ***The Dry* — Jane Harper**

### **Moves from EA to general list — end of 2027**

Australian author Jane Harper's 2016 debut novel is the first instalment in a series of three. *The Dry* won numerous awards, predominantly in the crime genre, and was made into a successful feature film that was released in 2021.

The story is set in the Victorian drought-ridden town and farming district of Kiewarra. Protagonist Aaron Falk, a Federal police officer, returns home to attend the funeral of three members of his childhood friend's family. His subsequent investigation into their violent deaths exposes the community's complex relationships. The unfolding murder mystery is told through flashbacks that entwine the past with the present.

As with many Australian novels, the setting is crucial to the development of tension, as Harper explores the social and economic ramifications of drought. *The Dry* also examines the moral ambiguities that can occur around law enforcement and seeking justice, how friendship influences decision-making, and the urban–rural divide that pervades Australian social, political and cultural life.

## ***The Namesake* — Jhumpa Lahiri**

### **Introduced to EA list — start of 2026**

English-born American writer Jhumpa Lahiri's novel was published in 2003. *The Namesake* focuses on the immigrant experience as people adapt to being in a new country with a different culture while trying to hold onto aspects of their past lives.

The novel spans several generations of a Bengalese Indian family, the Ganguli's, whose adult members, Ashima and Ashoke, have moved to Massachusetts in the USA so that Ashoke can start an academic career. Their children, Gogol and Sonia, are born in Boston, giving them an experience of growing up in America that is different from their parents. The novel explores the varying challenges and affirmations from Gogol's romantic relationships with three young women, one of whom he marries. As the title suggests, naming and identity are also crucial aspects of Lahiri's work. Gogol has been given his Russian name by his father who does not, until later, explain the significance of being named after the Russian writer, Nikolai Gogol. Eventually, Gogol decides to forge his own identity and take on the new name of Nikhil so he can move forward with his life.

As well as detailing the challenges inherent in the immigrant experience, *The Namesake* offers perspectives on the trials of growing up, and the place and importance of family life, traditions and rituals.

## ***The Yield* — Tara June Winch**

### **Moves from EA to general list — end of 2027**

Wiradjuri author Tara June Winch's highly acclaimed novel won the 2020 Miles Franklin Award, the 2020 Prime Minister's Literary Award for Fiction and the 2020 Voss Literary Prize.

The novel draws on geographical areas in Wiradjuri Country in New South Wales and Australia's colonial history. It uses shifting voices to tell the story of the Gondiwindi family: August, 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. Set mostly in Prosperous, on Massacre Plains where both August and Poppy grew up, the town 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.

*The Yield* represents the loss of Indigenous languages as a mirror to cultural deprivation. The crucial roles that spirituality and connection to Country play in terms of Aboriginal identity are also extensively explored. The dispute over land, and what it can provide as opposed to what can be taken from it, is a powerful motif for the clash of values that constitutes this politically committed and intricate novel's driving force.

## ***Twelfth Night* — William Shakespeare**

### **Introduced to EA list — start of 2026**

Shakespeare's much loved Christmas play, originally published in 1602, is replete with dramatic delights. Disguise, duality, mistaken identity, a duel and a double wedding all grace the stage in this energetic exploration of love's many aspects.

After a shipwreck, Viola finds herself in the fabled country, Illyria. Disguised, she becomes a servant to Duke Orsino, who is in love with Olivia, who falls in love with Viola's alter ego, who herself has fallen in love with the duke.

*Twelfth Night* is notable for its strong and decisive female characters. It offers interesting perspectives on the interplay of gender and expectation, both historically and in the modern world. The need for restoration and social unity is another key concept. The use of stock minor characters and bawdy jokes echoes the Italian medieval comedy style known as *Commedia dell'Arte*, unsurprising given that the play is believed to have been based on an Italian drama written around seventy years before.



# Novels and prose texts

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

Australian writer Christine Piper's award-winning 2014 novel provides an alternative reading of war by focusing on those who opposed the Allied forces in World War II.

The protagonist and first-person narrator of *After Darkness*, Toakazu Ibaraki, is a Japanese doctor working in Broome, Western Australia. He is arrested as an enemy alien and sent to Loveday Camp where Japanese, Italians, Germans and other nationalities are interred. Ibaraki then relates a story that takes readers into conflicts away from the battlefield, where characters struggle to navigate tensions around their competing cultural loyalties and allegiances, and their friendships. As the story unfolds, a promise made in Ibaraki's past life and its devastating consequences are revealed as the key to his personal tragedy.

This novel of a world at war offers perspectives on many concepts, including nationalism, biological warfare, ethics, justice, Australian cultural identity, and the nature of honour and loyalty.

## ***Begin, End, Begin: #LoveOzYA Anthology* — Danielle Binks (ed.)**

**Introduced to list — start of 2026**

This anthology of short stories was developed as part of a conscious movement to promote a greater awareness of Australian young adult fiction writers to national audiences. The list of contributors is notable, including many recent award winners.

The strength of *Begin, End, Begin* lies in its diversity of content, structure and style. The writers cover a range of genres — contemporary, romance, science fiction, fantasy — and include characters with widely variant social and cultural profiles. As the title suggests, the stories are linked by their focus on key moments in adolescence: falling in love (for the first time), going on pivotal journeys, negotiating rollercoaster friendships, realising you're about to break up (for the first time). As with much young adult writing, the stories are delivered with frankness, humour and considerable poignancy.

*Begin, End, Begin* includes concepts that will be familiar to young people: negotiating their identities, overcoming adversity, coping with the flux of relationships and making their imaginative offerings productive rather than destructive. The stories in this well-received anthology give much scope for analysis and could be especially useful as models for narrative writing.

## ***Burial Rites* — Hannah Kent**

**Moves from EA to general list — start of 2026**

Australian writer Hannah Kent's 2013 novel, set in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, is an absorbing work of historical fiction about Agnes Magnúsdóttir, the last woman executed in Iceland.

At the beginning of *Burial Rites*, Agnes is placed in home detention with the Kornsás, the family of a small-town official, as she awaits her punishment for the alleged murder of her employer. While there, she asks for and receives spiritual advice from Reverend Tóti, who befriends her and struggles to reconcile the person he comes to know with the violence she is accused of. As her relationship with the Reverend strengthens, Agnes slowly wins over the family as doubts are cast on her involvement in the murder.



*Burial Rites* offers multiple narrative perspectives. Agnes is dominant but the voices of the inexperienced young clergyman and the callous, self-important district commissioner are also woven into the story. The isolation of Agnes in a beautiful but unforgiving landscape is a powerful metaphor for women's mistreatment by social structures that align their function with patriarchal ideology and tradition.

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

American author Ray Bradbury's dystopian novel, written in 1953, focuses on the wholesale burning of books in a society as a way of eradicating viewpoints that subvert the dominant culture of the time.

The novel, set in the distant future, features a protagonist, Guy Montag, who is a 'fireman'. Montag's job is to seize works of literature and other serious cultural texts and burn them, because books are seen as encouraging critical thinking, and offering knowledge and ideas that threaten or, at least, challenge this particular society's leaders' authority. Montag's disillusion with his soul-destroying occupation leads him to rebel and commit his energies to the preservation of literature, with devastating consequences.

Despite its age, *Fahrenheit 451* remains highly relevant to modern readers, raising questions about the importance of learning from the past and offering perspectives on mass media's potentially pervasive influence as a weapon for totalitarianism and brainwashing. Bradbury also invites consideration of the value of books as key contributors to people being able to live with purpose and meaning.

## ***Frankenstein* — Mary Shelley**

### **Moves from general to EA list — start of 2027**

English writer Mary Shelley's 1818 Gothic novel belongs to both the science and horror fiction genres. As a Romantic, Shelley resisted the ongoing scientific and medical revolution that began early in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. She feared the effects of these developments on the Romantic view of what it meant to be fully human. She was particularly aware that medical scientists believed electricity could be used to reanimate the dead, including human beings. The subtitle of the novel, *The Modern Prometheus*, is a clear indication of her attitude towards humans seeking to usurp God.

The novel is epistolary, told principally through explorer Robert Walton's letters to his sister about his friend Victor Frankenstein, a scientist with an interest in alchemy and natural philosophy. Frankenstein has used the emerging energy source of electricity to bring to life a human-like creature that subsequently seeks acceptance and love from its creator, but enacts a terrible revenge when it is rejected.

*Frankenstein*, while not especially popular when published, has been adapted into films and art works, reflecting the scientific and technological developments effecting humans over the last 300 years. Shelley's novel can be seen principally as asserting the author's idea of what it means to be human and relate fully to the humanity of others.

## ***Growing Up Series* — various authors**

At the time of writing, there are eight volumes in Black Inc's Growing Up series: *Growing Up Asian in Australia*, *Growing Up Aboriginal in Australia*, *Growing Up African in Australia*,

*Growing Up Queer in Australia, Growing Up Disabled in Australia, Growing Up In Country Australia, Growing Up Torres Strait Islander in Australia and Growing Up Indian In Australia.*

Established and emerging writers have contributed to each anthology, bringing their unique perspective to the central topic. While the creators' experiences individualise these nonfiction works, the collection clearly indicates that being part of a group that Australian society undervalues can negatively influence the journey to self-determination.

The Growing Up series offers an enormous variety of childhood and adolescent tales that give readers the chance to reflect on others' lives as a prelude to considering their own social and cultural parameters. The stories could certainly be aligned to broader identity and/or marginalisation studies, or used as imaginative writing models and stimulus.

## ***If Cats Disappeared From The World*** **— Genki Kawamura**

**Introduced to list — start of 2026**

This unique and introspective novel written by a renowned Japanese creative was published in 2012 and later turned into a film that the author produced.

The narrator, a young postman who lives alone with his cat, has been diagnosed with terminal cancer. Aloha, a manifestation of the Devil, offers him a deal if he is willing to eliminate items from his life, granting him an extra day of life per item. The postman accepts the offer but soon discovers that even mundane things have memories attached that can lead to regret. When Aloha suggests he should sacrifice his beloved cat, the narrator realises that only love and relationships create a worthwhile existence.

Despite its potentially grim subject matter, Kawamura's minimalist prose is suffused with a wry and self-deprecating humour. The novel blurs lines between realism and surrealism, creating a world that is both credible and fantastical. This is supported by the profusion of cultural references to modern Japan blending with profound existential questions wrapped up in a relatively simple storyline. In this whimsical, gentle novel, Kawamura asks us to consider the quality of our relationships, how we might cope with the idea of mortality and materialism's place in our lives.

## ***Into Thin Air* — Jon Krakauer**

Jon Krakauer is an American mountaineer and nonfiction writer who joined a group to climb Mt Everest in 1995. *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, giving his impressions of people and places and only occasionally making judgment or commentary. His account generated considerable controversy, with other mountaineers criticising what they saw as inconsistencies in Krakauer's narrative.

*Into Thin Air* operates as an adjunct to investigative journalism. Krakauer is candid in depicting the fabled mountain's commercialisation and resultant desecration. Acknowledging the conflict the Sherpa people face trying to both protect a sacred space and appease the Western tourist industry, Krakauer provides an important cultural perspective.

## ***Jane Eyre* — Charlotte Brontë**

Penned under her male pseudonym, Currer Bell, Charlotte Brontë's 1847 novel is widely considered to be her most engaging work. Unaware that the author was a woman, the book's eventual publisher, George Smith, so loved the manuscript he read it in just one sitting.

*Jane Eyre* deals with the titular character's endeavours, as a young woman from lowly origins, to find connection and security in a society characterised by inequality. The novel is broken into five sections: Jane's abusive childhood, her formal education, her employment as a governess by Edward Rochester, her thwarting of the romantic attentions of her less than desirable cousin, and finally, her marriage to Rochester. The novel's first-person narrative perspective, an innovation previously unused in prose fiction, adds great authenticity to Jane's character, giving readers insight into her Christian moral stance and the reasons for her decisions.

Brontë used *Jane Eyre*'s story to critique Victorian society. Within the guise of the protagonist's characterisation, the novel offers perspectives on class and gender divisions, religion's powerful influence on all aspects of life, and the individual's struggle to attain selfhood in a highly structured environment. George Smith was right to be enamoured!

## ***Minds Went Walking: Paul Kelly's Songs Reimagined* — Jock Serong, Mark Smith, Neil A. White (eds.)**

**Introduced to list — start of 2026**

This anthology of fiction and nonfiction from 21 Australia authors reimagines the songs of Australian troubadour, Paul Kelly. Each writer was offered one song as stimulus for new work, with no direction about style, structure or concept.

Not surprisingly for a collection curated in such a manner, the results are sufficiently diverse to appeal to a wide range of interests. Michelle Wright constructs a tender tale of a lonely woman who comforts a dying animal in 'With Walt'. Zoe Bradley captures the wistfulness and thrill of illicitly revisiting an old lover in 'Five-Eight'. Editor Jock Serong delivers a tale of machismo and cars in 'The Fastest Ford in Western Australia', and Lorin Clarke celebrates her love for her father by recalling their time at a Paul Kelly concert in 'Meet Me In The Middle of the Air'.

The stories in *Mind Went Walking* are relatively brief and certainly accessible. Their conceptual and aesthetic diversity provides many perspectives on Australian life and society, offering sufficient flexibility for the anthology to be used productively in the English classroom.

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

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Nobel Prize-winning author Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* is a dystopian novel set in the 1990s and published in 2005. The book garnered numerous awards and was later released as a feature film.

There are three distinct sections in the story, each providing insight into the lives of the central characters, Tommy, Ruth and Kathy, students at Hailsham, an elite boarding school in England. Their teachers, known as guardians, closely monitor their health and encourage them to create art. It is later revealed that the students are clones, bred to donate organs. However, their school

— since shut down — was part of an initiative to make people think of clones as human beings with a soul.

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

In this compelling novel, published in 1949, George Orwell imagines a dystopian London under the Party's totalitarian rule. Led by the omnipresent Big Brother, the Party constantly surveils the populace and systematically eliminates free thought. The Thought Police torture and eliminate subversive Party members, imposing order.

The story follows Winston Smith, a low-ranking Outer Party member working in the Ministry of Truth, the government 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 things the Party will do to maintain conformity and control.

This prescient novel highlights the dangers of oppressive rule and advocates for individual freedom. *Nineteen Eighty-Four* offers perspectives on societies that maintain power through the denial of individuality and self-actualisation. It is a bracing study of propaganda, information and language control, and the struggle for individual identity and expression that remains a negative feature of many countries and communities today.

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

*Persepolis*, first published in 2000, is a memoir presented as a graphic novel. Iranian writer Marianne Satrapi's narrative is set 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 world.

Marji, a ten-year-old child, comes from a family that has allowed her to access books and media and therefore develop an understanding of life outside Tehran. The rise of religious extremism in her world, and her activist uncle Anoosh's visit, further stimulates Marji's interest in Western life and ideals. After a series of traumatic incidents, Marji's parents decide that she must join the diaspora of people leaving Iran, and go to Europe to study.

*Persepolis* explores the difficulty individuals face to sustain loyalty to their inner self while coping with societal challenges. Satrapi's decision to use the child's point of view both softens and intensifies much of the inherent brutality of Marji's world, resulting in a poignant narrative about survival and freedom. This rich and engaging text offers further perspectives on the importance of family, the impacts of gender-based and cultural stereotypes, and most significantly, hope.

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

Australian author Thomas Keneally's 1982 novel belongs to the historical fiction genre, being a true story the author has embellished. Keneally, who won the Booker Prize for *Schindler's Ark*,

researched avidly, transcribing survivors' testimonies and directly accessing people who had been part of the story. His novel was famously filmed as *Schindler's List*, directed by Steven Spielberg and released in 1993 to much acclaim.

Oskar Schindler was a German Nazi businessman and industrialist who, despite his personal and political affiliations, saved the lives of over a thousand European Jews. He employed them at his factory in the Polish city of Krakow so that they could not be taken to death camps during World War II. Kenneally explores Schindler's actions and motivations, and offers further heartbreaking detail of the lives of those who were incarcerated. Amon Göth, the brutally sadistic commandant of the labour camp known as Płaszów, is another key character in the narrative.

*Schindler's Ark* is a powerful, often challenging work that offers perspectives on how good and evil manifests in society. The potential of political ideology to become the motivator for violence and dehumanisation is also explored in this seminal Australian novel.

## 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.

Mansfield's work, which can reasonably be described as Modernist, is highlighted by her capacity to shift apparently ordinary incidents into highly significant moments. Some of her better known stories are 'At the Bay', where a new friendship provides new insights, 'The Garden Party', in which a teenage girl learns about death and empathy, and 'Prelude', a series of twelve vignettes describing the complex emotions that arise when a family must leave their home.

Like fellow Modernist writers such as Woolf, Joyce and Eliot, Mansfield's work is innovative, inventive 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 this writing form.

## Short stories — Tim Winton

### Introduced to list — start of 2026

Australian author Tim Winton has never been one to present readers with romanticised versions of reality. Instead, all the brutal, quirky, painful and inexplicable elements of life are present in his work.

In his three short story anthologies, *Minimum of Two*, *Scission* and *The Turning*, Winton offers readers flawed individuals who must navigate their way through pivotal moments brought about by chance, circumstance and choice. The inescapability of the past, the complexity of human relationships and the human psyche's fragility are just a few of the major themes that weave their way through these collections. Whether it's the story of a disaffected adolescent daughter of an alcoholic single mother (from *Minimum of Two*), a war-weary Australian soldier in a foreign land (from *Scission*) or a teacher with a shocking childhood secret (from *The Turning*), Winton has an extraordinary ability to access and convey his characters' interior worlds, making them both authentic and memorable.

The author's skilful characterisation, economy of language, masterly control of voice, inventive imagery and acute awareness of the importance of setting make his short stories consistently excellent examples of the craft of writing.

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

Stan Grant is a celebrated Australian journalist who has worked for many prominent media organisations in Australia and overseas. *Talking to My Country* is an award-winning personal memoir. Grant links aspects of his own life with the treatment of First Nations peoples in Australia.

The autobiographical text includes flash forwards, flash backs, anecdotes and important moments that have shaped Australian history and society. This structure enables readers to critically respond to questions raised about Australia's identity, and how it matches or abrades indigenous people's experiences. A particular focus is the ways broader social, political and cultural decision-making can significantly affect an individual's life.

*Talking About My Country* is a personal call to action. Grant does not seek to blame individuals or groups. Rather, he is critical of 'the system' that has suppressed our shared history. His view that we must reconcile past injustices if we are to successfully negotiate the future is powerful and persuasive. His book offers considered perspectives on social justice, history's role in determining identity, and the fundamental importance of cultural freedom and recognition.

## ***The Arsonist* — Chloe Hooper**

Chloe Hooper's 2018 nonfiction work focuses on the cataclysmic fires that were deliberately lit in Victoria's Central Gippsland region on 7<sup>th</sup> February 2009, now known as Black Saturday.

The book captures the immediacy of events with vivid descriptions 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's identity. Hooper recounts how the fire cells were so extraordinarily hot that they created their own weather patterns. The inclusion of key statistics emphasises the widespread destruction of this event in which, sadly, 173 people died. *The Arsonist* also explores the difficulties of navigating Australia's justice system through three distinct and connected sections: 'The Detectives', 'The Lawyers', and 'The Courtroom'. This structure allows Hooper to examine the convicted arsonist's background and possible motivations, his treatment by the media, and the larger social context for these events.

*The Arsonist* offers perspectives on many concepts and issues, including the environment, historical contexts for fire use, culpability and the burden of proof, the vulnerability of people who live with disadvantage, and the lasting effects of grief and loss.

## ***The Boat (collection of short stories)* — Nam Lee**

**Returns to general list having been removed at the end of 2022**

Published in 2008, *The Boat*, by Vietnamese–Australian writer Nam Le, is an exceptional debut work that has won multiple awards. The seven short stories in this anthology span six decades from the end of World War II to the early 2000s, and introduce readers to a fascinating and inventive assortment of settings, ranging from America to Japan and Iran.

The anthology begins with a clever story called 'Love and Honour and Pity and Pride and Compassion and Sacrifice' that merges reality and illusion. Other stories include, 'Cartagena', a powerful tale about a teenaged Columbian hitman, 'Tehran Calling', about cultural disconnect and betrayal, and 'Meeting Elise', about ageing and decline. Le's innovative collection concludes with the title story, a harrowing tale told from a Vietnamese refugee's perspective.



Although the works in the anthology are varied, they all speak to our world's cultural complexity and offer testimony to the wonderful way that fiction can allow readers to experience places and values that are different from their own. Le's production of a vast mosaic of voices is commanding, and the anthology includes diverse perspectives on concepts such as dislocation and loss, trust, loyalty and hope.

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

In this 2008 novel, 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 1992 war that started because the Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia broke apart. Galloway tells the stories of several Sarajevo citizens in danger from the chronic external bombing and snipers based within the city itself. Their lives are fraught, yet their spirits are sustained by an heroic musician who plays his cello. He plays Albinoni's *Adagio in G Minor* in a public square to express his bereavement at 22 citizens killed by a mortar bomb. Three characters, including a young woman who has unwillingly become a sniper, are especially affected by the cellist's courage and music's transcendent nature.

*The Cellist of Sarajevo* is an inspiring novel. It highlights the power of music, literature and other artforms when set against the dehumanisation of national leaders who intensify and exploit hatred and distrust between different groups of people for their own political ends.

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

*The Color of Water*, subtitled *A Black Man's Tribute to his White Mother*, is an engaging work by US writer, journalist and musician, James McBride. Published in 1995 it has since sold widely across the world.

The book, part-memoir and part-biography, offers readers two parallel accounts. The first is from McBride's remarkable and courageous mother Ruth's perspective. It deals with her two interracial marriages and her efforts to raise the twelve children who came from these unions. The second account, told from McBride's perspective, deals with his often chaotic 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 Ruth and himself. His book is an important reminder of the place and relevance of life-writing in literature, and explores key concepts such as the past's influence on the lives of individuals and families, the prejudices that can be associated with interracial relationships, the civil rights movement in the US, the significance of familial love, and the achievement of selfhood and establishment of identity.

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

F Scott Fitzgerald's 1925 novel is noted for its depiction of Jazz Age hedonism and the ethereal beauty of the writing. More significantly, it explores the American Dream, an often amorphous belief that the new world of the American republic could offer people a fresh beginning, economically and spiritually.

The protagonist, Jay Gatsby, is a symbol for this national myth. Beginning life with little, he has used whatever means are available to gather considerable wealth, symbolised in the novel

through his ornate mansion and extravagant parties. The American Dream also includes Romantic values such as the importance of individualism and the transcendent spiritual quality of the nation. In *Gatsby's* case, this pursuit of something beyond the material comes in the form of his once-lover, Daisy, now the wife of a ruthless businessman, Tom Buchanan. *Gatsby's* unshakeable belief that he and Daisy belong together is undercut by his naivety and the vicious selfishness of other characters, leading to a tragic conclusion.

*The Great Gatsby* uses the conceit of a matching pair of love triangles to explore the dangers of misguided idealism and the consequences of disrupting moral integrity. The novel also offers perspectives on law and order, class structures and the stark division between affluence and poverty that continues to afflict the Western world.

## ***The Hate Race* — Maxine Beneba Clarke**

**Introduced to list — start of 2026**

Maxine Beneba Clarke's acclaimed 2016 memoir is a two-part narrative that details her childhood and adolescence as a descendant of 'those unbroken' people of West Indian heritage who survived their inculcation into the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Clarke mixes personal experiences with family stories, historical commentary and folklore to create a forthright and engaging account of her early life and those of her family.

*The Hate Race* begins with an outline of her grandparents' lives in Britain and the circumstances that led to her parents' decision to move to Australia. Clarke acknowledges the many social, economic and cultural struggles immigrants faced and frames these via the difficulties she experiences in negotiating her childhood. The second part of the memoir focuses on Clarke's adolescence and her efforts to grapple with teenage rites of passage — self-identity, friendship groups, romantic awakenings — while also dealing with stereotyping, racism, bullying and harassment.

The strength of this work lies in Clarke's unflinching willingness to address significant community issues such as the processes and ideologies that lead to the marginalisation of individuals and groups, the power of words and epithets, the prevalence of cultural appropriation, and the influence of political attitudes, historical and current, on immigrants. The author's choice of the young person's voice for her memoir is especially powerful, as is linking key moments in Australia's social history with her own lived experience. *The Hate Race* is a compelling book that offers many opportunities for stylistic analysis and acts as an innovative model for personal and reflective writing.

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

This crime novel, first published in 1902, heralded the return of British writer 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, grisly deaths and emotionally driven characters. The story concerns the Baskerville family and an ongoing 18<sup>th</sup> century curse. When Sir Charles Baskerville's death is followed by anonymous notes and threats, old fears are rekindled, and Holmes agrees to intervene.

The novel pays homage to the Victorian fascination with the supernatural, offering varying perspectives on 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 human characters' hearts and minds. As always, the protagonist of this classical detective novel is enigmatic, courageous and brilliant as he picks apart the plot and exposes the failings of the characters.

## ***The Martian* — Andy Weir**

American author Andy Weir was a software engineer who first published *The Martian* as a blog serial before it metamorphosed into a novel, audiobook and film.

The story's plot operates from a recognisable literary premise: the main character, Mark Watney, 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 follows a version of the linear narrative arc of the hero's journey, famously theorised by Joseph Campbell. Food, water, shelter and communication become primary drivers as Watney seeks and finds innovative ways of sustaining himself and, ultimately, getting home. As well as creating a warm and often humorous protagonist, Weir provides a suspenseful plot and significant technical detail, 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.

## ***The Penelopiad: The Myth of Penelope and Odysseus* — Margaret Atwood**

**Introduced to list — start of 2026**

Internationally acclaimed Canadian author Margaret Atwood writes narratives that reveal characters' inner lives to provide new perspectives on old stories. Published as part of the Canongate Myths Series in 2005, *The Penelopiad: The Myth of Penelope and Odysseus* retells Homer's *Odyssey* from Penelope's, Odysseus's previously silenced wife, perspective.

Told in retrospect from the underworld, the narrative follows Penelope's life from childhood to marriage, through to Odysseus's absence and return. Drawing on the original myth, Atwood reshapes readers' perceptions of Penelope as the faithful, lonely Queen of Ithaca and creates a shrewder, more cunning woman than the one who appears in the Western canon. Atwood also gives voice to her twelve maids through an array of songs, scripts and rhymes that add humour and irony.

Atwood's masterful metatextual novel is a witty and engaging exploration of concepts such as storytelling, double standards, power, language, representations of identity, and justice. While much of the text is grounded in history, the novella is easily read as a standalone work. Atwood's modern language, powerful symbolism and manipulation of written forms allows truth-telling's complexities to be forensically examined.

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

Australian author Andrew McGahan's Miles Franklin Award-winning novel, published in 2004, is a multilayered work that draws on several literary traditions. The novel's setting, southern Queensland in 1992, is a reminder of the Mabo land decision of that year, and subsequent calls for Australia's colonial legacy to be formally dismantled.

Offering dual perspectives using two central characters, *The White Earth* focuses on the checkered history of a decaying rural property in the Darling Downs region and its reclusive owner, John McIvor. When William, his young nephew, comes to live with him following his father's death in a fire, McIvor's preoccupation with inheritance becomes increasingly apparent. His organisation of an anti-Native Title rally courts disaster, and sets in motion a chain of events that leads, inevitably, to tragedy.

*The White Earth* explores the past's impact on contemporary life. The author's decision to tell his story from differing personal perspectives gives the novel's political concepts extra power. McGahan's complex and thoughtful novel incisively explores concepts such as how we deal with land ownership and legacy, negotiating intergenerational attitudes, and the ongoing need in Australia for social and cultural reconciliation.

## ***The Yield* — Tara June Winch**

### **Moves from EA to general list — start of 2028**

Wiradjuri author Tara June Winch's highly acclaimed novel won the 2020 Miles Franklin Award, the 2020 Prime Minister's Literary Award for Fiction and the 2020 Voss Literary Prize.

The novel draws on geographical areas in Wiradjuri Country in New South Wales and Australia's colonial history. It uses shifting voices to tell the story of the Gondiwindi family: August, 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. Set mostly in Prosperous, on Massacre Plains where both August and Poppy grew up, the town 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.

*The Yield* represents the loss of Indigenous languages as a mirror to cultural deprivation. The crucial roles that spirituality and connection to Country play in terms of Aboriginal identity are also extensively explored. The dispute over land, and what it can provide as opposed to what can be taken from it, is a powerful motif for the clash of values that constitutes this politically committed and intricate novel's driving force.

# Plays and drama texts

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## Away — Michael Gow

Michael Gow's warm and lively play was first performed in 1986, the same year it won the New South Wales Premier's Literary Award. *Away* has since become one of Australia's most popular and enduring dramas.

The dramatic action focuses on three families on coastal holidays during the 1968 Christmas period. All are contending with significant personal and relational issues. English immigrants Harry and Vic are desperately trying to cope with their son Tom's terminal illness. Jim and Gwen are dealing with uncomfortable truths that Meg, their increasingly headstrong daughter has raised about their empty, ritualised relationship. Roy and Coral are grieving after the death of their only son in the Vietnam War, and dealing with the impact this has had on their relationship with each other and with their community.

Framed by excerpts from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *King Lear*, *Away* incorporates the grand Shakespearean themes of suffering and personal reconciliation. The play's structure and tenor, with its focus on departure and return, allows the characters to access significant self-knowledge as they move towards redemption. Its deep humanity, combined with its daggy humour and at times playful approach to serious topics, makes *Away* an 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 director of the work when it was first performed at the Sydney Opera House in 2014. Throughout the process of research, writing and production, this creative team was conscious that First Nations history in Australia has frequently been ignored, misappropriated or erased. *Black Diggers* was, in part, an attempt to redress this issue.

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

*Black Diggers* provides a powerful insight into the discrimination the Indigenous soldiers suffered. The play is confronting in its depictions of military violence and provides an honest appraisal of the survivors' fates, many of whom suffered post-traumatic stress disorder or were left destitute and unacknowledged after the war ended. *Black Diggers* overrides a statistical or summative approach to international conflicts and provides a perspective on the profound human suffering these senseless events engendered.

## Così — Louis Nowra

Louis Nowra's play, first performed in 1992, 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 is Lewis Riley, a recent university graduate and anti-war activist who has been offered the opportunity to direct Mozart's opera, *Così Fan Tutte*, for the patients of a local psychiatric hospital. After some initial scepticism, Lewis warms to the task, eventually reframing

his own life as selfish and overly idealistic, and developing compassion. The patients respond positively to this change and the opera is duly performed with great energy and joy.

Lewis's developing relationships with the cast members of the opera are contrasted with his increasingly fraught relationships with girlfriend, Lucy, and roommate, Nick. This contrast allows Nowra to challenge negative and narrow representations of people with mental illness, and to highlight the arbitrary distinction that can exist in our definitions of those who are 'sane' and those who are not. This raw and often humorous play also offers perspectives on love as both a unifying and pernicious force, and the sometimes contradictory role of social activism as an expression of human rights.

## ***Counting and Cracking* — S Shakthidharan**

This 2019 play by Australian–Sri Lankan–Tamil playwright S Shakthidharan tells the story of four generations of the one Tamil family. The dramatic action 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, *Counting and Cracking* begins with Siddhartha throwing his grandmother's ashes into the Georges River in Australia at his mother Radha's behest. A tapestry of vignettes ensues, moving back and forth through time but always connected to Sri Lanka's difficult, war-ravaged history and the Australian refugee narrative. The play goes full circle, ending with Siddhartha and Radha planning the funeral rites for Siddhartha's great-grandfather in Sri Lanka.

*Counting and Cracking* is a poignant journey involving healing and renewed understanding of family, history, heritage and restoration. The play also offers perspectives on the political nature of language, the effects of trauma, injustice and discrimination, and the possibility of forgiveness.

## ***Gaslight* — Patrick Hamilton**

**Introduced to list — start of 2026**

This precise thriller, written by Hamilton in 1938 and set in Victorian-era London, intriguingly depicts coercive control and domestic abuse. The play was made into an Academy Award winning film of the same name and alludes to other literature of the era in its exploration of the Victorian belief in psychological duality, and the potentially destructive dichotomy that can exist between a person's public and private personae.

Jack Manningham is a criminal and narcissist who has embarked on a deceitful Machiavellian campaign to convince his wife Bella that she is going insane: hearing footsteps overhead when no one should be there and seeing a gaslight dimming when it does not. A visiting detective persuades Bella that her husband is responsible for her mental deterioration and that his endeavours are part of an unsolved murder plot. If *Gaslight* is a claustrophobic whodunnit, then Manningham is an actor with a captive audience who coldly sets up a battle between reason and emotion that he feels certain he cannot lose — but for the intervention of external, rational forces of law and order.

Hamilton's play is an unsettling depiction of patriarchy and misogyny that retains relevance for modern audiences. The manipulation of Bella, known in contemporary times as 'gaslighting', invites the study of power structures, and how people develop and retain their social roles.



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

### **Moves from EA to general list — end of 2025**

Shakespeare's tragedy is set in medieval Scotland. It was written following the ascension of James I, a Scot, to the English throne, and charts the demise of an heroic and valiant soldier who succumbs to dangerous desires, fuelled by dark forces.

Having successfully thwarted a rebellion the Thane of Cawdor initiated, Macbeth and his loyal friend Banquo are confronted by three witches armed with prophecies about their futures. After the first prophecy for Macbeth comes true, his wife, Lady Macbeth, is fierce in her demand that he should actively seek the second, that he will 'be king hereafter'. But Macbeth's ensuing murder of the existing king, Duncan, leads to a series of crimes and complications, and his descent into evil becomes inevitable as he and his wife discover that tyranny cannot coexist with conscience.

Imbued with unsettling and evocative imagery, the play operates as an absorbing study of two memorable characters, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, who are prepared to sacrifice all for the chance to rule Scotland. *Macbeth* offers perspectives on power and corruption, gender roles, ambition and guilt. The motif of children as representations of innocence and succession is an especially interesting aspect of this brutal and arresting drama.

## ***RBG: Of Many, One* — Suzie Miller**

### **Introduced to list — start of 2026**

Australian playwright and ex-lawyer Suzie Miller has built a career penning stories about social justice issues. Her theatrical eulogy for the American judge Ruth Bader Ginsburg is a vibrant tribute to a woman who fought with great energy on behalf of those in her country with less power and, correspondingly, less hope.

*RGB: Of Many, One* charts Ginsburg's life from her early adolescence through to her death in 2020 at the age of 87. Miller splices short scenes — both domestic and politically charged — from the past and the present to depict a fiercely intelligent woman who occupied many roles in her life. A child of a Jewish family, student, lawyer and judge, she was a feminist advocate and staunch supporter of the principle that women deserve reproductive control, and a daughter, wife, mother and grandmother. The play can also be seen as a love story, pivoting as it does on the devotion that existed between its subject and her husband. Ginsburg, best known for her fearless Supreme Court judgements and her willingness to combat the patriarchy inherent in American political and cultural institutions, is presented as fully human.

Miller's play offers opportunities for the contextual analysis of concepts such as gender-based rights and feminism's role in the modern world. The rich language of *RGB: Of Many, One* and its dynamic structuring are worthy of closer study, as is the author's capacity to imbue her scenes with emotional strength. This is a compassionate rendering of the life of a selfless but often vulnerable icon of the judicial and common worlds.

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

First performed in the mid-1990s, this play is the product of a collaboration between Nunukul Ngugi man Wesley Enoch, and Bidjara and Māori woman Deborah Mailman. It deals primarily with the collective grief First Nations Australians experience because of colonisation.

The dramatic action is performed by a lone actor, 'the woman', who speaks on her people's behalf. On a highly symbolic stage and using a variety of modes of communication, she shares a range of stories including, her memories of her grandmother's life and death, an exploration of family photos, a satirical re-enactment of the First Fleet's landing, a ritualised purification ceremony, and poems about invasion and reconciliation.

Although *The 7 Stages of Grieving* necessarily deals with pain and suffering, it also focuses on people's remarkable resilience in the face of trauma. The play offers compelling perspectives on community, cultural heritage, loss, injustice, and systemic racism. In so doing, it promotes awareness and empathy but, more importantly, acts as a powerful advocate for systemic change.

## ***The Crucible* — Arthur Miller**

Arthur Miller's play is a compelling text that continues to resonate seven decades after it was first performed. Written in the context of the Cold War and America's McCarthyism period, the play deals with the extraordinary Salem witch trials of 1692 and 1693.

Told in four acts, *The Crucible* charts the onset of paranoia in Salem when a teenage ritual in the forest renders the local preacher's daughter comatose. The clash between long-held jealousies and prejudices, and the Puritan rule-makers' dogmatic, authoritarian approach to society and the law, crystallises in the eventual persecution of the play's protagonist, John Proctor, a farmer. His past transgressions with Abigail Williams, the leader of the accusers, enables him to see through the fabrication and lies.

One of the many strengths of this play is its dramatic intensity, with each of the acts ending in an emotion-charged crescendo. Memorable characterisation is another feature of Miller's work. From the austere, unbending Danforth, to the agonisingly conflicted Proctor and Reverend Hale, the characters of this work linger in the memory long after the last lines of the text are read. *The Crucible* is a timely reminder of the consequences of allowing state power to become autocratic, and offers perspectives on the significance of individual reputation, the deleterious impacts of hysteria-driven 'mob' movements, and how we might define virtue and act with grace.

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

This play, by Australian writer, actor and director, Leah Purcell — a Goa-Gunggari-Wakka Wakka Murri woman — is based on Henry Lawson's short story of the same name. First performed in 2016, *The Drover's Wife* explores a woman's stoicism, courage and independence, raising her children in a remote homestead while her husband is off droving.

The dramatic action is set in the Snowy Mountains in 1893. Purcell reimagines Lawson's tale, introducing new characters and adding layers of complexity absent from the original. The central complication in this version is not the arrival of a snake to the remote homestead, but the advent 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 that cascade into verbal and physical savagery.

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

## ***The Frogs* — Aristophanes**

### **Introduced to list — start of 2026**

*The Frogs*, a satiric comedy from one of Ancient Greece's best known playwrights, was written during the Peloponnesian War between Athens and Sparta. Aristophanes was a strident critic of the inertia of Athenian public life in the face of Spartan aggression, and his work highlights the time's unrest. With its popular appeal and earnest desire for change, *The Frogs* — fantastical, vulgar, scornful and punchy — is a fine example of early political theatre.

The play's plot sees the god Dionysus, the patron saint of theatre, disguise himself as Hercules and travel to Hades to bring the dead playwright Euripides back to the living world. He believes that a politically and morally weakened Athens desperately needs the great poet and playwright's advice and inspiration. However, once in Hades, Dionysus is persuaded to judge a contest between Euripides and the tragic poet Aeschylus to determine who is best placed to save Athens. After much toing and froing, Aeschylus is selected and returned to Athens.

*The Frogs* satirises laws, customs and the role of art and artists in civilised society, heralding later theatrical forms with its verbal adroitness and wit, and its use of farce, role swapping and disguise. At its heart, the play is pacifist. Like Dionysus, Aristophanes seeks solutions, espousing the notion of poets and playwrights as educators who are more erudite and incisive than the civic leaders. The great irony of *The Frogs* is that, not long after it was staged, Sparta defeated and occupied Athens. Aristophanes' mockery, it seems, was aptly targeted.

## ***The Glass Menagerie* — Tennessee Williams**

### **Introduced to list — start of 2026**

*The Glass Menagerie* premiered in Chicago at the end of 1944. Over the next few months, critics began to recognise that this semi-autobiographical work by emerging writer, Tennessee Williams, was a theatrical and thematically significant drama.

The play takes place in 1930s St Louis, Missouri, in a bleak urban apartment block which, according to Williams' production notes, is 'burning with the slow implacable fires of human desperation'. Living inside one of the tiny apartments is the Wingfield family. Amanda, an overbearing, abandoned wife lives with Tom, her long-suffering, desperately unhappy son and Laura, her highly anxious, reclusive daughter. Haunted by a lost, romanticised past of parties, gentleman callers, servants and Southern manners, Amanda is desperate for her two twenty-something children to live in a way that allows her to vicariously recapture the gaiety of those bygone days.

Over seven memorable scenes, Williams uses an inventive, expressionist approach to poignantly reveal what he calls the 'inner souls' of these three complex characters. In so doing, he allows his audience to enter their lives and to empathise with the struggles they face, especially their inability to accept the harsh glare of reality over the softer lights of fantasy and nostalgia.

## ***The Importance of Being Earnest* — Oscar Wilde**

### **Introduced to list — start of 2026**

*The Importance of Being Earnest* is widely regarded as Oscar Wilde's magnum opus, a witty comedy of manners that satirises the arrogance, hypocrisy, pettiness and over-entitlement of England's elite.

At the heart of this much-loved drama are two friends, Jack Worthing and Algernon Moncrieff. Both are men of means but Jack is represented as the steadier of the two, caring for his charming eighteen-year-old ward, Cecily Cardew, and hoping to marry the sophisticated and well-to-do Gwendolen Fairfax. Despite Jack's more stable persona, he, like Algernon, has invented a fictional alias — Ernest — that allows him to periodically step away from his responsibilities and the restraints of Victorian morals and social mores. Much of the humour in the play is generated through the confusion these duplicitous alternative identities cause.

The fascinating socio-cultural milieu of the time and the opportunity to discuss topics such as satire's function, the changing nature of humour and the relationship between class and social mores make this an engaging study text. *The Importance of Being Earnest* also boasts a cast of memorable characters, none more so than the outrageously intimidating and insensitive Lady Bracknell.

## ***The Trojan Women* — Euripides**

**Introduced to list — start of 2026**

This famous play was written as an intervention on Homer's poem, *The Iliad*, which depicted the final weeks of the Trojan War. In classic Ancient Greek style, *The Trojan Women* melds spoken word and song, featuring remorseless gods and suffering mortals locked together in their biospheric world. Its daring conceptual framework, however, is its best feature. The play is a powerful condemnation of the terrible impact that war has on the lives of innocents and is indicative of Euripides' empathy for people in society whom he saw as victims: slaves, foreigners, outcasts — and women.

*The Trojan Women* begins just after Troy has been captured and focuses on the suffering of the wives and children of the vanquished. Their fates are brutal. As the city burns, Hecuba, the former queen, faces servitude in Greece, Helen is put on trial for causing the war, Cassandra is forced into a life of sexual slavery while Andromache's son is killed on the pretext that his survival into adulthood might engender future rebellion. Beyond the immediacy of the play, the women face further savagery: enslavement, rape and murder at their captors' behest.

Euripides was an innovative writer, and this anti-war narrative exemplifies his acute sensibilities. He highlights the wrongful treatment of women as commodities and the folly of classifying them as irrational and emotional. As such, *The Trojan Women* can be seen as an early exploration of feminism. The extraordinary number of modern reworkings of the play — one example being The Trojan Women Project, which offers social and psychological support for refugees — suggests its continuing power and prescience.

## ***When The Rain Stops Falling* — Andrew Bovell**

**Introduced to list — start of 2026**

The embryonic concepts for Andrew Bovell's intense and compelling play, *When the Rain Stops Falling*, emerged from an eclectic collaboration called 'The Extinction Project'. This project brought together the playwright and fellow creatives from a variety of backgrounds to explore broad ideas about the impact of human beings on the planet and each other. As one of Australia's most talented writers for stage and screen, it is not surprising that Bovell was able to take these nascent ideas and fashion them into a taut, innovative and memorable theatrical work.

Spanning 80 years, from 1959 to 2039, and involving characters from four generations, the play deals with two dark and murky family histories, which are inextricably and tragically linked. At the centre of the play's events and timeline are Gabrielle York and Gabriel Lord. Both are lonely individuals, unmoored and scarred by past events that neither of them fully understands. As the

play progresses, the full and harrowing details of their respective family histories, including instances of horrifying child abuse, are revealed.

Against the backdrop of this disturbing multi-generational tragedy, Bovell, through repeated motifs, alerts his audience to another unfolding tragedy: the degradation of our beleaguered planet and the negative climate impacts that have ensued. Theatrically inventive and ambitious, his play has some confronting moments, but it also clearly demonstrates drama's power to convey uncomfortable and unsettling aspects of human existence.

# Film, television and multimodal texts

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The text title is followed by director/creator.

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

This 2017 Australian film is based on the real-life experiences of Iranian-born Australian writer, actor and standup 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 two cultures. Ali, son of an Iraqi Shia cleric who has left his 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 — to become a doctor and go through with an arranged marriage — and asserting his individualism by being with the woman that he loves. The film's dramatic and comic appeal is predicated on the complicated lie that Ali tells his family at the start of the film, and his increasingly desperate and ultimately unsuccessful attempts to stop that lie, and his life, from unravelling.

This engaging film offers perspectives on community, family and identity, and representations of diversity in Australia. It also invites explorations of the multilayering inherent in cultural concepts such as filial duty, and love and marriage.

## ***Amelie* — Jean-Pierre Jeunet**

This quirky romantic 2001 comedy directed by Jean-Pierre Jeunet follows the exploits of a mischievous but highly likeable 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, Amelie spends her childhood being homeschooled by her father. This isolated existence leads to her developing an overactive imagination and an appreciation for small pleasures. When she discovers a box of toys and memorabilia belonging to a boy who used to live in her apartment, Amelie 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. During 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 and enchanting presentation of Paris, which blurs the line between the everyday and the fantastical. At the heart of the film is Amelie's generous and attentive appreciation of her world and the people she interacts with. The film offers perspectives on the significance of minutiae in everyday life, and the benefits of trying to understand people beyond a superficial level. The clever script and wide array of characters add further appeal to the filmic experience.

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

*Australian Story* has won many professional accolades, including Walkley and Logie awards. This long-running series provides compelling insights into well-known and unknown Australians' lives and experiences.

Currently presented by highly respected journalist, Leigh Sales, each episode details the challenges a specific individual or group face, their attempts to overcome or embrace these



challenges, and the consequences of their and others' actions. The predominant voice of each story is often the person themselves, a narrative thread that is a key feature of each 30 minute, standalone episode. The subjects share their stories and reflections on their lives, taking viewers to urban, regional and remote locations.

*Australian Story* can be amusing, uplifting, confronting or polemical. It is a vibrant, often emotionally charged series that explores a range of perspectives relevant to modern life.

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

English director Stephen Daldry's film was released in 2000. *Billy Elliot* is set in a working class community in County Durham in the United Kingdom during the mid-1980s. Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's ruling conservative Tory government faced rolling miner's strikes because of their policy to close coalmines that were deemed to be uneconomic.

Eleven-year-old Billy is the son of a coalminer, Jackie. He lives in a challenging world, forced to endure the loss of his mother, the financial hardship the strikes generate and the masculine stereotypes his brother, Tony, perpetrates. When Billy accidentally stumbles onto a ballet class as an alternative to boxing, he finds a new way to express his complex emotions. Importantly, he also finds a supportive mentor, his dance teacher, Mrs Wilkinson, and begins to see that there may be a future for him outside the restrictions his circumstances impose.

The film explores gender stereotypes, especially those associated with community perceptions of what it means to be male. *Billy Elliot* establishes the centrality of family in people's lives, and invites audiences to examine the limitations that society places on individuals, and the challenges, and benefits, of breaking out of these. This tender and uplifting film explores concepts such as resilience, fear, acceptance and forgiveness, and the need to live authentically.

## ***Blade Runner* — Ridley Scott**

English director Ridley Scott's brooding, atmospheric, neo-noir film, released in 1982, is widely regarded as a seminal example of science fiction film-making.

*Blade Runner* is set in Los Angeles in 2019, where over-industrialisation has resulted in an overcrowded, sprawling city covered in a thick smog that leaves its inhabitants in perpetual darkness. This grim dystopia provides the ideal stage for the film's cynical and world-weary protagonist, Rick Deckard, as he struggles 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', human-like androids created by the Tyrell corporation. At the beginning of the film, Deckard accepts the assignment to track and kill four Nexus-6 Replicants that 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 representation of the Replicants and their plight. This invites the audience to question what it means to be human, and to critically examine alienating trends in modern life. In the final scene, Scott notoriously includes a hint that Deckard himself might be a Replicant, a proposition that the film's cult following still debates today.

## ***Brooklyn* — John Crowley**

Irish director John Crowley's 2015 period drama is an adaptation of the novel written by Irish writer 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 must choose between returning to Ireland or starting a new life in America.

Ellis lives with her sister, Rose, and her mother in Enniscorthy, a small town where there are few employment opportunities. Despite feeling guilty about leaving Rose alone with their mother, Ellis embarks on a journey to Brooklyn and a new job. Once there, she adapts to her changed life, making close friends, taking night classes in bookkeeping and falling in love with an Italian-American, Tony Fiorello. When Rose dies unexpectedly, Ellis decides she must go home, but not before secretly marrying Tony in City Hall. Her return to Ireland undercuts her chances of finding happiness. Ellis must choose between staying with her mother and her new suitor, Jim, or returning to her husband in Brooklyn.

*Brooklyn* is a stylish 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, the film's protagonist becomes a mature, assertive woman who has the courage to decide the course her life will take.

## ***Cleverman* (TV series) — Ryan Griffen, Wayne Blair and Leah Purcell**

This groundbreaking six-part Australian drama series, conceived by indigenous 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 takes place in an Australia divided into hairypeople (or hairies) and humans, where non-conforming hairies are shunned and 'shavers' attempt to fit in. The Cleverman, a traditional healer and keeper of culture, provides a link between this future world and the Dreaming. In the series, the role of the Cleverman falls upon an outcast, Koen West, who becomes an unlikely hero in stories that play out in both urban settings and the natural environment.

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

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

*Four Corners* 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. Episodes vary in structure and content but are generally of a mixed style, using a combination of interviews, real and archival footage, and narration.

Over its lengthy tenure, *Four Corners* has been involved in breaking many high profile stories, and has provided significant insights and perspectives into events in Australian life. At the time of writing, recent examples of episodes include, 'Truth/Yoorrook', about national progress towards reconciliation, 'Betrayal of Trust', an inquiry into failings in Australia's childcare sector, 'Leaving Hate', about the rise of political extremism, and 'Party Crashers', about our shifting political landscape.

*Four Corners* brings a sharp critical eye to social, political and/or environmental issues that are broadly pertinent to Australian audiences.

## ***Glitch* (TV series) — Emma Freeman**

**Introduced to list — start of 2026**

Directed by Australian Emma Freeman, this television show's plot is underpinned by ideas about paranormal activity. There are three series of *Glitch*, with six episodes in each.

The catalyst for the dramatic action occurs when James Hayes, a policeman in fictional Yoorana, Victoria, is called to the local cemetery in the middle of the night after seven people have arisen from the dead. All are in perfect health but with no memory of their identities. Hayes is determined to discover who they are and what has happened to them. Working on the premise that the people are linked in some way, and secretly assisted by Dr Elishia McKellar, Hayes begins a search for the truth about these people and why they have arisen.

*Glitch* is an innovative production that offers perspectives on free will and self-determination. The series explores the difficult balance that exists between scientific explanation for phenomena and the acceptance of mysticism and spirituality and focuses on the search for balance in all aspects of human existence. Redemption, seen in the characters' desire to resolve past conflicts and achieve that balance, is the driving concept of the show.

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

This critically acclaimed 2005 drama is set in 1950s America during what is euphemistically known as the McCarthy era. The film explores a critical time in the nation's history, when American citizens' constitutional rights were under threat.

The principal conflict concerns 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. In addition to the fictional dramatic action, the film incorporates historical footage that shows Murrow championing individual rights and advocating for free choice in people's lives. Interestingly, the film also establishes Murrow's concerns about the pervasive infiltration of television in society, as he questions the broadcasters' integrity in light of their relentless attacks on individuals and institutions.

Despite the historical context, *Good Night and Good Luck* retains its relevance because it masterfully explores dogma and the body politic. Clooney's film offers opportunities to consider the concept of truth as absolute or contextualised, the media's social and moral responsibilities, and the ramifications of personal commitment and courage in the face of ideological over-reach.

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

Theodore Melfi's 2016 film is a historical drama based on a novel 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 during the space race in Cold War America.

The women work as 'computers', doing mathematical calculations, in the 'coloured' section of the NASA complex. The film recounts how they 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, becomes the first African-American female engineer at NASA. Dorothy, who is the manager of the 'coloured

computers' team, leads her group to learn programming and eventually becomes NASA's first African–American manager.

The film provides a sobering portrayal of African–American women's lives in segregation-era America by focusing on the ways that racism is normalised and encoded in everyday practices. *Hidden Figures* is also notable for showing that the three women rely on friendship and community as much as their own resourcefulness and resilience to achieve success.

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

Acclaimed Japanese director Hayao Miyazaki's strident opposition to US forces invading Iraq in 2003, influenced his 2004 animated fantasy film.

*Howl's Moving Castle* tells the story of multiple characters who are caught within a mythical, magical kingdom that is at war. A young wizard, Howl, must find a way to save Sophie, a milliner, from a witch's spell. During his quest, Howl becomes a stronger person, echoing elements of the heroic narrative. Sophie, too, remains steadfast in her dedication to her own moral view. This is a tale which incorporates many storytelling tropes: a curse that needs to be broken, the tricky navigation of the line between friends and enemies, and the incorporation of honour and integrity as the main characters' key motivations.

Visually rich and highly evocative, this film provides opportunities to explore the concepts of pacifism, courage, loyalty, duty and compassion, and connections between age, physical frailty and wisdom. One of the central ideas underpinning the film is that characters can quickly and guilelessly transform, a process that invites reflections about the masks we adopt in our interactions with the wider world.

## ***JoJo Rabbit* — Taika Waititi**

This 2019 Oscar-nominated satiric comedy was adapted from New Zealand–Belgian writer Christine Leunens's novel, *Caging Skies*.

Set in Germany during World War II, the film opens with a combination of historical footage and dramatic moments intercut with the anachronistic sounds of German Beatlemania. Ten-year-old German boy, Johanne — the JoJo of the title — is growing up under the Third Reich's stringent rule. He dreams of becoming an Aryan war hero and engages in conversations with his imaginary friend, Adolf, his own version of Hitler. When he discovers that his mother, a covert anti-fascist, is hiding Jewish girl Elsa in their attic, he begins to rethink his allegiances. JoJo's path towards the tolerance and humanity that was antithetical to the Nazi regime frames the remainder of the film's narrative.

Taika Waititi's fast-paced, energetic, and thought-provoking film, told from a ten-year-old child's perspective, explores many complex concepts, including innocence and corruption, loyalty and conformity, notions of 'otherness', courage and integrity.

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

This 2006 film, written by Michael Arndt, is a lively tragicomedy about a dysfunctional family who reconnect on a disaster-prone road trip to Redondo, in California.

Olive is the youngest child of Richard, who aspires to be a motivational speaker, and the more pragmatic Sheryl. She lives with her parents, her silent brother, depressed uncle and outlandish

grandfather. The latter, Edwin, is coaching Olive towards her goal of qualifying for a beauty pageant. When this happens, Olive's family, so as not to crush her dreams, decide to drive together to the Little Miss Sunshine competition finals. On the road trip, the family members are forced to work cooperatively to cope with a series of unfortunate events. Each is compelled to confront their self-imposed limitations and accept the notion that there are no neat formulas or solutions for 'winning' at life.

As well as offering perspectives on success and failure, *Little Miss Sunshine* explores concepts such as the importance of unconditional love and the family unit, stereotypes associated with physical appearance and gender, and social and cultural attitudes to mental health. The film is heartfelt, provocative and often very funny.

## ***Little Women* — Greta Gerwig**

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

Each of the four sisters has a distinctive talent and temperament. Gerwig paints a portrait of a family group 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. Their mother 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 based on reason rather than emotion.

Gerwig eschews a chronological storyline to create a film that cuts back and forward in time. She presents the sisters' lives as a tapestry of events, memories and expectations in which character and circumstance both play important roles in shaping outcomes. The director emphasises the contrasts between the talent, determination and resilience of the four sisters, and the consequences of these differences, as well as the limitations their class and gender impose.

## ***Mystery Road* — Ivan Sen**

### **Introduced to list — start of 2026**

Ivan Sen's 2013 film is a carefully paced, evocative thriller that combines crime-noir and western genre elements. *Mystery Road*, which generated the television spin-off series of the same name, retells the classic story of a damaged but fundamentally virtuous loner returning to hostile territory and standing up against endemic corruption.

Jay Swan, an indigenous detective, arrives in his former outback town home to investigate the murder of a teenage girl. His efforts are compromised by a mix of police disinterest and aggression, long-simmering tensions between the town's Aboriginal and white populations and Swan's alienating status as a man caught, professionally and personally, between two worlds. The film moves through a series of character-driven interactions towards its gritty and violent conclusion, a meticulously choreographed shootout in the Hollywood western tradition.

*Mystery Road* is replete with aesthetics. The arid landscape operates as a metaphor for the characters' spiritual emptiness, and the titular road, representing the mystery of what lies beyond mortal life, is a destiny where transformation must occur. This raw and often unsettling film with its focus on race- and gender-based exploitation is underpinned by the idea that moral putrefaction will inevitably occur when power imbalances are institutionalised at the expense of human dignity and the truth.

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

*Rear Window*, set in New York in 1954, is a suspenseful mystery drama that invites the viewer into the restricted world of a man trapped in his wheelchair after an accident.

Jeff is a famous photographer. Because of a broken leg, he is unable to leave his apartment, so he succumbs to voyeurism. During his incessant watching, he notices certain clues that lead him to the conclusion that one of his neighbours has been murdered. He tries to convince his fiancée, Lisa, that a crime has been committed. She is more concerned with Jeff's failure to commit himself to life, and her, preferring to stay outside the action and gaze through a lens. As the dramatic tension builds, trust is juxtaposed against doubt, fear against courage, and action against inaction.

With its focus on watching others rather than seeking agency by participating in your own life, *Rear Window* remains a highly prescient film for contemporary audiences raised in an environment where mass media platforms and channels dominate our perceptions. The film asks whether privacy is, ultimately, an illusion, and explores concepts such as alienation and connectedness, and curiosity and invasiveness.

## ***Sherlock* (TV series) — Mark Gatiss and Steven Moffatt**

This four series BBC production first aired in 2010. The characters, addresses and places from the original classic stories by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle reappear but in a more contemporary fashion. The crimes that need to be solved in 21<sup>st</sup> century London are detailed with humour and significant suspense.

Sherlock Holmes is a brilliant eccentric operating as a consultant detective. He is aided in his endeavours by his flatmate, Dr John Watson, a war veteran who is equipped with skills learned in Afghanistan's battlefields. As Holmes continues to effortlessly solve mysteries, his nemesis, the devious and amoral Moriarty, plots for the detective's denunciation and elimination.

As is to be expected, mysteries abound in *Sherlock*. These are neatly wrapped within modern views of personality and relationships. The series offers perspectives on masculinity and belonging, and the concepts of trust, manipulation and vanity. Audiences are also invited to consider the fundamental philosophical question of whether we are principally the products of our genetic potential or our lived experiences.

## ***Stranger Things* (TV series) — the Duffer Brothers**

Created by Matt and Ross Duffer, this popular four-season television series, which first aired in 2016, is set in the fictional town of Hawkins, Indiana, during the 1980s.

The action centres around Will, Dustin, Mike and Lucas, a group of young friends who love riding their bicycles and playing Dungeons and Dragons. When Will disappears the rest of the group meets and befriends Eleven, a psychokinetic 'changeling' who has somehow entered their world. It becomes apparent that a nearby laboratory that has ostensibly been researching energy is also experimenting with the paranormal, leading to the accidental creation of a portal to an alternate dimension. With Eleven's help, the friends resolve to find Will and bring the perpetrators of his disappearance to justice.

Balancing humour with drama, *Stranger Things* meshes the natural world with the complex world of science fiction. As well as the multitude of existential questions associated with this genre,



the series offers audiences a multi-dimensional exploration of the concepts of acceptance and belonging, courage and teamwork.

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

Directed by Daniel Gordon, this documentary explores belonging, race and identity in Australian society by casting a microscope on our national relationship with sport, especially Australian Rules football.

While a range of voices, including journalist Stan Grant, ex-footballers Gilbert McAdam and Michael O'Loughlin, and former Sydney Swans coach John Longmire, illustrate what life can be like for well-known First Nations Australians, the film's primary focus is Adam Goodes, an Adnyamathanha and Narungga man and the 2014 Australian of the Year, whose mother was a member of the Stolen Generations. Throughout the documentary, Goodes shares his story about his time as a national sportsman and his experiences of living in the media and public spotlight in Australia in a format that includes interviews, news and sporting event footage.

*The Australian Dream* is a powerful film that offers perspectives on cultural expression and identity, kinship and community, implied and overt racism, and national efforts at justice, inclusion and reconciliation. The film also invites audiences to consider key concepts such as the effects of intergenerational trauma, and sport's role in Australian life.

## ***The Dressmaker* — Jocelyn Moorhouse**

**Introduced to list — start of 2026**

*The Dressmaker*, released in 2015, is a film adaptation of a Rosalie Ham novel. The film is a hybrid genre, combining a revenge drama and gothic comedy with fairytale elements and styled as an Australian Western. It explores small town secrets and prejudices in a uniquely idiosyncratic manner.

Tilly Dunnage returns to the squalid town of Dungatar, her former home. She had been removed as a ten-year-old for allegedly murdering the town bully. Tilly is ostensibly there to look after her destitute mother, but her presence disrupts the comfortably corrupt status quo and her creativity as a dressmaker revitalises the town's eccentric, self-absorbed population. As the truth of the past is uncovered, Tilly strikes back against the cruel and boorish people who once victimised her.

*The Dressmaker* includes blackly comic moments alongside instances of abuse, violence and sexism. This is a film about transformation, whether temporary through shifting appearance or attitude, or permanent through the offering of love or its counterpoint, retribution. The familiar motif of the formerly disempowered but righteous outsider challenging conservative and morally compromised authority figures, drives the action. As an exploration of power and gender roles in groups and communities, or as stimulus for study around the concept of Australian identity, *The Dressmaker* could be highly effective.

## ***The Quiet Girl* — Colm Bairéad**

**Introduced to list — start of 2026**

Set in rural Ireland during the early 1980s and based on the novella *Foster*, by Claire Keegan, *The Quiet Girl* is a hauntingly beautiful work.

The film tells the gently moving story of an isolated and traumatised pre-adolescent girl, Cáit, who leaves the harshness and chaos of her dysfunctional home to spend a summer with her mother's cousin, Eibhlín, and her taciturn farmer husband, Seán. While Eibhlín is immediately

loving and keen to include Cáit in the day-to-day business of running the household, Seán is less welcoming. But when Cáit wanders away from the farm, he acknowledges his responsibilities and a strong, beautifully realised relationship begins.

From the impact of the setting to the masterful framing of shots, authentic characters, complementary musical score and interesting blend of both Irish and English dialogue, *The Quiet Girl* offers much scope for study. It is powerful in conveying the devastating impact of childhood trauma but, equally, the capacity of kindness, love and compassion to heal. Nominated in the Best International Film category at the 2023 Academy Awards, the film richly deserves all the critical acclaim it has received.

## ***Tsotsi* — Gavin Hood**

South African director Gavin Hood's film was the winner of the 2006 Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film. *Tsotsi*, an adaptation of a novel by writer Athol Fugard, tells the story of a young, aggressive criminal whose life is transformed by his encounter with a child.

David is a young man who, as a child, ran away from home to escape an abusive father and grew up on the streets of Johannesburg. As an adult, he is a gang leader who goes by the name of Tsotsi, meaning 'thug'. When one of the group murders a man during a routine mugging on a train and Tsotsi exacts a violent retribution, he is ejected from the gang. Determined to prove his legitimacy, Tsotsi steals a woman's car, only to find after driving some distance that there is a baby in the back seat. His ensuing struggle to look after the child and his encounter with a young mother who awakens, in him, memories of his own childhood, convince Tsotsi to risk his freedom to return the baby to its parents.

As well as being an unflinching portrayal of the horrors of life in a South African slum, the film explores the causes and consequences of anti-social behaviour, ultimately denouncing nihilism as the answer to prolonged physical and psychological pain. Like the titular character, *Tsotsi* moves beyond its raw, hard edges to advocate for atonement, moral transformation and spiritual succour.

## ***Uproar* — Paul Middleditch and Hamish Bennett**

### **Introduced to list — start of 2026**

This humorous and heartfelt coming-of-age drama was released in New Zealand in 2023. The story of seventeen-year-old biracial Josh presents the struggle of an individual trying to find his own voice and a nation still trying to work out how to assimilate its many diverse parts.

The plot is entertaining, with many recognisable tropes. In Dunedin in 1981, Josh is an outsider, the only student with a Māori heritage in the sports-obsessed St Gilbert's School for Men, which acts as a microcosm for wider society. Lonely and marginalised, he is integrated into a drama club where his talents are revealed and celebrated. This sets Josh on a path of self-discovery, backgrounded by the divisive protests against the 1981 Springboks rugby tour of New Zealand. In connecting more cogently with the Māori community, Josh is better able to determine his convictions and reframe his life.

*Uproar* is a film of great warmth and considerable insights into the impacts of racism at a personal and political level. The awkwardness of moving from adolescence to adulthood, the expectations on young people to conform to predetermined stereotypes, and the challenges of single parenthood are additional themes. The film is a worthwhile addition to that expanding group of texts using the voices of youth to explore the ways that individuals and communities can negotiate their multiracial identity.

# ***We Are Still Here* — various directors**

## **Introduced to list — start of 2026**

*We Are Still Here* was released in 2022 as a joint venture between Australian and New Zealand creators and has since screened at festivals across the world. The film is a multi-generic anthology of eight short pieces from ten directors, spliced without reference to chronology or style to form a holistic 'response to 250 years of colonisation'.

The initial sequence, an animated work that highlights the impact of the arrival of British ships to the Pacifica in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the difficulties for indigenous people caught between traditional and modern worlds provide the film's story arc. Other historical narratives centre on frontier violence in Australia, the 1864 Battle of Ōrākau between Māori tribes and British soldiers, the disenfranchisement of indigenous soldiers serving an Imperial Army in World War I, and the unchecked brutality of police towards protesters during the 1981 Springbok Tour. These are intertwined with contemporary pieces that explore the ongoing Australia Day controversy and a futuristic film that imagines a dystopian world of indigenous slavery.

The mosaic structure of this film could be seen as disjointed, however the strength of *We Are Still Here* lies in its themes' universality. The fragments of the form are made coherent by the exploration of the process and consequences of subjugation and dislocation, the struggle for recognition and the intergenerational effects of trauma. Language is depicted as both an alienating phenomenon and one that can eliminate barriers, and violence, presented in an uncompromising manner, becomes a motif for the struggle for selfhood. The film does ultimately provide a message of hope in its recognition and promotion of resilience, love, connection and kinship.

# Poets

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Options by poet.

## Ali Alizadeh

Iranian-born writer and academic Ali Alizadeh migrated to Australia with his family as a teenager, having won a literary award at the tender age of thirteen. His poems, which have been widely anthologised, are often reflective of his formative years in the Islamic Republic of Iran and the linguistic, social and cultural challenges he faced as an adolescent migrant.

In poems such as 'Your Terrorist' and 'We', for example, Alizadeh powerfully conveys the outsiders' perspective and their struggle to move from the margins in societies where inequality is perpetuated, and foreigners are demonised. 'The Lecture Last Night' and 'Evening Star' explore, in differing ways, the existential emptiness inherent in succumbing to a Western, capitalist lifestyle, while the raw and witty poem, 'Listening to Michael Jackson in Tehran', focuses on the persistence of cultural and social division between societies that struggle or decline to understand each other.

Alizadeh has a wonderfully inventive and original turn of phrase, and his work offers fresh perspectives on concepts such as migration, war, spirituality, globalism and identity.

## 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 culture. The experiences of reuniting with her Aboriginal family and finding her previously adopted son and her birth mother provided a profound recalibration, and 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.

Her poetry has a moving, elegiac quality and deals poignantly with cultural dislocation and loss of identity, highlighting the continuity of Aboriginal cultures and their unique connections to place and land. Works such as 'Unearth' and 'Trance' reinforce the importance of ancestral and family connections, 'Oombulgarri' depicts the tragedy of loss and dislocation via the image of an empty town, and 'Leaves' reflects on the poet's relationship between the natural world and her personal and cultural identity.

Eckermann addresses social, cultural, political and historical issues in Australia by drawing on her own experiences and background. She invokes poetic traditions and elements of Aboriginal storytelling to connect past, present and future in works that can whisper, and shout.

## Amanda Gorman

**Introduced to list — start of 2026**

When the Romantic poet, John Keats, tragically died at the age of 25 it is estimated that just a few hundred people had read his work. When poet, activist and model, Amanda Gorman, was the same age, millions had heard or read her work.

Gorman published her first anthology at just 17 years of age. At 22, she caught the attention of a vast global audience with her visually and aurally dazzling performance of 'The Hill We Climb' at the 2021 inauguration ceremony for American President Joe Biden. A month later, she became

the first poet to appear at a Super Bowl when, via a pre-recorded video, she performed 'Chorus of the Captains'.

Using media platforms such as Instagram and X, and tackling important contemporary topics including human rights, climate change and racial identity, Gorman is a powerful and influential communicator to youth audiences. Her spoken word style, electrifying performances, credentials as a social activist and the unerring message of hope that underpins her poetry work in combination to make her a remarkably appealing and accessible writer for students.

## Bruce Dawe

Australian poet Bruce Dawe's extensive writing career spanned six decades. Euphemistically referred to as 'the suburban poet', his work has been a staple in Australia's English classrooms for its honesty, 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 Australian soldiers returning from Vietnam ('Homecoming'), the Victorian obsession with AFL ('Life Cycle'), the emptiness of consumerism ('Enter Without So Much As Knocking'), the hard-edged prejudices of a drill sergeant ('Weapons Training'), or the tragedy of ingrained poverty ('Drifters'), the poet unerringly captures the essence of human experience.

Dawe's poems range in style from traditional to modernist. His work is notable for its wry humour and empathetic expression of his acute social conscience as he brings his discerning critical eye to a broad range of social, political and cultural situations, and provides both recognisable and unusual perspectives.

## 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.

Duffy has been a major voice in world poetry for many years. A prolific writer, her poems include, 'Anne Hathaway', a cleverly worded sonnet written from the point of view of Shakespeare's wife, 'In Mrs Tilscher's Class', a paean which fondly recalls a loving teacher and the safety of the pre-adolescent classroom cocoon, 'Syntax', a playful work about ways in which we might choose to declare our love, and 'Warming her Pearls', a subtle, character-driven poem about the class divide and forbidden love.

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 was a creative trailblazer. A fiercely independent thinker, she experimented with voice, form and style to produce an extraordinary body of work. Dickinson wrote nearly 1800 poems over her lifetime, although few were published until after her death.

Most of her works are titled by their delightfully quirky and memorable opening lines. Some notable examples include, 'I'm Nobody! Who are you?', about the pleasures of being and staying anonymous, 'Hope is the Thing with Feathers', an affirmation of the presence and longevity of hope in the human soul, 'I felt a Funeral, in my Brain', in which the poet contemplates the loss of

reason, and 'Because I could not Stop for Death', which suggests that our inevitable demise and whatever awaits us should not be feared.

Dealing with identity, desire, nature, suffering and death, Dickinson writes with great insight and stunning originality. Her poetry is easily recognised because of its idiosyncratic styling, especially her playful use of punctuation and rhyme. Interestingly, and no doubt appropriately, the epitaph on her gravestone was composed by the poet herself and is comprised of only two words: 'called back'.

## 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.

Keats' verse typically celebrates artistic endeavour, the power of the imagination, and the wonders of the natural world, but also highlights the harshness of human existence at that time, and the brevity of life that was the fate of many people. Some examples of his works are 'Ode to a Nightingale', a meditation on transience and death, 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci', a ballad about the potential perils of love, 'Ode to a Grecian Urn', an enigmatic exploration of art and truth, and 'On First Looking into Chapman's Homer', in which Keats revels in the transformative power of literature.

Intensely personal and exquisitely crafted, the poems of John 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 and explored multiple perspectives. Wright celebrated the natural world, highlighting the distinctive beauty of Australia's geography, flora and fauna. Her poems spoke for women, offering an incisive female perspective on relationships, love and intimacy, and highlighted the injustices Australia's First Nations people faced after colonisation.

Well-known examples of Wright's work include, 'Woman to Child', which meditates on the interconnectedness of a mother and her newborn, 'Metho Drinker', about alienation and death as a release from a meaningless life, 'Bora Ring', in which the poet reflects on post-colonial cultural displacement, 'South of my Days', depicting a desolate but resilient landscape, and 'The Surfer', a vividly realised poem about our relationship with Nature, and its strength and wonder.

As an insightful critic, social activist and writer, Wright made an invaluable contribution to the intellectual and sociocultural fabric of our country.

## Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner

Born in the Marshall Islands, Kathy Jentil-Kijiner is a contemporary poet, performer and educator. Often bringing her poems to life through multimedia presentations, she shares the stories and legends of her culture, and warns of the impending impacts of climate change and the continuing disadvantages political disempowerment poses to her nation. A passionate advocate for the Pacific nations and for the environment, Jentil-Kijiner 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.

Examples of Jentil-Kijiner's poetry include, 'Dear Matafele Peinem', a work, written to her daughter, that depicts the climate and political threats to her homeland but also the resilience of her people, 'Tell Them', a lyrical polemic about physical and cultural displacement, 'Grounded', a poem that unites Marshallese mythology with the difficult work done by frontline workers such as nurses and doctors, and 'Monster', about the horrors of US nuclear testing.

Kathy Jentil-Kijiner is an innovative writer and blogger whose powerful work and messaging is likely to resonate strongly with a youth audience.

## Kirli Saunders

Gunai woman Kirli Saunders is a writer, artist, speaker and educator who has been involved in creative initiatives such as a collaborative visual poetry project with the unifying theme of decolonising identity, and a project that 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 people.

She is a prolific writer who works across a range of forms and audiences. Examples of her poetry include, 'Mother', a lyrical work about the indigenous connection to Country, 'Petals', linking the perfect structure of flowers to love, 'Hard Learning', about the wisdom that elders in Aboriginal culture provide, and 'Aftermath', in which the poet reminds us that, as with bushfires, new life will always follow destruction.

Saunders' verse is deceptively simple and always evocative. Her work offers perspectives on connectedness, love, identity, language, cultural heritage, and nature.

## Luka Lesson

Born and raised in Brisbane, Greek–Australian performance poet, rapper and hip-hop artist, Luka Haralampou, whose professional name is Luka Lesson, showcases the power of spoken word poetry. Lesson's connection with his audience is charismatic and tangible. He is an engaging writer and performer who recognises the potential of his art to empower, question, challenge, teach and liberate.

The poet's work varies from poems such as 'Raising Consciousness' and 'Hy/ide Park', both written specifically for students and focusing on the importance of having a voice and using it with integrity, to 'Yiayia', a tribute to his beloved grandmother's commonsense approach to life. Other poems include, 'A Letter to my Daughter', in which Lesson mounts a critique of men who adhere to domineering masculinist stereotypes, and 'What Will Become of Us?', a lyrical work in which Nature's longevity is contrasted with the human appetite for manipulation and destruction.

Luka Lesson is an activist poet who seeks to give voice to the marginalised. His work is passionate, linguistically deft and highly skilled.

## Robert Browning

A master exponent of the dramatic monologue, Robert Browning produced a significant body of work in his lifetime, including an epic 21 000-line poem, *The Ring and the Book*. Reflecting the Victorian predilection for horror, his best works were darkly humorous commentaries on the social and political mores of Victorian England. He was active in his liberalism, supporting women's rights and deploring slavery.

Browning was masterful at creating and psychologically manipulating his characters. In 'My Last Duchess', a duke uses a painting of his former wife as the catalyst for a boastful narrative about his sexism and ruthlessness. In 'The Laboratory', a scorned wife instructs an apothecary on the correct blend for the poison that she will use to kill her husband's lover, while in 'Porphyria's Lover', Browning explores, with chilling precision, a Victorian version of coercive control.

In these and other similar works, Browning captures the unsettling voices of individuals who are driven by dark desires. His well-crafted verse artfully combines gothic elements with compelling storytelling.

## 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.

Frost's affinity with nature, his skill as an observer of ordinary life, his conversational style, and his ability to find profound meaning in everyday events, enabled him to appeal to a wide audience. Many of his works are deeply embedded in the American psyche such as 'The Road Not Taken', about fate and self-determination, 'Mending Wall', about whether barriers, physical or figurative, debilitate or enhance relationships, 'Out, Out –', an exploration of a community's response to tragedy, and 'Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening', a poem in which the flowing, structural simplicity contrasts with the poet's hints that his beautiful environment is potentially dangerous.

Simultaneously accessible and enigmatic, Frost's technically adroit and thoughtful 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, 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 Southeast Queensland during the Bjelke-Petersen era. 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.

Examples of Wagan Watson's poetic works include, 'Gas Tank Sonnets', a humorous account of the poet's journey from Byron Bay to Brisbane and his desire to be a writer, 'Hotel Bone', a wry and incisive mockery of modern politics, and 'Cloud Burst' — dedicated to TS Eliot — in which a mother-child relationship adds poignancy to the imagining of a nuclear wasteland.

Wagan Watson's poetry offers perspectives on identity, politics, place, childhood, heritage, love, and life in contemporary Australia. Infused with lived experience, it is unpretentious, unrestrained, direct and memorable.

## Sylvia Plath

Sylvia Plath was a gifted, idiosyncratic writer who blazed a unique poetic trail at a time when men commanded and operated the dominant American and European literary worlds. She was an alchemist, able to take hold of material that was intensely personal and private, and turn it into compelling, cathartic art.

There is a transparency, vulnerability and fearlessness about Plath's poetry that draws people to her work. Among many fine examples are 'Lady Lazarus', a grimly personal but darkly witty reflection on death and resurrection, 'Daddy', a difficult and controversial depiction of a traumatic father-child relationship, 'Morning Song', a poem of startling imagery in which a mother must tend to her newborn, 'Waking in Winter', in which Plath uses a bleak vision of a post-nuclear world as a metaphor for human disconnection, and 'Tulips', a lyrical confessional poem about Plath's time in hospital and her fragile mental state.

Sylvia Plath's intensely autobiographical work, with its elemental and often brutal imagery, continues to reverberate with readers. The precision with which she depicted and analysed her life provides a rewarding study across perspectives such as womanhood, familial relationships, mental despair and loneliness.

## WB Yeats

Like many great writers, Nobel Prize-winning Irish poet and dramatist William Butler Yeats spent a lifetime responding to shifting personal, sociocultural and historical influences. His early work tended towards lyricism as he followed his interests in mythology and transcendentalism. Later, Yeats became more politicised — even serving as a senator — and his poetry reflected this shift of priorities.

Some examples of his best work are 'Sailing to Byzantium', in which Yeats' fascination with mysticism is clearly evident, 'Second Coming', which showcases his Modernist period, 'An Irish Airman Foresees His Death', in which the forces of Irish nationalism are evident, and 'Long-Legged Fly', reflecting the poet's recognition of silence as being crucial to the creative process and the nurturing of great minds.

As he evolved as a writer, Yeats 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 concepts and styles.

## Wilfred Owen

Like Keats, a writer he greatly admired, English anti-war poet, Wilfred Owen, produced an extraordinary body of work within a very brief period.

Arriving on the Western Front at the beginning of 1917, Owen quickly realised that 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 debilitating fear, horror and sense of abandonment frontline soldiers experienced daily. He did this by writing poems such as 'Anthem for Doomed Youth', which likened the experience of soldiers to that of cattle being prepared for slaughter, 'Dulce et Decorum Est', in which Owen uses frighteningly vivid imagery to depict madness and death in the trenches, and 'Insensibility', a strident polemic about the lifelong psychological trauma that is inflicted on soldier survivors.

Owen's poems were characterised by heart-rending honesty and indelible, uncompromising imagery. They continue to speak powerfully for a generation of young men whose lives were recklessly squandered.



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