

Annotations

Literature prescribed texts — from 2023 to the end of 2025

Text selection

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

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

Cultural notice on spellings

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

Text categories

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

- [External assessment texts — p. 2](#)
- [Novels and prose texts — p. 6](#)
- [Plays and drama texts — p. 18](#)
- [Film and television/multimodal texts — p. 26](#)
- [Poetry — p. 33](#)

External assessment texts

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

***Catch-22* — Joseph Heller**

Moves to EA list from general list — start of 2023

American writer Joseph Heller (1923–1999), specialised in novels that satirised what he saw as the absurdity of 20th century Western civilisation. *Catch-22*, first published in 1961, is the best known of these novels.

The central character, Yossarian, a bombardier in World War II, is an antihero who simply wants to stay alive. The novel relentlessly mocks the military bureaucracy that, rather than facilitate Yossarian's desire, makes his death and those of his compatriots, all the more probable.

***In Cold Blood* — Truman Capote**

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

American writer Truman Capote wrote *In Cold Blood* after reading about the 1959 murders of four members of a well-respected farming family in the small town of Holcomb, Kansas.

As an investigative nonfiction work written in a fictional manner, *In Cold Blood* is generally accepted as the first novel to embrace the new journalism genre, also known as narrative or literary journalism. The plot is a reconstruction of the actions of the two perpetrators, Smith and Hickock, beginning with their release from prison through to the murders and their subsequent flight, confession and execution.

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***King Lear* — William Shakespeare**

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

Shakespeare's *King Lear*, published in 1606, is set in ancient Britain and explores the complexities that exist around roles and responsibilities of succession. Lear's decision to divide his kingdom among his three daughters at the beginning of the play has far-reaching consequences.

A structural point of interest is the inclusion of a subplot involving the Earl of Gloucester and his two sons Edmund and Edgar. In parallel to Lear's relationship with his children, Gloucester also falters in wisdom by trusting his illegitimate and scheming son over his 'legitimate' son, Edgar.

The climax of this dark play sees the once imposing king reduced to a frail old man.

***Mrs Dalloway* — Virginia Woolf**

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

Virginia Woolf's stream-of-consciousness novel, first published in 1925, is set in London in the summer of 1923 and takes place over a single day. The reader is absorbed into post-war British life via direct and unfiltered access to the thoughts and impressions of the novel's upper-class

protagonist, Clarissa Dalloway, and an oppositional character, the traumatised war veteran, Septimus Smith.

The novel is constructed as a collection of interior monologues ungoverned by chronology. Dialogue is both direct and reported, with little distinction between the two, and Woolf is able to imbue ordinary moments and objects with significant symbolic value.

***That Deadman Dance* — Kim Scott**

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

Wirloomin Noongar writer Kim Scott's novel *That Deadman Dance* is set around 1826 during the early days of European colonisation of Noongar peoples' Country along the south coast of Western Australia. Winner of the 2011 Miles Franklin Literary Award, the novel uses a nonlinear structure with flashbacks, and is shaped by Scott's historical research of the period and the connection of the Noongar peoples' story with the early whaling industry story.

The protagonist, young Noongar man Bobby Wabalanginy, befriends English and American arrivals, and the story unfolds via a mixture of third-, second- and first-person narrative, offering perspectives from both the coloniser and the colonised. Adaptable to change, Bobby learns to read and write the language of the settlers and joins them on their whaling trips. He has an inventive character and creates songs and dance in a mixture of English and Noongar language.

***The Tempest* — William Shakespeare**

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

The Tempest, first performed in 1611, is Shakespeare's final play, and often depicted as his farewell to the stage. The action of the play is driven by the omnipotent character of Prospero, a usurped Milanese noble who uses magic and illusion against his former tormentors.

The Tempest is set on an unnamed island in the Mediterranean and Shakespeare separates his characters according to their roles as either native to, or invasive of, that space. In line with this, the action of the play occurs as a series of opposing scenes set within the twin hemispheres of the island; only at the end do the characters properly intersect.

***The Poisonwood Bible* — Barbara Kingsolver**

Retires from EA list, moves to general list at end of 2024

American writer Barbara Kingsolver's novel *The Poisonwood Bible* (1998) is set over three decades and tells the story of a missionary family who move from Georgia, USA to the Belgian Congo in 1959. While Nathan Price, the father and a preacher, is the dominant force behind the family's relocation, the story is told from the perspectives of the five Price women, highlighting their struggles as they try to make ends meet and survive in the remote village of Kilanga.

There is an absence of flushing toilets, machine-washed clothes, the terror of Mobutu's reign and crocodiles in the river that Nathan Price insists on using for baptism. The Price women are unsettled and overwhelmed, while Nathan is zealous in his determination to convert the villagers to Christianity and a Western way of life against the backdrop of Congolese independence.

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

***Wuthering Heights* — Emily Brontë**

Introduced to EA list for first time in 2023

English writer Emily Brontë's only novel, *Wuthering Heights*, was published in 1847. It is set in the bleak West Yorkshire Moors and tells the story of two families embroiled in an intergenerational conflict which echoes across the decades with far-reaching consequences. Central to this story is the thwarted love between Heathcliff and Catherine and the feud between the two families of Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange — the Earnshaws and the Lintons.

***Hamlet* — William Shakespeare**

Introduced to EA list for first time — start of 2024

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

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

***Terra Nullius* — Claire G Coleman**

Introduced to EA list for first time — start of 2024

Noongar writer Claire G Coleman's acclaimed work of speculative fiction, *Terra Nullius* (2017), is set in an Australia in the future. It is a story that takes readers on a journey of survival through the interwoven stories of a number of characters, including Jacky, who escapes a settler mission in search of his family.

The novel opens with Jacky fleeing into unfamiliar terrain, knowing that settlers and skilled trackers of his own kind will be in pursuit and that they will be travelling more easily and swiftly. His journey is long and fraught, filled with hardships and battles for survival. Part way through the narrative, the novel takes an unexpected direction.

Other characters whose stories intersect with Jacky's include Sergeant Rohan, the leader of the group in pursuit of Jacky, Johnny Star, an ex-trooper and outlaw, and Esperance, a young woman trying to protect her own group from enslavement.

***Beloved* — Toni Morrison**

Introduced to EA list for first time — start of 2025

Winner of the 1988 Pulitzer Prize for fiction, African-American author Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, is set after the American Civil War in Ohio, and is about the legacy of slavery. It is a story of escape from slavery, recapture and then escape again.

Almost immediately, the reader is introduced via flashbacks to the history of the plantation 'Sweet Home' where Sethe, the novel's central protagonist, and Paul D, were both enslaved. Their shared history unites them, connecting the past and the present. The present is set in the house at 124 Bluestone Road where Sethe lives with her teenage daughter Denver. This is where the mysterious Beloved is introduced to the narrative.

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***Stasiland* — Anna Funder**

Introduced to EA list for first time — start of 2025

Using a mixture of historical facts, personal narrative and the lived experiences of others, Australian writer Anna Funder's hybrid nonfiction work, *Stasiland* (2003), chronicles the testimonies of East Berliners who lived inside the Stasi (secret police) surveillance state, with the Berlin Wall looming large in their stories.

The book begins with Funder's autobiographical account of her boss refusing to allow her to collect the East German stories, and the decision she makes to push past this. As Funder gathers personal histories from a variety of individuals who describe what it was like to live in a tightly controlled society where everyone's movements were watched by both citizens and enforcers of the totalitarian regime, she becomes subject to the residual effects of this history herself.

Novels and prose texts

***Anna Karenina* — Leo Tolstoy**

Russian writer Leo Tolstoy (1828–1910) is regarded as one of the world's foremost exponents of literary realism, a movement which developed in response to the Romanticism of the 18th century. *Anna Karenina*, first published in 1878, is shaped against a background of the tensions that were inherent in Russia's stratified society, the divisions that existed between rural and city life, and the dynamism of relationships within and outside of families. The reader is encouraged to accept the story for what it is, and make their own decisions as to the rightness or wrongness of the characters' actions.

The novel is twice the average length and contains multiple plots. The main narrative concerns the titular character, Anna, and her illicit relationship with a rich noble. In exploring the parameters of this doomed liaison, Tolstoy reveals the stifling pressures placed on women by the social norms of the time, many of which were linked to the moral coding of the Russian Orthodox Church. Anna's tragic fate can be seen as representative of the classic displacement story, whereby a character is ostracised and ultimately condemned by the unyielding social norms of their world.

A study of this novel will reward those who are interested in the impacts of social and political hierarchies on the individual, and the moral conflicts that occur when passion clashes with social expectations.

***Art Objects* (essay collection) — Jeanette Winterson**

Winterson is a British author and critic whose work has centred on issues that can be broadly grouped beneath the concept of social justice: the treatment of the poor, gender disparities, identity and the difficult but dynamic relationship that exists between humans and technology.

In the ten essays that comprise *Art Objects* (1995), Winterson reflects on the importance of art and literature in giving us new ways of understanding our world. Candid in her arguments, she asks readers and viewers not to shy away from difficult texts because it is in the consideration of the aesthetic — comfortable or not — that we learn more about ourselves, and the various ways that we might understand reality. This contention is supported by her choices of literary targets in the essays: she interrogates the Victorians, considers what was lost from the Romantics, questions the realism of Dickens and details the transformative power of Virginia Woolf. She is also prepared to confront perennial philosophical questions such as: what is art and what is its purpose, and why is it necessary to a full and worthwhile life?

This provocative collection provides opportunities for critical thinking about the nature of art and literature, and how these fit into modern lives.

***Bleak House* — Charles Dickens**

Bleak House, published as a serial between 1852 and 1853, was Dickens' ninth novel and typified his desire to use the narrative form as a way of criticising the social, economic and cultural prejudices inherent in Victorian England. The novel offers a scathing account of corruptions in the legal system and the concerns raised by the novel provided impetus for later legal reforms. *Bleak House* also features a murder subplot and, as such, is regarded as a precursor to the modern detective fiction genre.

As with all Dickens' novels, the reader can expect a vast array of characters from multiple social levels operating within a complex structure that intertwines the main narrative with a series of subplots, many of which feature minor characters.

***Carpentaria* — Alexis Wright**

Wright, an Australian writer and academic, is a member of the Waanyi nation in the Gulf of Carpentaria. Her fiction and nonfiction writing are characterised by her uncompromising interrogation of the social, cultural and political experiences of Australia's First Nations people.

Carpentaria, which won multiple literary prizes including the 2007 Miles Franklin Award, is set in a coastal town called Desperance. The narrative details the friction, both historical and recent, that exists between an array of strongly drawn characters, especially that caused by the establishment of a multinational mining company on sacred land.

The novel's structure is unconventional and nonlinear, a series of character-based stories that are interconnected by the core issues of the text. The writing is energetic and imaginative, and Wright moves fluidly through a range of tones and styles, invoking irony, anger, humour and violence.

Carpentaria offers a complex, layered and lyrical exploration of identity, resilience and the power of storytelling.

Collections of essays by John Gardner

Gardner (1993–1982) was an American author and teacher of fiction writing. His novels were innovative in style and frequently experimental: *Grendel* is a retelling of the mythical story of Beowulf told from the point of view of the monster, and *October Light* — about a difficult sibling relationship — contains, within the narrative, an invented novel that is read by the characters.

Gardner was also the author of well-regarded teaching texts, *The Art of Fiction* and *On Becoming a Novelist*. A number of his critical essays and incisive, wryly humorous responses to the work of other authors were gathered into an anthology, *On Writers and Writing*. In their acute analysis of American literature, these essays aptly demonstrate Gardner's overarching belief that the salient purpose of fiction is the depiction and dissection of modern moralities. As such, the essays provide multiple ideas for discussion of the craft of creative writing.

***Foreign Soil* (collection of short stories) — Maxine Beneba Clarke**

Introduced to list for first time — start of 2023

Maxine Beneba Clarke is an Australian writer and performance poet with Afro–Caribbean heritage, and author of the memoir *The Hate Race*. Beneba Clarke's *Foreign Soil*, a collection of short stories that focuses on the experiences of marginalised groups and individuals, in contexts ranging from New Orleans, Jamaica and Brixton to suburban Melbourne, has won numerous literary awards and was shortlisted for the 2015 Stella Prize.

Written with great empathy, each story captures characters' struggles with upheaval and cultural exile, and the collection as a whole explores the complexities of belonging and hope, intergenerational struggles of being an outsider in society, and the ongoing challenges of race and class. Beneba Clarke's writing in this collection of short stories is colourful, confronting and poetic, and deeply affecting.

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

***Heart of Darkness* — Joseph Conrad**

Conrad (1857–1924) was a Polish–English writer whose works are characterised by a strong sense of place and the isolation of a character within a foreign environment.

Heart of Darkness, first published in 1899, follows this trend to tell the story of Marlow, a steamboat sailor who goes to Africa and becomes disenchanted with the moral, physical and psychological havoc that has ensued from colonial occupation. Conrad uses Marlow’s confronting experiences, and the onset of insanity in his counterpoint character Kurtz, to mount a critique of the imperialist and racist attitudes that he saw as both fuelling and undermining colonial expansion. The novel invites readers to see that being alienated from society leads to the collapse of social constraints and raises questions about imperialism and notions of civilisation.

Debate about how *Heart of Darkness* represents Africa, race, gender and colonialism is extensive and ongoing.

***Life After Life* — Kate Atkinson**

Kate Atkinson is a contemporary British writer. *Life After Life* was published in 2013 and won numerous awards. The novel tells the story of Ursula Todd who undergoes a series of lives, initially dying at birth in 1910, then becoming a child who drowns at sea and later a victim of the Spanish flu, an abusive husband and a bomb in World War II. When Ursula realises that she is experiencing a repetitive cycle of lives, she decides to try and prevent the war by killing Adolf Hitler.

The writing in *Life After Life* is evocative and often comic. The novel’s structure supports its unusual premise by constantly looping back from the darkness of death to restart Ursula’s life. The question of whether Ursula’s experiences are real or imagined will potentially provoke an interrogation of concepts centred around the nature of human existence. The novel also offers interesting perspectives on the lives of ordinary people during extraordinary historical junctures, the developing social status of women during the first half of the 20th century, and the English class system.

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***Like a House on Fire* (collection of short stories) — Cate Kennedy**

Introduced to list for first time — start of 2023

Cate Kennedy is an Australian writer whose short stories detail the minutiae of everyday life. Her rich, specific, and evocative language choices invite insight into the moments after a disaster.

In this 2012 collection that reveals the sorrow and joy of human connection, Kennedy provides distinct, but never overwhelming, Australian views on personal tragedies through a variety of perspectives. Her self-contained stories bring the smallest moments to life, whether they be a mother dropping her child off to daycare, a father’s dismay at being unable to provide, taking a

family portrait, or the ritual of a soured relationship. Her narratives are tightly written with each narrative arc clearly suited to the protagonist’s characterisation. Kennedy’s portrayal of the invisible work of coping and the consequences of seemingly simple decisions provides a masterclass in realism.

***My Uncle Napoleon* — Iraj Pezeshkzad**

Pezeshkzad is an Iranian writer and translator with extensive experience in legal and political roles. Internationally, *My Uncle Napoleon*, published in 1973, is his best known and most acclaimed work. It was translated into English by Dick Davis in 1996.

The novel is a bildungsroman set in Tehran in the early 1940s. In detailing the experiences of an unnamed narrator and his often-farcical interactions with an extended cast of characters, Pezeshkzad is able to explore classic coming-of-age motifs such as the advent of first love and the unpredictable dynamics of large families. The novel is especially notable for its titular character, a tyrannical force of nature whose traditional beliefs provide the source of much of the conflict in the narrative, and for its creation of the beautiful garden setting and the three families whose lives revolve around it.

In *My Uncle Napoleon*, Pezeshkzad has used humour to satirise aspects of both Western and Persian society. The engaging story of the narrator’s unrequited love unravels over a bigger canvas of political and social intrigue that captures a country in transition.

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***Only the Animals* (linked collection of short stories) — Ceridwen Dovey**

Australian writer Ceridwen Dovey achieves a clever connective layering in *Only the Animals*. Published in 2014, each entry in the collection can be read as a single story but, as a whole, the structural connections between the stories of the prose text also provide an open, flexible opportunity for imaginative writing. Dovey’s work is a blend of fable and fantasy, a device she uses to explore the often violent and unthinking human animal in a gently satirical and ironic style.

Each of the ten stories proceeds in a linear timeframe, centred within a time of conflict, and is narrated posthumously by an animal who, in the tale of their dying, reveals profound judgments about human failings. Dovey employs aesthetic features with great skill: symbol, irony, sensory imagery and metaphor are woven delicately and purposefully throughout the tales. Her ability to find distinctive voices for each of her narrators — the loyal dog, the feisty mussel — and to weave these voices through multiple literary allusions adds power and depth to the narrative.

***Persuasion* — Jane Austen**

Persuasion is the last novel that Austen completed before her death in 1817, and 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 which uses humour and irony to make observations about the mores of the time. Set in the counties of South West 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 not. 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.

Short stories by Amy Witting

Amy Witting (1918–2001) was an Australian writer of novels, poetry and short stories. Like many writers, Witting obliquely uses her personal experiences as a source for fiction. For example, her stories frequently focus on the motif of survival, not surprising for someone whose childhood coincided with the Depression years. Witting, who was a teacher for many years, also writes convincingly about schools and childhood, language and communication, the isolation imposed by illness or mental health difficulties, the fluctuations inherent in marital relationships and the contrasts that exist between urban and outback life.

She is renowned for her understated writing style which invites a non-judgmental, compassionate approach to concept and character. Witting's acclaimed short stories are self-contained narratives with interesting perspectives, and examples of spare but elegant writing.

Short stories by Annie Proulx

Proulx is an American writer who specialises in stories set in rural locations with unique characters, many of whom struggle to fit into mainstream society. She is especially interested in depicting the trials of families with underlying dysfunctions.

Proulx's aesthetic is distinctive. Her stories are paced to be measured and reflective. She includes well-disguised plot twists and frequently uses vernacular language patterns that are common to the area in which the story is set.

Annie Proulx's stories of lonely people trapped in awkward situations are tender, whimsical, darkly comic and invariably created with great humanity.

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

Short stories by Edgar Allan Poe

Poe (1809–1849) was a prolific critic, poet and writer of stories and a key member of the Romantic movement in America.

His work was predominantly Gothic in style, exploring concepts related to the macabre and the unknown. He exploited the psychological flaws in his characters and led them inexorably towards often grisly fates. His narrative style combined the suspenseful plotting of detective fiction with the gritty aesthetic of horror writing.

Some of Poe's best known stories are: 'The Tell-Tale Heart', in which a nameless murderer tries to convince readers of his sanity, 'Murders in the Rue Morgue', a story which introduced the now standardised trope of the brilliant outsider as a detective, and 'The Cask of Amontillado', the tale of a horrific revenge. Typical of Poe's work, these stories are well-honed examples of classic,

Aristotelian structure. They also have the tonal directness and economy of detail that characterises the craft of short-form narrative writing.

Short stories by George Saunders

Introduced to list for first time — start of 2023

Saunders is an American professor of literature who specialises in writing and analysing short stories. Although they are significantly varied in terms of perspectives and technique, his own stories frequently focus on people who are alienated from mainstream society. Saunders' style is darkly comic and satirical: he uses a speculative approach to his fiction as a way of targeting sociopolitical concepts such as capitalism and the pervasive influence of the media. He creates settings which are both realistically recognisable and dystopian, and his stories often hinge on fantastical or magical possibility.

At the heart of Saunders' enticing and unusual narratives is the desire to mock those absurdities in life which work towards dehumanisation while championing our shared fallibilities and graces with an abundance of compassion.

Short stories by Ursula K Le Guin

Ursula K Le Guin (1929–2018) was an internationally acclaimed American writer whose realist, fantasy and science fiction offers an often deeply ironic commentary on contemporary attitudes, values and beliefs.

Her short stories are notable for their versatility of style and for the sharpness of their analysis of human behaviour. As a writer, Le Guin frequently used classical myths and legends, and biblical stories as sites for reinterpretation, especially around issues of gender roles and feminism.

At the heart of Le Guin's narratives lies the desire to initiate debate about the morality that underscores social and cultural decision-making. One of her best-known short stories, 'The Ones Who Walk Away From Omelas', creates a hypothetical but entirely believable society which exists on the premise that a single person's suffering is justifiable if the consequence of that suffering is the happiness of the majority. Le Guin does not seek to judge the ethics of such a situation: her stories pose questions and thus offer a multitude of ideas for analysis and reimagination.

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Snow Falling on Cedars — David Guterson

Introduced to list for first time — start of 2023

American writer David Guterson's 1994 novel *Snow Falling on Cedars* is set on the fictional Washington island of San Piedro in 1954, and tells the story of a Japanese citizen who has been charged with the murder of a well-regarded American fisherman. The trial of Kabuo Miyamoto forms the structure of the novel and operates as an extended motif for how truth may be intentionally or inadvertently misrepresented in order to privilege a preferred narrative.

Snow Falling on Cedars is notable for the author's use of an isolated, contained setting as a forum for the exploration of concepts such as justice, racism, the abrasions between the values of the East and the West, and the difficulty of maintaining a consistent individual conscience in the face of broader hostility. The novel offers opportunities to consider perspectives on estrangement and depersonalisation, seeing people as conceptually representative rather than as individuals.

Conflicting characters undergo parallel experiences as a way of highlighting the irony of their opposition, and Guterson utilises a range of narrative devices such as the symbolism of nature and the metaphor of place to highlight the unsteady nuances that exist around human self-perception and national identity. His novel is a finely wrought exploration of love and loss, betrayal and forgiveness.

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***Swallow the Air* — Tara June Winch**

Introduced to list for first time — start of 2023

Swallow the Air (2003) by Wiradjuri author Tara June Winch begins as a coming-of-age story that traces the personal growth of the main character, young Aboriginal woman May Gibson, as she moves from youth to early maturity. Early conventions of the genre appear when May's mother dies, leaving her alone with a brother who soon succumbs to drug addiction. However, when brave and resilient May undertakes her lengthy physical and moral journey, she is more focused on finding somewhere to belong than on her identity, and a conventional ending which successfully resolves the main character's problems is not offered to readers.

Nevertheless, May's story does end with a certain level of hope. She returns to the place where she began her journey and re-establishes meaningful connection with her aunt and her brother who has rebuilt his life.

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***The Complete Maus* (graphic novel — two volumes) — Art Spiegelman**

Spiegelman, an American cartoonist and writer, created *Maus* as a series of magazine chapters, later published as a duo of graphic novels, from interviews with his father, who had survived the Holocaust.

The Complete Maus (1980) is the story of how Spiegelman created the story, organised as a dual narrative that explores the disturbing experiences of his parents at Auschwitz, and Spiegelman's fractious relationship with his father and grief over his mother's death. The creator uses animal symbolism to depict humans from different nations as a way of highlighting the absurdity of ideological divisions. Text dominates the artwork, and the narrative includes moments of lightness amidst the poignancy and reflection.

Maus can be read as both a personal memoir and a commentary on concepts such as survival, guilt, suffering and family conflict. The graphic novels also explore the phenomenon known as post-memory, whereby the children of trauma survivors experience, intergenerationally, the effects of that trauma themselves.

***The Good People* — Hannah Kent**

Australian writer Hannah Kent often locates her narratives within obscure historical intersections as a way of exploring the lives of women.

The Good People (2016) immerses readers in the poverty and insularity of rural Ireland in the 18th century. The death of Nóra Leahy's husband marks a sinister shift in the balance of the community, and rumours of her hidden and ailing grandson feed anxieties that he has been harmed by otherworldly folk. The healing powers of Nance Roche, the old woman with 'the knowledge', become significant as the social fabric of the community is tested by encroaching systems of faith and urban governance.

Focusing on a remote setting allows Kent to depict the conflicts inherent within a community that is caught between superstition and traditional wisdom, and the arrival of Christianity with its adherence to formal education and patriarchal control. The narrative encourages an examination of how women are placed in society in relation to nature, knowledge, protection and safety, and — with wisdom and compassion — offers perspectives on the role of belief systems in maintaining communities.

This interesting and highly readable work is grounded in Kent's research of Irish traditions and the power of nature, and women, in healing.

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***The Labyrinth* — Amanda Lohrey**

Introduced to list for first time — start of 2023

The Labyrinth, a novel by Australian writer Amanda Lohrey and winner of the 2021 Miles Franklin Literary Award, offers an exploration of justice, family, forgiveness, the search for perfection, and art as a form of self-expression. Through the main character, Erica, the novel focuses on dysfunctional family relationships across two generations: her own as a child and later as a mother of her adult son, Daniel, who is imprisoned for arson and the killing of six people in the fire.

At the core of the novel is the labyrinth. Erica researches the many different versions of the labyrinth according to history, culture and purpose in her quest for settling on the perfect form for building one in her garden. After considering and discarding a number of them for different reasons, she meets Jurko, an undocumented immigrant and together they create their own entirely original shape and construct it by hand. While the story's focus switches from setting to setting and from Erica's relationships, the labyrinth remains central to the narrative.

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***The Man in the High Castle* — Philip K Dick**

Introduced to list for first time — start of 2023

American author Philip K Dick's *The Man in the High Castle* (1962) is a dystopian science-fiction alternative-history novel set in a world governed by the Axis powers (Japan and Germany) who defeat the Allies (Britain and America) in World War II and establish their own regimes by dividing

up the world's continents between them. Both are autocratic regimes. In Germany's zone, Hitler is insane, and incarcerated in a psychiatric institution, and his henchmen occupy the top echelons of government, imposing Nazi ideology and continuing their expansive domination of territory, but this time, on conquering other planets. In Japan's zone, society is ordered through strict codes and functionality, positioning Japanese as the highest class. The first half of the novel, focused on setting up the new world order, describes its politics.

Philip K Dick has created a world of order imbued with chaos, filled with delusion, suspicion and paranoia, where characters struggle to transition to learning to live within the rules. A blurring of reality, made worse as time progresses, presents questions about whose version of history can be trusted. This is amplified by *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy*, a book written by the man in the high castle, which explores the alternative outcome of the war, one dominated by the United States and Britain.

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

***The Meursault Investigation* — Kamel Daoud**

Introduced to list for first time — start of 2023

The Meursault Investigation (2013), set in Algeria, offers readers a retelling of *The Stranger* by Albert Camus. Algerian writer Kamel Daoud presents an alternative perspective of the 1942 murder in that novel, by creating a family for the murdered character from the original text — the 'nameless Arab' — and telling the story from the viewpoint of his brother, Huran.

Enraged by society's callous treatment of his brother and its denial of his identity and humanity, Huran as narrator takes readers into the harmful emotional impact this has had on him and his mother. As the murder occurs when Huran is a young boy, the event is pivotal to his development and has a lasting effect on his later life as an older man. He has an overwhelming sense of displacement and alienation as a result of this injustice and is constantly trying to make sense of his guilt, his mother's harshness and aloofness towards him, and the political landscape he inhabits.

This is a story about bereavement, complex mother-and-son relationships, colonialism and its effects, the power of language, justice that never eventuates, revenge, and retribution. It is a text that also invites reflections on remorse, identity, and existentialism.

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

Introduced to list for first time — start of 2023

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 the perspective of Penelope — Odysseus's previously silenced wife.

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 elements of the original myth, Atwood reshapes readers' perceptions of Penelope as the faithful and lonely Queen of Ithaca, creating within the novella a representation of a shrewder and more cunning woman than the one that appears in the Western canon. Serving to critique Penelope's recount, Atwood also gives

Penelope's twelve maids a 'voice' through an array of songs, scripts, and rhymes that add humour and ironic twists. 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 offer an examination of the complexities of truth-telling.

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

***The Picture of Dorian Gray* — Oscar Wilde**

Published in 1891, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is Irish writer Oscar Wilde's only novel, and tells the tale of a beautiful young man, who after having his portrait painted by artist and admirer Basil Hallward, laments the fact that the painting will remain beautiful as his beauty fades. Influenced by the hedonistic views of Lord Henry Wotton, Dorian pledges his soul in exchange for his face remaining perfect while the painting distorts with his ageing and debauchery. His strange pledge works and as Dorian sinks into every kind of excess, betrayal and pleasure, the painting twists into a horrible image of Dorian, while the real Dorian appears to possess timeless beauty.

This philosophical novel, constructed within the literary tradition of stories about ill-advised Faustian bargains, focuses on the moral imperative that we all must pay for the evils that we perpetrate, regardless of how long we may appear to remain unpunished, while others suffer. It deals effectively with concepts such as the power of influence, the role of art in society and the lure of sensuality over rationality. Despite its Victorian setting and relatively traditional, Gothic style, the novel's perspective on humanity's fervent desire to prolong youth and beauty gives it continued contemporary relevance.

***The Quiet American* — Graham Greene**

English writer Graham Greene's novel *The Quiet American* (1955) is a narrative that combines the drama of political intrigue against a backdrop of romance, friendship and murder. Set in Vietnam, at the end of French colonial occupation of the country, the rather world-weary, veteran war reporter Thomas Fowler is tasked with covering the conflict for an English newspaper. During the course of this assignment, Fowler is befriended by an idealistic American, Alden Pyle, who purports to be an economic attaché. The reality is that Pyle is an undercover CIA agent. When a badly timed bombing incident kills innocent women and children, Fowler is determined to uncover where the responsibility lies. It leads him to the 'quiet American', Alden Pyle.

At the centre of the novel is Phuong, a young Vietnamese woman who becomes involved romantically with both Pyle and Fowler.

***The Remains of the Day* — Kazuo Ishiguro**

Introduced to list for first time — start of 2023

Japanese-born British writer, Kazuo Ishiguro's novel *The Remains of the Day* (1989) is set in England in the summer of 1956. Stevens, the butler of Darlington Hall, is given the opportunity to drive to Cornwall to see a former colleague he was once secretly in love with, and persuade her to rejoin him in employment.

The Remains of the Day is a first-person narration written predominantly in flashback. The protagonist has deliberately led a life which is characterised by dignity and restraint, prompting questions about regret over lost opportunities as well as national character. As a narrator, Stevens is not so much unreliable as unwitting: his determined absence of self-knowledge has cocooned him within a fiction of his own making.

Ishiguro uses landscape as a metaphor for this restraint of purpose. Stevens equates the nobility of the English countryside with his own belief as to what constitutes worthwhileness in a human being. The novel provides a compelling study of how class-based perceptions of morality can manipulate behaviours, and explores varying representations of love, especially of the misguided or thwarted kind.

Although he has lived with dignity, Stevens eventually realises that his rigid self-control has compressed his capacity to enjoy ordinary, daily pleasures, a situation that he seeks to revoke by the end of the novel.

***The Sound of Things Falling* — Juan Gabriel Vasquez**

Introduced to list for first time — start of 2023

Acclaimed South American writer Juan Gabriel Vasquez's award-winning 2011 novel, set in Bogota in the 1990s, begins by immersing readers in the reflections of protagonist Antonio Yammara on how the crimes perpetrated by the drug cartels of the 1960s in Columbia (including infamous figures such as Pablo Escobar) affected normal, everyday citizens like him. Through his recollections, the mysterious Laverde family becomes an increasingly important presence in the novel, particularly after Yammara is shot on the street by two men on motorcycles. He survives, but his new friend, Ricardo Laverde, does not. This triggers Yammara's search for answers about why Laverde was killed, a search that is complicated and shaped by Yammara's post-traumatic stress disorder and its effects on his life and family relationships. Readers discover that Laverde's wife's occupation is a Peace Corp volunteer in Colombia, but Laverde's activities are shrouded in mystery and it is not until towards the end of the novel that, suddenly, what lies beneath this puzzle is revealed.

This novel invites reflections on people's desire to uncover the 'truth', to understand cause and effect, and to try to make sense of sequences of events that may turn out to have no more meaning than being simply the result of chance.

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

***The White Tiger* — Aravind Adiga**

This novel, Indian writer and journalist Aravind Adiga's first, won the 2008 Man Booker prize. Written as a bildungsroman, *The White Tiger* juxtaposes the rise into selfhood of an impoverished character, Balram Halwai, with India's development as a global economy. The protagonist is symbolised as a 'white tiger' whose wit and tenacity enable him to prosper, despite the disadvantage of his lowly birthright and the rigidity of India's caste system.

Structurally, *The White Tiger* can be viewed as a quest novel, with the protagonist overcoming a series of barriers and setbacks to achieve his goal. The narrative, told in retrospect, is episodic and darkly humorous, and evokes a country that is characterised by the tensions that exist between ancient traditions and modern imperatives. Adiga uses the arc of Halwai's story to

highlight social and political injustices, especially the divisive effects of capitalism: the sociopolitical power of money, the debilitating effect of poverty on the human spirit, and the human capacity for violence and immorality.

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

***Things Fall Apart* — Chinua Achebe**

Things Fall Apart (1958) is the first novel written by African author Chinua Achebe and is widely regarded as his masterpiece. The novel is set in Nigeria in the late 19th century and depicts the tragic downfall of its main character, Okonkwo, and pre-colonial African life in the village of Umuofia.

Okonkwo is a man who, determined to avoid being like his indolent, wasteful, hedonistic father, dedicates himself to building up his wealth and reputation through disciplined hard work. This self-discipline and success earn him the esteem and respect of the Umuofian people, but Okonkwo's fear of being anything like his father gives him a pathological insecurity regarding his own masculinity, one that is expressed in his inflexible, censorious worldview and a propensity towards violence. The first part of the novel explores life in Umuofia before colonisation, and how Okonkwo's violent nature, while earning him some esteem, also leads him into conflict with his society. The second part of the novel recounts Okonkwo's exile in Mbanta because of a tragic accident, and how Okonkwo responds to stories of white missionaries who have set up a church in Umuofia. The third part recounts Okonkwo's return to Umuofia, and his ultimately tragic response to English colonisation that precipitates the end of traditional Umuofian society.

Achebe's depiction of the complexities of the laws, rituals, religion, and social customs of pre-colonial African society challenges the Eurocentric representations of Africa and Africans that underpinned colonialist practices. But Achebe avoids presenting African society in an overly idealistic or nostalgic way by showing that Umuofia, like any human society, contained people with different characters, values, and priorities, and so had its own internal conflicts and contradictions, its own victors and victims.

The enduring appeal of *Things Fall Apart* is very much a result of it being so much more than a story about colonisation: it is a story of a man whose struggle for reputation and esteem is undermined by his own insecurities and his desperation to be accepted. It is Okonkwo's story, told in a way that integrates both European and African narrative techniques, that gives this novel its universal, mythic dimensions, so that the novel is not just about the conflict between two incompatible worlds colliding in the colonial context, but also about the incompatibility between individuality and social expectation that is an inherent part of the human experience.

Plays and drama texts

***A Doll's House* — Henrik Ibsen**

A Doll's House by Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen (1828–1906) offers an acute analysis of the moral failings of the dominant middle class in European 19th century life through the story of the Helmers, Nora and Torvald, and the unravelling of their apparently sound marriage. The play explores the uneven power dynamic within this.

Ibsen's plays examined ordinary people and situations in closed-off environments, and in *A Doll's House* he uses the device of outsiders invading the domestic space to force out uncomfortable truths. The play, first performed in 1879, offers interesting perspectives on many concepts, such as ethical behaviour, self-sacrifice, gender, the agency of women, and social reputation.

There is no happy ending for the characters of *A Doll's House*, a factor which shocked audiences of the time.

***A Man for All Seasons* — Robert Bolt**

English writer Robert Bolt's play, first staged in 1960, is set in the 1530s and traces the decline of the career of Sir Thomas More, High Chancellor of England and advisor to King Henry VIII. It presents a perspective on a key historical event, the proposed annulment of Henry's Catholic marriage and the subsequent establishment of the Church of England.

A Man for All Seasons explores the relationship between persecution and conscience. More, seen as reluctant to agree to Henry's plan, is systematically destroyed, going from being a wealthy, un-corruptible lawyer to a poverty-stricken prisoner who is eventually executed. Juxtaposed against his unshakeable integrity is the baseness of human nature personified in characters such as Richard Rich, who deliberately perjures himself in court to complete More's demise. The key struggle in the play, however, can be seen to be More's inner turmoil as he grapples with the king's untenable demands while simultaneously trying to remain a faithful subject and relying on the law to protect his civil liberties.

This sobering story about non-conformity and authoritarianism offers perspectives on many ideas, such as the cost of integrity and whether it is important enough to justify the fate experienced by More and his family.

***A Taste of Honey* — Shelagh Delaney**

Introduced to list for first time — start of 2023

British dramatist Shelagh Delaney wrote the play *A Taste of Honey* when she was 19. Set in 1958 in the industrial town of Salford in Lancashire, it focuses on working class mother and daughter, Helen and Jo. The opening dialogue between the pair highlights the poverty and hardship of their circumstances. The mother–daughter relationship is revealed as fractious and candid and their banter is both playful and honest. Jo resents Helen's constant 'flitting about' because it prevents her from making friends and being at a school long enough to showcase her drawing talent. When Helen moves out to marry Peter, her wealthy and younger boyfriend, seventeen-year-old Jo is left alone.

Jo's subsequent relationship with her friend Geoffrey following her romance with Jimmy is central to the play, and to the perspectives it offers on identity and love, motherhood, social expectations, class, race and wealth.

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

***Black is the New White* — Nakkiah Lui**

Introduced to list for first time — start of 2023

The humorous *Black is the New White* (2017) by award-winning writer and Gamillaroi–Torres Strait Islander woman Nakkiah Lui is set in an expensive holiday home in a natural landscape on ancestral land where the members of two families gather at Christmas. It begins with a narrator, who prefers to be called the Spirit of Christmas, and who provides background information and commentary throughout. The first scene introduces the audience to Charlotte, a self-confessed 'Black woman' (a lawyer who has received offers to do a TV show and a scholarship to complete her PhD at Columbia) who is marrying Francis, a 'White man' (a 'poor artist' who is an experimental classical composer from a wealthy family).

Joan and Ray, Charlotte's parents, who met at a 'Deaths in Custody March in 1980 in Redfern, Sydney' arrive next, and once Charlotte's sister and brother-in-law, Rose and Sonny, and Francis' parents, Dennison and Marie, turn up, the stage is set for the old rivalries and personal secrets that this Christmas gathering will reveal.

The play's fast paced witty dialogue covers a range of serious topics in a highly engaging and thought-provoking way, offering perspectives on cultural appropriation, privilege, inequality, and ingrained social practices. In their interactions with each other, characters delve into ideas about success, wealth, politics, love, 'post'-colonial identities, conflict, and relationships.

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

***Black Medea* — Wesley Enoch**

Enoch is a writer and director and a Nunukul Ngugi man. In his play *Black Medea* (2006), he has reframed the narrative and structural elements of Euripides' classical tragedy. Euripides was unusual for his era in that he humanised his characters; likewise, Enoch tells a personal story which touches potently on the relationship between the individual and their spiritual destiny.

Medea, promised to another man, sacrifices her connections to land and people for her love of Jason and their child. However, their happiness is short-lived as Jason is destined to become his own father; unemployed, drunk and violent. The Chorus, linking the action of the play and its audience, urges Jason to let go of Medea and their son, and as Jason deteriorates, for Medea to return home, so the child can know his people and ancestors. True to the horrific outcome of Euripides' tragedy, Medea provides her child with a monstrous 'escape', leaving the audience to contemplate contemporary perspectives of love, gender, race and betrayal.

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

***By the Bog of Cats* — Marina Carr**

Introduced to list for first time — start of 2023

Irish playwright Marian Carr's play, first staged in 1998, is set in an ancient bog in the Irish midlands but based on a blend of the Greek myth Medea and Irish folklore. *By the Bog of Cats* begins with a poignant, but startling portent of the events that will befall its cast of characters, particularly Hester Swane, her daughter Josie, and her former lover, Carthage. The dreams of the strange and mystical Catwoman and her interactions with the play's ghosts reveal key events of the past, including the murder of Hester's brother, and foretell the tragic consequences that will result.

Dialogue in the play is interspersed with songs about the Bog of Cats, and the work as a whole offers perspectives on justice and prejudice, relationships between parents and children, guilt and sin, and the complexities of human passion. It also explores ideas about land ownership and connections with the natural landscape.

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

***Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* — Tennessee Williams**

Introduced to list for first time — start of 2023

Awarded the 1955 Pulitzer Prize for Drama, American dramatist Tennessee Williams's *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* is set in the 1950s on Big Daddy Pollitt's Mississippi cotton plantation, and spans only one evening. It is a momentous night, Big Daddy's birthday, and he has been given good news about his health. At the same time, audiences are invited into the dysfunctional marriage of Big Daddy's son, Brick, and his wife Maggie the 'Cat'. Infidelity has poisoned their relationship and alcoholism has destroyed Brick's self-esteem and faith in others.

Rejoicing in his 'all clear' cancer diagnosis, Big Daddy is determined to grasp life enthusiastically in a way he has never allowed himself. In contrast, Brick is unable to conceal his deep-seated disgust at people's mendacity, which is slowly destroying him as he drinks to feel numb. Dramatic tension reaches a crucial turning point when Big Daddy's agonising indecision about who is to inherit his vast \$20 million estate provokes Brick into revealing the truth about Big Daddy's terminal illness.

This is a play that offers insights into the complexities of family and power relationships, truth and lies, trust and betrayal, different forms of love, deception, and mortality.

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

***City of Gold* — Meyne Watt**

Introduced to list for first time — start of 2023

Australian actor, artist, writer and Wongutha–Yamatji man, Meyne Wyatt's 2019 play *City of Gold* is set predominantly in Kalgoorlie, in the present time. The first few lines introduce audiences to an apparent play within a play when an ill-timed mobile phone call during a scene brings the performance to a halt. Instead of a play within a play, audiences discover that the acting is for an Australia Day advertisement for lamb, and that the young Black actor making the ad is Breythe,

who left Kalgoorlie to pursue his acting career and has now returned to his family, brother Mateo and activist sister Carina, all grieving the death of their father and struggling with regret, guilt and the pain of loss.

The play is a compelling exploration of injustice, racism, inequality, and alienation, and asks probing questions about Australia's past and its present, and about power and powerlessness.

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Constellations — Nick Payne

Payne, a British playwright and screenwriter, is regarded as an exciting talent within a new generation of writers.

Constellations (2012) explores the possibility of people living parallel existences, meaning a range of possible futures depending on the decisions that we make. The is-it-or-isn't-it romance between Roland, a beekeeper, and Marianne, a cosmologist, becomes a post-modernist experience as time is transcended and traditional narrative structure is disrupted. The characters' relationship is constructed as a jigsaw, with repeated scenes, different endings and tie-ins, and multiple potential realities. This structural complexity allows Payne to present perspectives on broad philosophical questions to do with the purpose of existence and how humanity can determine and safeguard freedom of choice, as well as explore more familiar domestic concepts such as the nature of love and how we grieve.

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

Death and the Maiden — Ariel Dorfman

Dorfman is a Chilean–American writer, academic and human rights activist. His work is highly political and framed by his personal experience of being exiled from his home country after a violent overthrow of the existing democratic government.

Death and the Maiden, first performed in 1990, is set in an unnamed Latin American country. The play explores what happens when a former political advisor inadvertently meets a man who, she believes, abducted and violated her in the past. Tautly written and plotted like a crime-thriller, the play examines perspectives of truth, and how it can be proven or defined, and the moral imperatives that exist around innocence and justice, especially as they relate to revenge and reconciliation.

Death and the Maiden offers an interesting and often abrasive character study set against the conflicted backdrop of a nation still coming to terms with its return to democracy.

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

***Hotel Sorrento* — Hannie Rayson**

Introduced to list for first time — start of 2023

Written early in her literary career and published in 1990, *Hotel Sorrento* remains one of Australian playwright Hannie Rayson's most popular works.

The play deals with issues of identity: personal, familial, and national. Set in the Victorian seaside town of Sorrento, it examines the relationships between the three Moynihan sisters, reunited after ten years apart. Two of the sisters, Meg, a writer, and Pippa, an advertising executive, have been living overseas. The third sister, Hilary, has remained in Sorrento, residing with her son and father, and running a small gourmet delicatessen.

Two important complications drive the interactions in the play. One is the recent publication of a highly acclaimed novel by Meg. Both Pippa and Hilary feel that Meg has shamelessly purloined aspects of their lives to achieve her literary fame. The other is the sudden death of the sisters' father.

Assembling a cast of very believable characters, Rayson has produced an engaging drama that explores Australian cultural identity, life as art, and the complexity of family dynamics.

***Photograph 51* — Anna Ziegler**

Introduced to list for first time — start of 2023

The inspiration for American playwright Anna Ziegler's 2008 play *Photograph 51* is Rosalind Franklin, the scientist and x-ray crystallographer whose role in creating the technique that identified the structure of DNA was not properly recognised until after her death in 1958 at the age of 37.

This one-act play reimagines the race to discover the structure of DNA. It portrays Franklin as complex and brilliant, devoted to scientific discovery, working until midnight for weeks at a time, in a world where her fellow scientists are almost all male, and tensions, rivalries and ego are at play, and it leaves the audience with a sense of what her life might have been had circumstances and events been different.

This compelling play explores perspectives on technology, progress and research, the challenges faced by women in science, and ultimately loneliness.

***Rainbow's End* — Jane Harrison**

The Australian playwright Jane Harrison is descended from the Muruwari people of New South Wales. Her play *Rainbow's End* (2007) is set in an area known as The Flats, in 1950s Victoria. The story focuses on three generations of Aboriginal women, and their ongoing battle for fundamental rights such as housing, education, employment, safety and acceptance. The women's situation is juxtaposed against the normalisation of privilege, affluence and containment in the lives of settler Australians, a contrast that becomes more acutely realised when Errol Fisher, a salesman, falls in love with Dolly, the youngest of the three women.

Rainbow's End explores perspectives on endurance, social oppression, cultural and racial division and gender disparity. Harrison's structure features the unification of starkly realistic scenes and colloquial language with music and dream sequences, a dramatic device which enables a more visceral exploration of the psychology that underscores the play's important issues.

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

***Shafana and Aunt Sarrinah* — Alana Valentine**

Introduced to list for first time — start of 2023

Published in 2010, *Shafana and Aunt Sarrinah* is a play by Australian playwright Alana Valentine, based on her conversations with Muslim women. The play itself takes the form of a conversation between two Afghani–Australian women — Shafana, a young and idealistic Muslim woman, and her older, more conservative aunt. This focus on generational divide is most evident when Shafana announces her intention to publicly wear the hijab as a symbol of her deep and abiding faith.

Valentine’s naturalistic work operates on a binary structure, featuring two characters with oppositional but related worldviews. The play’s salient conflict lies in the choice between cultural integration or separation, symbolised by the presence of the hijab. Valentine uses setting to further represent this motif: the action takes places in a progressive science laboratory and the more traditional domestic venue of the family kitchen. Flashbacks and monologues develop Aunt Sarrinah’s backstory, providing a context for her traditionalist thinking and world-wariness.

***Terror* — Ferdinand von Schirach**

Von Schirach is a German lawyer whose short stories about his experiences with criminals and the judicial court have been internationally acclaimed. *Terror*, his first play written in 2015, is well-known for its ending, whereby audiences are asked to behave as a jury and vote on the guilt or otherwise of the story’s protagonist.

The narrative is structured as a linear, courtroom drama which centres on a profound moral question, that of the greater good. Major Lars Koch, the defendant, is an air-force pilot who was ordered to divert a hijacked plane. When the hijackers changed course and directed their own plane towards a packed sports stadium, Koch made the decision to shoot them down, resulting in the deaths of the hijackers and 164 passengers. The play begins with Koch being charged with murder.

Although *Terror* offers perspectives on the spectre of international terrorism, the play can also be read as a study of the relationship between State and individual, and the uncertainties that can exist around how and when we must exercise moral responsibility. Von Schirach’s complex plot and compromised characters address concepts such as how societies can determine guilt over innocence, whether homicide can ever be considered justifiable and the potential gradation, or scaling, of wrongdoing.

***The Real Thing* — Tom Stoppard**

Introduced to list for first time — start of 2023

The Real Thing, first performed in 1982, and set in London over a period of two years in the 1980s, is a play by Czech-born British writer Tom Stoppard that explores love, marriage, fidelity and infidelity. It focuses on the relationship between Henry, a successful London playwright, who at the beginning of the play is married to Charlotte, the lead actress in his current play, and Annie, an actress he falls in love with and for whom he leaves Charlotte. Annie, at the time, is

married to Max who is also the lead actor in Henry's new play where he plays the role of an architect who discovers his wife is having an adulterous affair.

Tom Stoppard's witty, humorous play *The Real Thing* and its play within the play, *House of Cards*, provides engaging and thought-provoking insights into connections between art and 'real life', the complexities of relationships, activism and the nature of idealism, and the idea of marriage as a social construct.

***The Winter's Tale* — William Shakespeare**

Introduced to list for first time — start of 2023

Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*, first published in 1623, is a romantic comedy with elements of tragedy that explores arrogance, foolishness, loyalty, faith, guilt, fidelity and in the end, reconciliation, compassion and forgiveness.

The play opens with Leontes, the King of Sicily who, convinced that his wife Hermione, Queen of Sicily, is having an affair with Polixene, the King of Bohemia and his childhood friend, rashly imprisons her and their baby is born prematurely. Initially, Leontes wants the child killed, but Antigonus, the husband of Hermione's attendant, and a loyal friend, convinces him to spare the baby's life. The king agrees, but commands Antigonus to leave the baby girl Perdita somewhere far from his kingdom at the mercy of animals and the weather. The Oracle of Apollo is consulted and although Hermione is acquitted of all charges, Leontes refuses to accept the outcome and continues with the trial. Hermione is taken away and presumed dead, and Leontes is left alone and in despair.

Sixteen years pass, and Perdita who has been brought up by a shepherd and his wife in Polixene's kingdom of Bohemia, is betrothed to Florizel, the son of Polixene, who in turn disapproves of his son's union with a lowly shepherdess. The dramatic resolution of these complicated relationships comes with the revelation that Hermione is alive after all. Her 'statue' comes to life, and families and friends are reunited.

***Uncle Vanya* — Anton Chekov**

As well as being a playwright and short story writer, Russian Anton Chekhov (1860–1904) was a doctor, a profession which arguably helped him to hone his acute observation of human psychology. He became a key member of literature's early modernist phase with his unflinching and realistic portrayals of ordinary people and situations.

Uncle Vanya, first published in 1898, traces the disruption caused by the return, to his own estate, of a retiring academic and his younger wife, and their decision to sell the property in favour of other investments. The play exemplifies many of Chekhov's primary dramatic focuses by providing an insight into the compromised inner life of the characters and the frustrations felt by people who must undergo significant social change which is not always of their own choosing. It offers perspectives on what Chekhov saw as each person's social and cultural necessities: to communicate effectively, especially across social classes; to have a work ethic as a way of locating a life purpose; and to safeguard the future by nurturing the land and nature.

Chekhov's plays are still regularly performed. The enduring nature of his body of work can be attributed to the playwright's ability to chart, with great precision, the shifting emotional journeys of characters who are both individualised and clearly representative.

***Wit* — Margaret Edson**

Edson, an American playwright and teacher, wrote the 1999 Pulitzer Prize-winning play *Wit* (also called *W;t*) after working as a clerical assistant in a hospital oncology ward.

The play traces the final hours of the life of a cancer-stricken literature professor who, in line with her belief that intellectualising a problem is the only pathway to a possible solution, uses the poetry of John Donne as a way of coming to terms with her terminal status. However, as her condition worsens, Dr Vivian Bearing is pushed towards an acceptance of both her own mortality and the view that compassion and empathy are as valuable and necessary for the proper functioning of society as abstract knowledge.

The narrative is constructed via a combination of direct action, flashbacks and monologues, and the use of an omniscient narrator who also acts as the protagonist of the story and establishes a key dramatic irony. *Wit* interrogates the nuances of language, and explores key concepts such as our social and personal response to mortality, the dehumanisation that can underscore medical research and activity to the point that the treatment becomes as debilitating as the disease, and our need for kind connections in a world in which — for many — the prevailing condition is loneliness.

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

Film and television/multimodal texts

Title followed by director/creator.

***Alias Grace* — Mary Harron**

Introduced to list for first time — start of 2023

Alias Grace (2017) is a six-episode television miniseries directed by Mary Harron that is based on Margaret Atwood's 1996 novel of the same name. It reimagines the real-life story of Grace Marks, an Irish immigrant in Canada who was convicted of the 1843 murders of her employer and his housekeeper and was sentenced to life imprisonment. The series focuses on the relationship between the protagonist Grace and the doctor who researches her case, using this as the narrative frame for exploring Grace's story. This includes her experiences as an immigrant and as a servant, her time as a convicted killer, and her life after her release. Different, contradictory, and tantalisingly ambivalent versions of Grace and the sort of person she might or might not be are on offer, and the viewer can never be quite sure who to believe.

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

***Arrival* — Denis Villeneuve**

French–Canadian director Denis Villeneuve's science fiction film *Arrival* (2016) focuses on the character of trained linguist Louise Banks. Banks is tasked with translating and interpreting communications with alien life forms to learn their intentions on Earth. Through acquiring and understanding their logographic language, Banks' understanding of time is altered and she can foresee her future. The film is based on a novella *The Story of Your Life* by Ted Chiang and offers perspectives on the challenges of transcending barriers of race and language.

***Beneath Clouds* — Ivan Sen**

Australian director and Gamillaroi man Ivan Sen's award-winning 2002 film *Beneath Clouds* is a drama that explores representations of communities, relationships, family and identity. It is set in north western New South Wales and was filmed on location in Moree and the surrounding countryside. The film tells the story of the journey together of two teenagers, Lena, the daughter of an Aboriginal mother and absent Irish father, and Vaughn, who escapes from juvenile detention to visit his dying mother in Sydney. Both teenagers are alienated from their families and searching for a sense of identity and purpose in their lives. Initially, they are wary of each other but events during the film bring them together.

This visually distinctive film is at heart the deeply moving story of a search for identity and a sense of belonging, and central to the power of the film's storytelling are the portrayals of Lena and Vaughn by its two young, first-time actors.

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

***Elementary* (TV series) — Robert Doherty**

Elementary (2012–2019) is an American drama series directed by Robert Doherty that presents a contemporary reimagining of the character from Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's original novel, *Sherlock Holmes*. In this series, Holmes is a recovering drug addict and former consultant to Scotland Yard. He assists the New York City Police Department in solving crimes and his indifference to police procedure often leads to conflict with Captain Thomas Gregson. He is accompanied by Dr Joan Watson.

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

***Gattaca* — Andrew Niccol**

Gattaca (1997), written and directed by New Zealand-born Andrew Niccol, is a science fiction crime film dealing with a dystopian society that allocates roles to individuals based on the strength of their genetic profile. Those with superior genetically engineered profiles are allocated the elite jobs of society. By contrast, individuals naturally conceived have inferior profiles and are allocated the menial jobs. The central character in the film, Vincent, is determined to rise above his allotted station in life. To do so, he fraudulently uses the genetic material of a superior. The film offers perspectives on the ethics of genetic engineering, the pursuit of perfection and what it is that ultimately makes us human.

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

Directed by Australian Emma Freeman, *Glitch* (2015–2019) is a series with underpinning ideas related to paranormal activity. James Hayes, a small town policeman in Yoorana, Victoria, is called to the local cemetery in the middle of the night after seven people have risen from the dead in perfect health but with no memory of their identities. Hayes is determined to discover who they are and what has happened to them. The seven people are all linked in some way, and the search begins for someone who knows the truth about how and why they have returned.

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

***Hugo* — Martin Scorsese**

Martin Scorsese's 2011 multi-award-winning film *Hugo* tells the story of an orphaned boy who lives within the clock of a Paris railway station in the 1930s. Originally created in 3D, the film makes creative use of visual cinematography and CGI to create a rich and beautiful backdrop for Hugo's adventures. There are intertextual references to some of Charles Dickens' work with Hugo evading the attentions of the irritable station master and befriending the bright and bookish Isabelle. Scorsese also takes viewers on a journey through the history of cinema and pays tribute to many of the industry's founders.

***Interstellar* — Christopher Nolan**

Introduced to list for first time — start of 2023

Interstellar (2014) is British–American director Christopher Nolan's science fiction film about the bleak future of an over-populated world that is running out of food where the protagonist's 10-year-old daughter will be the last generation to survive on Earth. It is a world in caretaker mode where strict numbers are allocated to training and employment based on a dying world's needs. It is a world that no longer needs engineers, but farmers, and science determines people's careers, not individuals.

It is from this world where people are often ill, dust storms are normal and rainfall is rare, that the group of astronauts, whose story is central to the film, set out in search of a new home for humankind.

***Knives Out* — Rian Johnson**

Introduced to list for first time — start of 2023

American film director Rian Johnson's 2019 *Knives Out* begins with a pre-dawn scene of a darkened house where two black dogs charge towards the camera, then a close-up of a coffee mug that states 'My house, my rules, my coffee'. This mystery film focuses on Detective Benoit Blanc's investigation of the dysfunctional Thrombey family after 85-year-old Harlan Thrombey, wealthy mystery novelist, is found dead. As the mystery unfolds, it emerges that all the characters have secrets.

***Mad Max: Fury Road* — George Miller**

Introduced to list for first time — start of 2023

Australian director George Miller's 2015 post-apocalyptic film *Mad Max: Fury Road* is the fourth of his Mad Max films and revisits the dystopian universe of the earlier films. It opens with the words, 'My name is Max. My world is fire and blood' and the audience is propelled into a damaged world devoid of life where a diminutive figure is dwarfed by a backdrop of vast orange desert. This is a world where warfare is relished, sacrifice is revered, and pleasure is found in the challenge of the fight. It is a world forged by an unforgiving environment where survivors eke out a violent existence in conflict with one another over resources.

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

***Pan's Labyrinth* — Guillermo del Toro**

Introduced to list for first time — start of 2023

Mexican director Guillermo Del Toro's 2006 *Pan's Labyrinth* has won multiple awards, including three Academy Awards. This dark fantasy film is set in Spain in 1944; the civil war is over, but there are still rebel soldiers in the mountains, using guerrilla warfare to regain control. Two parallel tales are told, one through a girl's eyes (Ofelia) and one through Captain Vidal's. The film begins with the fairytale of an escaped princess who experiences sunlight for the first time, which erases her memory and causes her to forget who she is.

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

***Parasite* — Bong Joon-ho**

Introduced to list for first time — start of 2023

Acclaimed director Bong Joon-ho's 2019 tragicomedy, *Parasite*, is the first South Korean film to be awarded the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival and the first South Korean film to win the Academy Award for Best Picture. It also won the 2019 Golden Globe Award for Best Foreign Film and the BAFTA Award for Best Film Not in English. A film that resists categorising as belonging to a particular genre, it is part murder mystery, part dystopian fantasy, part thriller, and focuses on the members of two families from diametrically opposite socioeconomic backgrounds. The Kim family live in poverty in a semi-basement and the wealthy Park family in an architecturally spectacular house far removed from the slums of Seoul. The lives of the two families are connected when the Kims' son bluffs his way into a job with the Parks.

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

***Picnic at Hanging Rock* — Peter Weir**

Based on the 1967 historical fiction novel by Joan Lindsay, the Australian film *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (1975) is a mysterious drama adapted to screen by Cliff Green and directed by Peter Weir. Set in the early 1900s, the plot revolves around a trip to an unusual volcanic formation called Hanging Rock, in Victoria. Against the headmistress's instructions, a group of schoolgirls venture away from the picnic group and disappear. Underpinning ideas include adolescent perceptions about love, and concepts of death and femininity. The film also provides an opportunity to explore colonial tropes such as that of the vanishing child and sacrifice to the imagined menace and mystery of the Australian landscape.

***Radiance* — Rachel Perkins**

The 1998 Australian drama *Radiance*, which was scripted for film by Louis Nowra from his own play, was directed by Perkins, who is an Arrernte and Kalkadoon film and television director and screenwriter. The story centres around the actions of three sisters who reunite at the family home during the 24 hours following their mother's funeral. When the three women learn the family home will be reclaimed by the owner and their mother's lover, they decide to torch the house. The film stars Rachael Maza, Deborah Mailman and Trisha Morton-Thomas as the three sisters, and offers perspectives on family relationships, identity, and the Stolen Generations.

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

***Raise the Red Lantern* — Zhang Yimou**

The 1991 award-winning film *Raise the Red Lantern* has been described as a political allegory. Directed by Zhang Yimou, it tells the tale of adultery, conspiracy, hatred and entanglement in China in the 1920s. Wealthy Lord Chen Zuoqian has three wives living in separate houses. The

tale focuses on the fate of Songlian, a 19-year-old who is forced to join the formal and repressed community as a concubine. The competition among the four wives is intense as their master's attention is associated with power and privilege. Directed by the critically acclaimed Chinese filmmaker Zhang Yimo and starring Gong Li, the film captures traditional cultural aesthetics through exquisite cinematography, lighting, sound and costuming.

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

Rebecca — Alfred Hitchcock

Introduced to list for first time — start of 2023

Based on Daphne du Maurier's Gothic novel *Rebecca*, English director Alfred Hitchcock's award-winning black-and-white 1940 film tells the suspenseful story of a young woman of modest means and background, whose name the audience never learns, who marries the older and wealthy English aristocrat Max de Winter, and goes to live with him in his grand ancestral home, Manderley. De Winter's glamorous and sophisticated first wife, Rebecca, has died in mysterious circumstances, but her presence is kept alive by the de Winter's housekeeper Mrs Danvers to such an extent that, though deceased, the first Mrs de Winter dominates the life of the second Mrs de Winter, and the entire film.

It is not until the real account of Rebecca's death is revealed (interestingly a quite different version from the novel's) that Max and his young wife are able to free themselves of her shadow. Readers familiar with Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* will recognise echoes of Jane's story in that of the second Mrs de Winter.

This haunting and atmospheric film offers perspectives on the class system in mid 20th century British society, as well as the complexities of loyalty, betrayal, trust, love, marriage and integrity. It also invites questions about representations of women and the social expectations that shape those representations.

Run Lola Run — Tom Tykwer

This fast-paced and energetic 1998 film is an interactive thriller from German director Tom Tykwer. The film focuses on Lola's desperate attempt to find the 100 000 marks needed to save her boyfriend's life. The narrative sequencing of this film is unusual with the opening scene avoiding any inclusion of the main protagonists, or clues regarding the setting. An example of the film's distinctive stylistic choices and structural patterns is the inclusion in the opening sequence of two quotations, one from the poet TS Eliot and the other from German football coach, Sepp Herberger.

Sweet Country — Warwick Thornton

Acclaimed Australian director and Kaytetye man Warwick Thornton's film *Sweet Country* has won many awards, including the Special Jury Prize at the 2017 Venice Film Festival. This Australian Western, set in the outback of the Northern Territory in the 1920s and based on a series of real events, centres on Sam, a middle-aged Aboriginal man, whose employer, Fred Smith, is a preacher who sends him to help bitter war veteran, Harry March, with renovating his cattle yards. Sam's relationship with the cruel and ill-tempered Harry ends with a violent shootout. As a result, Sam becomes a wanted criminal for the murder of a white man and is forced to flee with his wife across the deadly outback. A hunting party led by Sergeant Fletcher tracks Sam down.

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

***Ten Canoes* — Rolf de Heer and Peter Djigirr**

Introduced to list for first time — start of 2023

Ten Canoes is a story within a story within a story where both connect the past with the present. Directed by Dutch-born Australian director Rolf de Heer and Yolngu man Peter Djigirr, this 2006 Australian film is set in Arnhem Land in a time before Western influence, and is spoken entirely in Yolngu Matha, the local languages of North-East Arnhem Land. It focuses on a young Aboriginal warrior, Dayindi, who is interested in his older brother's third and youngest wife. His older brother knows this and decides to use the art of storytelling to help Dayindi learn about his ancestors. As the stories within stories move through different timeframes, the film shifts between colour, monochrome and black and white.

***The Gods of Wheat Street* (TV series) — Wayne Blair, Catriona McKenzie and Adrian Russell Wills**

The Gods of Wheat Street (2014) is a six-part television drama series that explores the story of the Freeburns, an Australian Aboriginal family and is directed by Wayne Blair, a Batjala, Mununjali, Wakka man; Catriona McKenzie, a Gunai/Kurnai woman; and Adrian Russell Wills, a Wonnarua man. Odin Freeburn is challenged by family dynamics. He had promised his dying mother he would keep the family together; however, with one brother in jail, another brother in love with the daughter of a family enemy, and raising his two daughters on his own, he is pulled in many different directions. The series offers perspectives on love and family relationships, particularly within the context of Aboriginal culture.

***True Grit* — Ethan Coen and Joel Coen**

This 2010 film by prolific American directors Ethan Coen and Joel Coen (otherwise known as the Coen brothers) is a remake of a classic John Wayne western loosely based on Charles Portis' novel of the same name. The story is told from the perspective of fourteen-year-old Mattie Ross who, in 1878, joins an aging US marshal and another lawman in tracking her father's killer into hostile territory. This provides ample opportunity for the directors to parody the genre's longstanding traditions and heroic ideals. Within this, the film offers perspectives on revenge, redemption, and loss and the idea of journey.

***Wadjda* — Haifaa al-Mansour**

This 2012 film directed by Haifaa al-Mansour tells the story of Wadjda, a 10-year-old girl living in a suburb of Riyadh, the capital of Saudi Arabia. Despite living in a traditional, conservative world, Wadjda is fun-loving, entrepreneurial and always pushing the boundaries of what she can get away with. After a fight with her friend Abdullah, she sees a bicycle for sale. Wadjda's mother won't allow her to purchase it as they live in a society that considers bicycles dangerous to a girl's virtue. Not fazed, Wadjda begins entrepreneurial efforts to raise the money herself.

***World War Z* — Marc Forster**

The underpinning focus of horror–thriller film *World War Z* (2013), directed by German–Swiss director Marc Forster, is a pandemic that threatens to consume humanity, and former UN investigator Gerry Lane must lead a worldwide search to find the sources of the infection. When his family get stuck in urban gridlock, he senses that this is no ordinary traffic jam. His suspicions are confirmed when, suddenly, the city erupts into chaos. The lethal virus spreads through a single bite, and turns healthy people vicious, unthinking and feral.

Poetry

Options by poet.

Alison Whittaker

Introduced to list for first time — start of 2023

Alison Whittaker is a Gomeri writer from Gunnedah near the Namoi River in New South Wales. In 2015, while studying at the University of Technology Sydney, she was named the National Indigenous Law Student of the Year. Awarded a Fulbright Scholarship to study at Harvard University, she received the accolade of Dean's Scholar in Race, Gender and Criminal Law. Whittaker is passionate in campaigning against gendered violence and, in particular, supports First Nations Australian women who have experienced violence and trauma.

Lemons in the Chicken Wire (2016) is Whittaker's debut poetry collection. The poems in this text are described by critics as powerful and impassioned, as well as playful and joyous. Whittaker's work explores the idea of a colonial language, the idea of body, and perspectives on concepts such as identity and relationships. *Blakwork*, published in 2018, offers a hybrid of writing including fiction, nonfiction, social commentary, and poetry.

Christina Rossetti

Christina Rossetti was one of the most prominent women poets of the Victorian era. Born in England in 1830, her ideas about writing were influenced by poets like Dante, John Keats, Walter Scott and Elizabeth Barret Browning. Her poetry employs a structure of riddles, paradox, and allusions to the Bible.

Her faith is reflected deeply across her work. While Rossetti's views regarding the role of women were not necessarily radical in tone, her poetry did offer her the opportunity to question and to challenge accepted norms, particularly in relation to the concepts of gender and power in Victorian England.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning

A contemporary of Christina Rossetti, Elizabeth Barrett Browning was born in 1806. Like Rossetti, and many girls from wealthy families during this time period, Barrett Browning was educated at home by tutors. Influenced by writers such as John Milton and William Shakespeare, Barrett Browning had written her first book of poetry by the age of 12 years.

Her writing explores many theological concepts, including the metaphysical idea of romantic and spiritual love. Barrett Browning was particularly eager to emphasise the central place of poetry in society as a means of representing individual thought and emotions. She used verse to speak out on issues considered taboo for women to express an opinion. For example, Barrett Browning was critical of slavery, the basis of her family's fortune made from Jamaican sugar plantations, and was vocal about the exploitation of children in British mines and factories.

Ellen van Neerven

Born in 1990, Ellen van Neerven is a writer with Mununjali Yugambeh and Dutch heritage. Named as the *Sydney Morning Herald*'s Best Young Australian Novelist in 2015, critics praised van Neerven's voice as sharp, honest and powerful. Their debut work *Heat and Light* (2014), won a range of awards including the David Unaipon Award, the Nita May Dobbie Literary Award and the NSW Premier's Literary Awards Indigenous Writers Prize.

Van Neerven has published two poetry collections *Comfort Food* (2016) and *Throat* (2020), which offer perspectives on a range of challenging and complex issues including racism, grief and trauma, capitalism, identity and memory.

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

Gerard Manley Hopkins

Born in Essex, England in 1844, Gerard Manley-Hopkins is regarded as one of the Victorian era's greatest poets. Educated at Balliol College, Oxford, he studied Classics and in 1864 converted from the High Anglican faith to Catholicism. In 1867, he entered the Jesuit order, and began teaching and preaching.

Manley-Hopkins' poetry is inventive in its language use and ability to generate rich aural patterning. His most famous technical innovation was the idea of 'sprung rhythm', a technique that counts stresses rather than syllables, developing a sense of movement.

The poet's work echoes the sentiments of his contemporaries that industrialisation was a pollutant force; his style of writing, influenced by nature and a connection to God, is more reminiscent of metaphysical poets than the Victorian poets.

Gwen Harwood

Gwen Harwood was born in Taringa, Brisbane in 1920. The subject matter of her work explores a range of ideas generating reflection on relationships between children and parents, the domestic aspects of women's lives, music, nature, and memory.

Harwood refuted the idea that her work should be categorised into a 'woman's canon' of poetry. Rather she defined her identity and belonging as a poet influenced by the Romantic era. Inspired by the work of philosopher, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Harwood's poetry experiments with voice, plays with language and is often underpinned by a deeply grounded, satirical wit. Using different pseudonyms, (mostly male) Harwood was known for enjoying disguises and did not reveal her identity for many years. Writing at a time when women poets struggled for recognition and visibility, the pseudonyms can be seen as not only a mask to create anonymity but also a means of creating a divided self and delivering a feminist perspective from an assumed masculine lens.

James McAuley

Australian-born poet James McAuley (1917–1976) is a contemporary of Gwen Harwood. He also worked as a journalist and literary critic. Educated at the University of Sydney, his wartime experience in Papua New Guinea (PNG) informed much of his writing.

In 1943, he famously collaborated with fellow poet Harold Steward and invented the fictive writer named Ern Malley. Under this name, they submitted a body of work numbering seventeen poems

to the editor of the magazine *Angry Penguins*. The content of the poems was nonsensical and written in the modernist style that McAuley despised.

In 1946, he published the first collection of poetry under his own name called 'Under Aldebaran'. A second collection of work appeared about ten years later entitled 'A Vision of Ceremony'. Some of McAuley's most moving and exquisite poems are about loss and family relationships.

Kae Tempest

Born in 1984 in London, Kae Tempest is a playwright, poet, novelist and spoken word artist. From the age of 16 Tempest has attracted a wide following and is now recognised as one of Britain's foremost performance artists. Their dramatic performance poem 'Brand New Ancients' won the Ted Hughes Poetry Award for innovation in poetry in 2013.

Tempest's work combines the power of storytelling; music and lighting; and the sounds, patterns and rhythms of language to connect with audiences and with readers. The experiences and stories explored through their poetry include those related to poverty, identity and relationships.

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

Les Murray

Leslie Allan Murray was born in 1938, near Bunyah, New South Wales, Australia to dairy farmers. His early childhood was marked with loss. His mother died when he was just 12 years old, leaving Murray and his father grief-stricken and bereft. In high school, Murray experienced sustained bullying. A mix of these formative years, rural landscapes and rural communities inform much of his writing. During his career, Murray's writing won many awards, and he is frequently referred to as Australia's 'unofficial poet laureate.' His collection of poems *Subhuman Redneck Poems* (1996) won the prestigious TS Eliot Award and the CJ Dennis prize.

Murray travelled widely to give readings, lectures and talks across Australia, Britain, Europe, and the United States. A prolific essayist and cultural critic, as well as poet, his work has been translated into many languages. Murray continued to reside in Bunyah until his death in 2019.

Lionel Fogarty

Lionel Fogarty is internationally regarded as an important voice in Australian poetics and writing. A Yugambah and Kujjela man, born on Wakka land at Barambah, Cherbourg Aboriginal Reserve, Fogarty's work is brutally frank and arguably uncompromising in exploring the experience of First Nations Australians. He has spoken out on issues ranging from the Land Rights movement and Aboriginal health, to education, housing and legal services, and is committed to his work in activism and advocacy for First Nations peoples.

Fogarty has published eight collections of poetry; his first, *Kargun*, was published when he was just 22 years old. Culture, spirituality and the struggles faced by Murri people are expressed through Aboriginal English, Bundjalung language and vernacular. His poetry challenges traditional structures and forms, and the English language itself.

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

Maya Angelou

Marguerite Johnson was born in St Louis, Missouri in 1928 and later changed her name to Maya Angelou. Her poetry explores representations of racism, poverty, and violence. She also focuses on concepts of love, hope, Godly faith, and the importance of resilience.

Childhood abuse and suffering resulted in Angelou not speaking for many years. From this difficult childhood, she emerged as a strong, literary role model. Her civil rights activism is well documented and she worked with both Martin Luther King and Malcolm X. Angelou was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by Barack Obama in 2010. Her writing style is often described as playful yet humble and accessible and relentless in the quest for justice. Much of her writing centres on perceptions and experiences of her own challenges and her work can be seen as an expression of deep inner strength, integrity, and beliefs.

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

Pablo Neruda

Pablo Neruda was born Ricardo Eliecer Neftali Reyes Basoalto in 1904. Writing under the pseudonym Pablo Neruda, he later registered this as his legal name. Neruda is often referred to as Chile's national poet and his work has been influential worldwide. In 1971, Pablo Neruda was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature.

In part influenced by the poet Gabriela Mistral, Marcel Proust, Russian novelists Tolstoy and Dostoevsky as well as the modernist writers Conrad, Joyce, and DH Lawrence, Neruda's international career as a poet was launched when he managed to place a few poems in the journal *The Criterion* edited by TS Eliot.

Neruda's career was both literary and political. He travelled the world as a poet-diplomat advocating for social change. His experiences of the Spanish Civil War, communism, love and intimacy are among a range of influences and concepts that underpin much of his poetry.

Rosemary Dobson

Born in 1920, Rosemary Dobson's contribution to Australian literature has been well recognised and won many awards, including the Order of Australia (AO) in 1987, the Patrick White Award in 1994, and an Honorary Doctorate from the University of Sydney in 1996. Her writing explores ideas ranging from the transcendent potential of art, the paradox of time, the poignancy of existence and the mystery of death.

Later in her life, as her sight began to fail, Dobson experimented with the haiku structure. Her poetry offers perspectives on concepts such as renewal, consolation, friendship and inspiration.

Seamus Heaney

Born in 1939 and raised in County Derry, Ireland, Seamus Heaney won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1995. Heaney's verse tells stories from his farm, about his family and his younger years. It also explores ideas of war and conflict and the experiences of two Irelands — Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic.

Heaney's work is known for the aural beauty of its text, and he is often described as a regional poet reminiscent of the traditionalist approach taken by William Wordsworth and John Clare.

Heaney himself explained that he felt a particular affinity with the writing of Russian poets Osip Mandelstam and Joseph Brodsky; Polish poets Czeslaw Milosz and Zbigniew Herbert; and the Czech poet Miroslav Holub. Like Heaney, these poets witnessed and endured sociopolitical turmoil and unrest in their homelands.

'Digging' is one of Heaney's earliest and best-known poems. It reflects on his father's and grandfather's skills in using a spade and suggests that whilst Heaney felt he could not emulate either man, he was still their successor. When accepting his Nobel Prize in Literature in 1995, Heaney quoted from his work 'Exposure' highlighting the fear of failure, self-doubt and his desire to belong to his own people, his tribe.

TS Eliot

Born in St Louis, in the United States, TS Eliot moved to England in 1914 at the age of 25. He eventually became a British subject and renounced his American passport. In 1948, he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature.

Eliot's study of Dante's poetry and English writers John Webster and John Donne, as well as the French symbolist Jules Laforgue contributed to the development of his style.

One of his most well-known poems, 'The Love Song of J Alfred Prufrock' is seen as a leader in the modernist movement. This masterpiece was followed by 'The Waste Land' (1922), 'The Hollow Men' (1925), 'Ash Wednesday' (1930), and 'Four Quartets' (1943). Eliot was also known for his seven plays, particularly 'Murder in the Cathedral' (1935) and 'The Cocktail Party' (1949).

WH Auden

The poet, author and playwright Wystan Hugh Auden was born in York, England in 1907. Considered one of the greatest English poets of the 20th century, he is known for his versatility and inventiveness, writing poetry in almost every verse form. His work won the Pulitzer Prize in 1948.

Much of his poetry addresses moral issues and there is a strong political, social and psychological underpinning. Like many of his contemporaries, he travelled to Spain during the country's civil war and his earlier work is influenced by his experience in conflict-stricken locations and the teachings of Marx and Freud.

Auden regularly explored the interplay between death and patterns of existence in his work through evocative imagery and figurative language features.

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