

KS4 Recommended Reading List		
Title	Author	Description
'The Great Gatsby'	F.Scott Fitzgerald	<i>Set in Jazz Age New York, it tells the tragic story of Jay Gatsby, a self-made millionaire, and his pursuit of Daisy Buchanan, a wealthy young woman whom he loved in his youth.</i>
'Tess of the D'Urbervilles'	Thomas Hardy	<i>When Tess Durbeyfield is driven by family poverty to claim kinship with the wealthy D'Urbervilles and seek a portion of their family fortune, meeting her 'cousin' Alec proves to be her downfall. A very different man, Angel Clare, seems to offer her love and salvation, but Tess must choose whether to reveal her past or remain silent in the hope of a peaceful future.</i>
'The Bloody Chamber'	Angela Carter	<i>An anthology of 10 short stories based on commonly known fairytales. Angela Carter subverts the tales into dark and sinister versions with traditional gothic conventions to give them an exhilarating new life.</i>
'Wide Sargasso Sea'	Jean Rhys	<i>Born into the oppressive, colonialist society of 1930s Jamaica, white Creole heiress Antoinette Cosway meets a young Englishman who is drawn to her innocent beauty and sensuality. After their marriage, however, disturbing rumours begin to circulate which poison her husband against her. Caught between his demands and her own precarious sense of belonging, Antoinette is inexorably driven towards madness, and her husband into the arms of another novel's heroine. This classic study of betrayal, a seminal work of postcolonial literature, is Jean Rhys's brief, beautiful masterpiece.</i>
'The Handmaid's Tale'	Margaret Atwood	<i>Offred is a Handmaid in The Republic of Gilead, a religious totalitarian state in what was formerly known as the United States. She is placed in the household of The Commander, Fred Waterford - her assigned name, Offred, means 'of Fred'. She has only one function: to breed. If Offred refuses to enter into sexual servitude to repopulate a devastated world, she will be hanged. Yet even a repressive state cannot eradicate hope and desire. As she recalls her pre-revolution life in flashbacks, Offred must navigate through the terrifying landscape of torture and persecution in the present day, and between two men upon which her future hangs.</i>
'Birdsong'	Sebastian Faulks	<i>Stephen Wraysford, a young Englishman, arrives in the French city to stay with the Azaire family. He falls in love with unhappily married Isabelle and the two enter a tempestuous love affair. But, with the world on the brink of war, the relationship falters. With his love for Isabelle forever engraved on his heart, Stephen volunteers to fight on the Western Front and enters the unimaginable dark world beneath the trenches of No Man's Land</i>
'The Help'	Kathryn Stockett	<i>There's Aibileen, raising her seventeenth white child and nursing the hurt caused by her own son's tragic death; Minny, whose cooking is nearly as sassy as her tongue; and white Miss Skeeter, home from College, who wants to know why her beloved maid has disappeared. Skeeter, Aibileen and Minny. No one would believe they'd be friends; fewer still would tolerate it. But as each woman finds the courage to cross boundaries, they come to depend and rely upon one another. Each is in a search of a truth. And together</i>

		<i>they have an extraordinary story to tell...</i>
'The Colour Purple'	Alice Walker	<i>A powerful cultural touchstone of modern American literature, The Color Purple depicts the lives of African American women in early twentieth-century rural Georgia. Separated as girls, sisters Celie and Nettie sustain their loyalty to and hope in each other across time, distance and silence. Through a series of letters spanning twenty years, first from Celie to God, then the sisters to each other despite the unknown, the novel draws readers into its rich and memorable portrayals of Celie, Nettie, Shug Avery and Sofia and their experience.</i>
'Atonement'	Ian McEwan	<i>On a hot summer day in 1935, thirteen-year-old Briony Tallis witnesses the flirtation between her older sister, Cecilia, and Robbie Turner, the son of a servant. But Briony's incomplete grasp of adult motives and her precocious imagination bring about a crime that will change all their lives, a crime whose repercussions Atonement follows through the chaos and carnage of World War II and into the close of the twentieth century.</i>
'Rebecca'	Daphne Du Maurier	<i>Life begins to look very bleak until, on a trip to the South of France, she meets Maxim de Winter, a handsome widower whose sudden proposal of marriage takes her by surprise. Whisked from glamorous Monte Carlo to his brooding estate, Manderley, on the Cornish Coast, the new Mrs de Winter finds Max a changed man. And the memory of his dead wife Rebecca is forever kept alive by the forbidding Mrs Danvers . . .</i>
'Wuthering Heights'	Emily Bronte	<i>Wuthering Heights is a wild, passionate story of the intense and almost demonic love between Catherine Earnshaw and Heathcliff, a foundling adopted by Catherine's father. After Mr Earnshaw's death, Heathcliff is bullied and humiliated by Catherine's brother Hindley and wrongly believing that his love for Catherine is not reciprocated, leaves Wuthering Heights, only to return years later as a wealthy and polished man. He proceeds to exact a terrible revenge for his former miseries.</i>
'Northanger Abbey'	Jane Austen	<i>It tells the story of young, impressionable Catherine Morland, whose first experience of fashionable society introduces her to the thrills of Gothic romances, and to the sophisticated Tilneys, who invite her to their family home, Northanger Abbey. But there, influenced by novels of horror and intrigue, Catherine begins to think that terrible crimes are being committed, and her imagination threatens to run away with her.</i>
'The Scarlett Letter'	Nathaniel Hawthorn	<i>Set in the Puritan Massachusetts Bay Colony during the years 1642 to 1649, the novel tells the story of Hester Prynne, who conceives a daughter with a man to whom she is not married and then struggles to create a new life of repentance and dignity. As punishment, she must wear a scarlet letter 'A' (for "adultery").</i>
'The Picture of Dorian Grey'	Oscar Wilde	<i>Enthralled by his own exquisite portrait, Dorian Gray exchanges his soul for eternal youth and beauty. Influenced by his friend Lord Henry Wotton, he is drawn into a corrupt double life; indulging his desires in secret while remaining a gentleman in the eyes of polite society</i>

'A Room with a View'	E.M.Forster	<p><i>Lucy has her rigid, middle-class life mapped out for her until she visits Florence with her uptight cousin Charlotte, and finds her neatly ordered existence thrown off balance. Her eyes are opened by the unconventional characters she meets at the Pension Bertolini: flamboyant romantic novelist Eleanor Lavish, the Cockney Signora, curious Mr Emerson and, most of all, his passionate son George.</i></p> <p><i>Lucy finds herself torn between the intensity of life in Italy and the repressed morals of Edwardian England, personified in her terminally dull fiancé Cecil Vyse. Will she ever learn to follow her own heart?</i></p>
'A Passage to India'	E.M.Forster	<p><i>When Adela and her elderly companion Mrs Moore arrive in the Indian town of Chandrapore, they quickly feel trapped by its insular and prejudiced British community. Determined to explore the 'real India', they seek the guidance of the charming and mercurial Dr Aziz, a cultivated Indian Muslim. But a mysterious incident occurs while they are exploring the Marabar caves with Aziz, and the well-respected doctor soon finds himself at the centre of a scandal that rouses violent passions among both the British and their Indian subjects</i></p>
'The Yellow Wallpaper'	Charlotte Perkins Gilman	<p><i>Narrated with superb psychological skill and dramatic precision, it tells the story of a nameless woman driven mad by enforced confinement after the birth of her child.</i></p> <p><i>Isolated in a colonial mansion in the middle of nowhere, forced to sleep in an attic nursery with barred windows and sickly yellow wallpaper, secretly she does what she has to do - she writes. She craves intellectual stimulation, activity, loving understanding, instead she is ordered to her bedroom to rest and 'pull herself together'. Here, slowly but surely, the tortuous pattern of the wallpaper winds its way into the recesses of her mind...</i></p>
'The Kite Runner'	Khaled Hosseini	<p><i>Afghanistan, 1975: Twelve-year-old Amir is desperate to win the local kite-fighting tournament and his loyal friend Hassan promises to help him. But neither of the boys can foresee what will happen to Hassan that afternoon, an event that is to shatter their lives. After the Russians invade and the family is forced to flee to America, Amir realises that one day he must return to Afghanistan under Taliban rule to find the one thing that his new world cannot grant him: redemption.</i></p>
'A Thousand Splendid Suns'	Khaled Hosseini	<p><i>Mariam is only fifteen when she is sent to Kabul to marry Rasheed. Nearly two decades later, a friendship grows between Mariam and a local teenager, Laila, as strong as the ties between mother and daughter.</i></p> <p><i>When the Taliban take over, life becomes a desperate struggle against starvation, brutality and fear.</i></p> <p><i>Yet love can move a person to act in unexpected ways, and lead them to overcome the most daunting obstacles with a startling heroism.</i></p>

'Dracula'	Bram Stoker	<p><i>When Jonathan Harker visits Transylvania to help Count Dracula purchase a London house, he makes horrifying discoveries in his client's castle. Soon afterwards, disturbing incidents unfold in England: a ship runs aground on the shores of Whitby, its crew vanished; beautiful Lucy Westenra slowly succumbs to a mysterious, wasting illness, her blood drained away; and the lunatic Renfield raves about the imminent arrival of his 'master'. In the ensuing battle of wills between the sinister Count and a determined group of adversaries - led by the intrepid vampire hunter Abraham van Helsing - Bram Stoker created a masterpiece of the horror genre, probing into questions of identity, sanity and the dark corners of Victorian sexuality and desire.</i></p>
'In Cold Blood'	Truman Capote	<p><i>Controversial and compelling, In Cold Blood reconstructs the murder in 1959 of a Kansas farmer, his wife and both their children. Truman Capote's comprehensive study of the killings and subsequent investigation explores the circumstances surrounding this terrible crime and the effect it had on those involved.</i></p>
'The Secret Life of Bees'	Sue Monk-Kidd	<p><i>Lily has grown up believing she accidentally killed her mother when she was four years old. Now, at fourteen, she yearns for forgiveness and a mother's love. Living on a peach farm in South Carolina with her harsh and unforgiving father, she has only one friend, Rosaleen, a black servant. When racial tension explodes one summer afternoon, and Rosaleen is arrested and beaten, Lily chooses to flee with her. Fugitives from justice, the pair follow a trail left by the woman who died ten years before. Finding sanctuary in the home of three beekeeping sisters, Lily starts a journey as much about her understanding of the world as about the mystery surrounding her mother.</i></p>
'The Road'	Cormac McCarthy	<p><i>In a burned-out America, a father and his young son walk under a darkened sky, heading slowly for the coast. They have no idea what, if anything, awaits them there. The landscape is destroyed, nothing moves save the ash on the wind and cruel, lawless men stalk the roadside, lying in wait. Attempting to survive in this brave new world, the young boy and his protector have nothing but a pistol to defend themselves. They must keep walking.</i></p>
'Great Expectations'	Charles Dickens	<p><i>Dickens's haunting late novel depicts the education and development of a young man, Pip, as his life is changed by a series of events - a terrifying encounter with an escaped convict in a graveyard on the wild Kent marshes; a summons to meet the bitter, decaying Miss Havisham and her beautiful, cold-hearted ward Estella; the sudden generosity of a mysterious benefactor - and he discovers the true nature of his 'great expectations'.</i></p>
'Small Island'	Andrea Levy	<p><i>It is 1948, and England is recovering from a war. But at 21 Nevern Street, London, the conflict has only just begun. Queenie Bligh's neighbours do not approve when she agrees to take in Jamaican lodgers, but Queenie doesn't know when her husband will return, or if he will come back at all. What else can she do?</i></p>

		<p><i>Gilbert Joseph was one of the several thousand Jamaican men who joined the RAF to fight against Hitler. Returning to England as a civilian he finds himself treated very differently. It's desperation that makes him remember a wartime friendship with Queenie and knock at her door.</i></p> <p><i>Gilbert's wife Hortense, too, had longed to leave Jamaica and start a better life in England. But when she joins him she is shocked to find London shabby, decrepit, and far from the golden city of her dreams. Even Gilbert is not the man she thought he was...</i></p>
'The Bell Jar'	Sylvia Plath	<p><i>When Esther Greenwood wins an internship on a New York fashion magazine in 1953, she is elated, believing she will finally realise her dream to become a writer.</i></p> <p><i>But in between the cocktail parties and piles of manuscripts, Esther's life begins to slide out of control. She finds herself spiralling into depression and eventually a suicide attempt, as she grapples with difficult relationships and a society which refuses to take women's aspirations seriously.</i></p>
NON-FICTION		
'Notes from a Small Island'	Bill Bryson	<p><i>In 1995, before leaving his much-loved home in North Yorkshire to move back to the States for a few years with his family, Bill Bryson insisted on taking one last trip around Britain, a sort of valedictory tour of the green and kindly island that had so long been his home.</i></p> <p><i>His aim was to take stock of the nation's public face and private parts (as it were), and to analyse what precisely it was he loved so much about a country that had produced Marmite; a military hero whose dying wish was to be kissed by a fellow named Hardy; place names like Farleigh Wallop, Titsey and Shellow Bowells; people who said 'Mustn't grumble', and 'Ooh lovely' at the sight of a cup of tea and a plate of biscuits; and Gardeners' Question Time.</i></p>
'Down and Out in Paris and London'	George Orwell	<p><i>Written when Orwell was a struggling writer in his twenties, it documents his 'first contact with poverty'. Here, he painstakingly documents a world of unrelenting drudgery and squalor - sleeping in bug-infested hostels and doss houses of last resort, working as a dishwasher in Paris's vile 'Hotel X', surviving on scraps and cigarette butts, living alongside tramps, a star-gazing pavement artist and a starving Russian ex-army captain.</i></p> <p><i>Exposing a shocking, previously-hidden world to his readers, Orwell gave a human face to the statistics of poverty for the first time - and in doing so, found his voice as a writer.</i></p>
'Twelve Years a Slave'	Solomon Northup	<p><i>Twelve Years a Slave tells the story of Solomon Northup, a free-born man of colour who was kidnapped and sold into slavery in the American South in 1841. His true tale of captivity, torture and abuse brings to life the unimaginable evils of slavery in a time when it was yet to be outlawed.</i></p> <p><i>Equal parts slave, travel, and spiritual narrative, Twelve Years A Slave reveals Northup to be a person of astonishing strength and wisdom.</i></p>

'I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings'	Maya Angelou	<p><i>Loving the world, she also knows its cruelty. As a Black woman she has known discrimination and extreme poverty, but also hope, joy, achievement and celebration.</i></p> <p><i>In I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings, Maya Angelou beautifully evokes her childhood with her grandmother in the American south of the 1930s. She learns the power of the white folks at the other end of town and suffers the terrible trauma of rape by her mother's lover.</i></p>
POETRY		
'The Goblin Market'	Christina Rossetti	<p><i>This is a faery tarot with a difference, uncompromising in its portrayal of faeries as they really are: sly, frequently cruel, cleverer than humans and full of secrets, rather than the whimsical, sweet-natured creatures beloved of the Victorians and the New Age. It's the world of Christina Rossetti's Goblin Market, a place where all denizens of the Otherworld come to buy and sell, to mingle and exchange gossip. It is a place unsafe for humans.</i></p>
'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner'	Samuel Taylor Coleridge	<p><i>In The Rime of the Ancient Mariner, one of the best-known and best-loved poems in the English language, a grizzled old sailor stops a man on his way to a wedding and tells a terrifying story. He speaks of how he doomed the crew of his ship by shooting dead an albatross, awakened the wrath of ocean spirits, met Death himself, and must now walk the earth for ever and share his tragic tale of sin, guilt and - ultimately - redemption.</i></p>
DRAMA AND PLAY TEXTS		
'Death of a Salesman'	Arthur Miller	<p><i>Willy Loman is on his last legs. Failing at his job, dismayed at his the failure of his sons, Biff and Happy, to live up to his expectations, and tortured by his jealousy at the success and happiness of his neighbour Charley and his son Bernard, Willy spirals into a well of regret, reminiscence, and A scathing indictment of the ultimate failure of the American dream, and the empty pursuit of wealth and success, is a harrowing journey. In creating Willy Loman, his destructively insecure anti-hero, Miller defined his aim as being 'to set forth what happens when a man does not have a grip on the forces of life'.</i></p>
'A Streetcar Named Desire'	Tennessee Williams	<p><i>Fading southern belle Blanche DuBois is adrift in the modern world. When she arrives to stay with her sister Stella in a crowded, boisterous corner of New Orleans, her delusions of grandeur bring her into conflict with Stella's crude, brutish husband Stanley Kowalski. Eventually their violent collision course causes Blanche's fragile sense of identity to crumble, threatening to destroy her sanity and her one chance of happiness.</i></p>
'King Lear'	William Shakespeare	<p><i>The ageing King Lear, tired of office, decides to split his kingdom between his three daughters, Goneril, Regan and Cordelia; but the decision to allot their share based on the love they express for him proves to be a terrible mistake.</i></p>
'Hamlet'	William Shakespeare	<p><i>In Shakespeare's verbally dazzling and eternally enigmatic exploration of conscience, madness and the nature of humanity, a young prince meets his father's ghost in the middle of the night, who</i></p>

		<i>accuses his own brother - now married to his widow - of murdering him. The prince devises a scheme to test the truth of the ghost's accusation, feigning wild insanity while plotting revenge. But his actions soon begin to wreak havoc on innocent and guilty alike.</i>
'Othello'	William Shakespeare	<i>A soldier of great standing and a newly married man, Othello seems to be in an enviable position. And yet, when his supposed friend sows doubts in his mind about his wife's fidelity, he is gradually consumed by suspicion. In this tragedy of strange, ornate beauty and remarkable psychological power, innocence is corrupted, and goodness and happiness are wantonly destroyed.</i>
'Dr Faustus'	Christopher Marlowe	<i>Weary of academic study, an eminent scholar turns to magic and makes a deal with the Devil. Mephistopheles will serve him and give him whatever he wants, but after twenty-four years Faustus must keep his side of the bargain.</i>
'Educating Rita'	Willy Russell	<i>Hairdresser Rita feels that life is passing her by. She wants an education. But does Frank have anything to teach her? Willy Russell's play gives a hilarious - and often moving - account of a young woman's determination to change her life.</i>