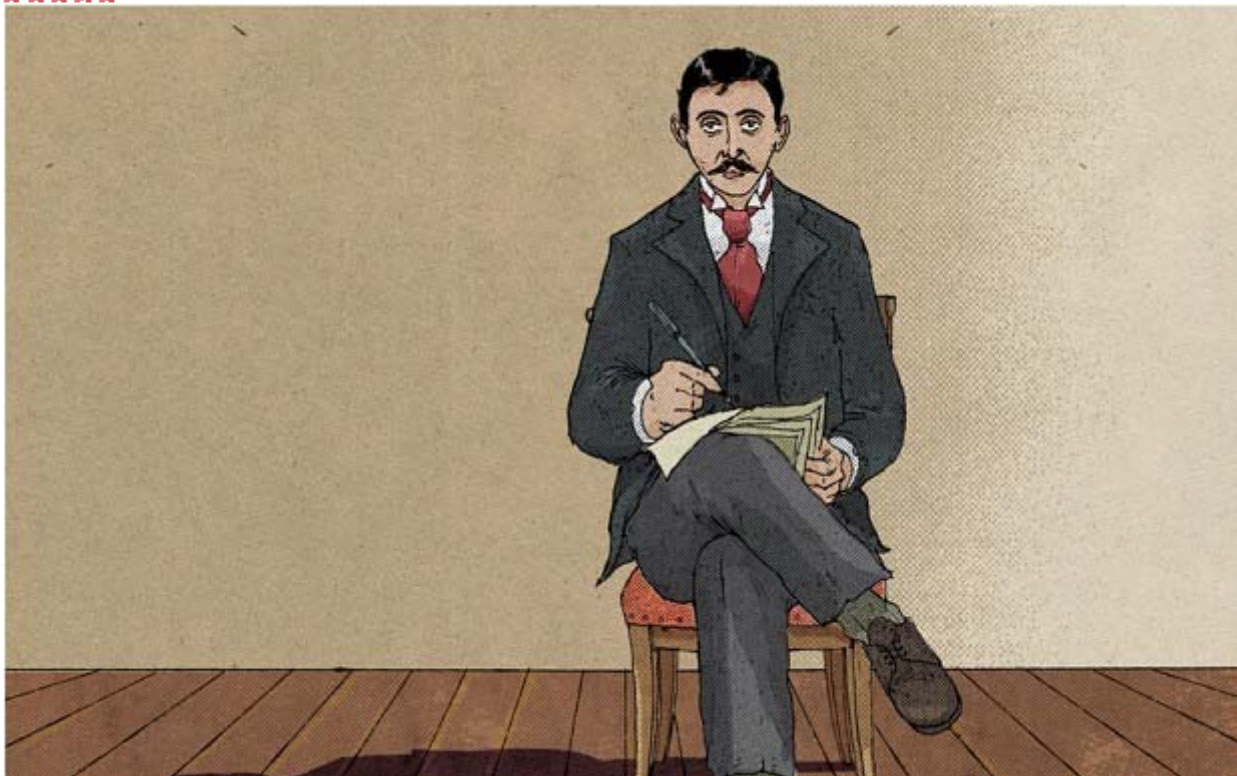


# 100 novels everyone should read

The best novels of all time from Tolkien to Proust and Middlemarch



Marcel Proust Photo: Wesley Merritt

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## 100 **The Lord of the Rings** by JRR Tolkien

WH Auden thought this tale of fantastic creatures looking for lost jewellery was a “masterpiece”.

## 99 **To Kill a Mockingbird** by Harper Lee

A child’s-eye view of racial prejudice and freaky neighbours in Thirties Alabama.

## 98 **The Home and the World** by Rabindranath Tagore

A rich Bengali noble lives happily until a radical revolutionary appears.

## 97 **The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy** by Douglas Adams

Earth is demolished to make way for a Hyperspatial Express Route. Don’t panic.

## 96 **One Thousand and One Nights** Anon

A Persian king’s new bride tells tales to stall post-coital execution.

## 95 **The Sorrows of Young Werther** by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Werther loves Charlotte, but she’s already engaged. Woe is he!

## 94 **Midnight’s Children** by Salman Rushdie

The children of poor Hindus and wealthy Muslims are switched at birth.

## 93 **Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy** by John le Carré

Nursery rhyme provides the code names for British spies suspected of treason.

## 92 **Cold Comfort Farm** by Stella Gibbons

Hilarious satire on doom-laden rural romances. “Something nasty” has been observed in the woodshed.

## 91 **The Tale of Genji** by Lady Murasaki

The life and loves of an emperor’s son. And the world’s first novel?

## 90 **Under the Net** by Iris Murdoch

A feckless writer has dealings with a canine movie star. Comedy and philosophy combined.

**89 The Golden Notebook by Doris Lessing**

Lessing considers communism and women's liberation in what Margaret Drabble calls "inner space fiction".

**88 Eugene Onegin by Alexander Pushkin**

Passion, poetry and pistols in this verse novel of thwarted love.

**87 On the Road by Jack Kerouac**

Beat generation boys aim to "burn, burn, burn like fabulous yellow roman candles".

**86 Old Goriot by Honoré de Balzac**

A disillusioning dose of Bourbon Restoration realism. The anti-hero "Rastignac" became a byword for ruthless social climbing.

**85 The Red and the Black by Stendhal**

Plebian hero struggles against the materialism and hypocrisy of French society with his "force d'ame".

**84 The Three Musketeers by Alexandre Dumas**

"One for all and all for one": the eponymous swashbucklers battle the mysterious Milady.

**83 Germinal by Emile Zola**

Written to "germinate" social change, Germinal unflinchingly documents the starvation of French miners.

**82 The Stranger by Albert Camus**

Frenchman kills an Arab friend in Algiers and accepts "the gentle indifference of the world".

**81 The Name of the Rose by Umberto Eco**

Illuminating historical whodunnit set in a 14th-century Italian monastery.

**READ: The best books of 2014**

**80 Oscar and Lucinda by Peter Carey**

An Australian heiress bets an Anglican priest he can't move a glass church 400km.

**79 Wide Sargasso Sea by Jean Rhys**

Prequel to Jane Eyre giving moving, human voice to the mad woman in the attic.

**78 Alice's Adventures in Wonderland by Lewis Carroll**

Carroll's ludic logic makes it possible to believe six impossible things before breakfast.

**77 Catch-22 by Joseph Heller**

Yossarian feels a homicidal impulse to machine gun total strangers. Isn't that crazy?

**76 The Trial by Franz Kafka**

K proclaims he's innocent when unexpectedly arrested. But "innocent of what"?

**75 Cider with Rosie by Laurie Lee**

Protagonist's "first long secret drink of golden fire" is under a hay wagon.

**74 Waiting for the Mahatma by RK Narayan**

Gentle comedy in which a Gandhi-inspired Indian youth becomes an anti-British extremist.

**73 All Quiet on the Western Front by Erich Remarque**

The horror of the Great War as seen by a teenage soldier.

**72 Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant by Anne Tyler**

Three siblings are differently affected by their parents' unexplained separation.

**71 The Dream of the Red Chamber by Cao Xueqin**

Profound and panoramic insight into 18th-century Chinese society.

**70 The Leopard by Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa**

Garibaldi's Redshirts sweep through Sicily, the "jackals" ousting the nobility, or "leopards".

**69 If On a Winter's Night a Traveller by Italo Calvino**

International book fraud is exposed in this playful postmodernist puzzle.

**68 Crash by JG Ballard**

Former TV scientist preaches “a new sexuality, born from a perverse technology”.

**67 A Bend in the River by VS Naipaul**

East African Indian Salim travels to the heart of Africa and finds “The world is what it is.”

**66 Crime and Punishment by Fyodor Dostoyevsky**

Boy meets pawnbroker. Boy kills pawnbroker with an axe. Guilt, breakdown, Siberia, redemption.

**65 Dr Zhivago by Boris Pasternak**

Romantic young doctor’s idealism is trampled by the atrocities of the Russian Revolution.

**64 The Cairo Trilogy by Naguib Mahfouz**

Follows three generations of Cairenes from the First World War to the coup of 1952.

**63 The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde by Robert Louis Stevenson**

Stevenson’s “bogey tale” came to him in a dream.

**62 Gulliver’s Travels by Jonathan Swift**

Swift’s scribulous satire on travellers’ tall tales (the Lilliputian Court is really George I’s).

**61 My Name Is Red by Orhan Pamuk**

A painter is murdered in Istanbul in 1591. Unusually, we hear from the corpse.

**60 One Hundred Years of Solitude by Gabriel García Márquez**

Myth and reality melt magically together in this Colombian family saga.

**59 London Fields by Martin Amis**

A failed novelist steals a woman’s trashed diaries which reveal she’s plotting her own murder.

**58 The Savage Detectives by Roberto Bolaño**

Gang of South American poets travel the world, sleep around, challenge critics to duels.

**57 The Glass Bead Game by Herman Hesse**

Intellectuals withdraw from life to play a game of musical and mathematical rules.

**56 The Tin Drum by Günter Grass**

Madhouse memories of the Second World War. Key text of European magic realism.

**55 Austerlitz by WG Sebald**

Paragraph-less novel in which a Czech-born historian traces his own history back to the Holocaust.

**54 Lolita by Vladimir Nabokov**

Scholar’s sexual obsession with a prepubescent “nymphet” is complicated by her mother’s passion for him.

**53 The Handmaid’s Tale by Margaret Atwood**

After nuclear war has rendered most sterile, fertile women are enslaved for breeding.

**52 The Catcher in the Rye by JD Salinger**

Expelled from a “phony” prep school, adolescent anti-hero goes through a difficult phase.

**51 Underworld by Don DeLillo**

From baseball to nuclear waste, all late-20th-century American life is here.

**50 Beloved by Toni Morrison**

Brutal, haunting, jazz-inflected journey down the darkest narrative rivers of American slavery.

**49 The Grapes of Wrath by John Steinbeck**

“Okies” set out from the Depression dustbowl seeking decent wages and dignity.

**48 Go Tell It On the Mountain by James Baldwin**

Explores the role of the Christian Church in Harlem’s African-American community.

**47 The Unbearable Lightness of Being by Milan Kundera**

A doctor's infidelities distress his wife. But if life means nothing, it can't matter.

**46 The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie by Muriel Spark**

A meddling teacher is betrayed by a favourite pupil who becomes a nun.

**45 The Voyeur by Alain Robbe-Grillet**

Did the watch salesman kill the girl on the beach. If so, who heard?

**44 Nausea by Jean-Paul Sartre**

A historian becomes increasingly sickened by his existence, but decides to muddle on.

**43 The Rabbit books by John Updike**

A former high school basketball star is unsatisfied by marriage, fatherhood and sales jobs.

**42 The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn by Mark Twain**

A boy and a runaway slave set sail on the Mississippi, away from Antebellum "civilisation".

**41 The Hound of the Baskervilles by Arthur Conan Doyle**

A drug addict chases a ghostly dog across the midnight moors.

**40 The House of Mirth by Edith Wharton**

Lily Bart craves luxury too much to marry for love. Scandal and sleeping pills ensue.

**39 Things Fall Apart by Chinua Achebe**

A Nigerian yam farmer's local leadership is shaken by accidental death and a missionary's arrival.

**38 The Great Gatsby by F Scott Fitzgerald**

A mysterious millionaire's love for a woman with "a voice full of money" gets him in trouble.

**37 The Warden by Anthony Trollope**

"Of all novelists in any country, Trollope best understands the role of money," said W?H Auden.

**36 Les Misérables by Victor Hugo**

An ex-convict struggles to become a force for good, but it ends badly.

**35 Lucky Jim by Kingsley Amis**

An uncommitted history lecturer clashes with his pompous boss, gets drunk and gets the girl.

**34 The Big Sleep by Raymond Chandler**

"Dead men are heavier than broken hearts" in this hardboiled crime noir.

**33 Clarissa by Samuel Richardson**

Epistolary adventure whose heroine's bodice is savagely unlaced by the brothel-keeping Robert Lovelace.

**32 A Dance to the Music of Time by Anthony Powell**

Twelve-book saga whose most celebrated character wears "the wrong kind of overcoat".

**31 Suite Française by Irène Némirovsky**

Published 60 years after their author was gassed, these two novellas portray city and village life in Nazi-occupied France.

**30 Atonement by Ian McEwan**

Puts the "c" word in the classic English country house novel.

**29 Life: a User's Manual by Georges Perec**

The jigsaw puzzle of lives in a Parisian apartment block. Plus empty rooms.

**28 Tom Jones by Henry Fielding**

Thigh-thwacking yarn of a foundling boy sewing his wild oats before marrying the girl next door.

**27 Frankenstein by Mary Shelley**

Human endeavours "to mock the stupendous mechanism of the Creator of the world" have tragic consequences.

**26 Cranford by Elizabeth Gaskell**

Northern villagers turn their bonnets against the social changes accompanying the industrial revolution.

**25 The Moonstone by Wilkie Collins**

Hailed by TS Eliot as “the first, the longest, and the best of modern English detective novels”.

**24 Ulysses by James Joyce**

Modernist masterpiece reworking of Homer with humour. Contains one of the longest “sentences” in English literature: 4,391 words.

**23 Madame Bovary by Gustave Flaubert**

Buying the lies of romance novels leads a provincial doctor’s wife to an agonising end.

**22 A Passage to India by EM Forster**

A false accusation exposes the racist oppression of British rule in India.

**21 1984 by George Orwell**

In which Big Brother is even more sinister than the TV series it inspired.

**20 Tristram Shandy by Laurence Sterne**

Samuel Johnson thought Sterne’s bawdy, experimental novel was too odd to last. Pah!

**19 The War of the Worlds by HG Wells**

Bloodsucking Martian invaders are wiped out by a dose of the sniffles.

**18 Scoop by Evelyn Waugh**

Waugh based the hapless junior reporter in this journalistic farce on former Telegraph editor Bill Deedes.

**17 Tess of the D’Urbervilles by Thomas Hardy**

Sexual double standards are held up to the cold, Wessex light in this rural tragedy.

**16 Brighton Rock by Graham Greene**

A seaside sociopath mucks up murder and marriage in Greene’s literary Punch and Judy show.

**15 The Code of the Woosters by PG Wodehouse**

A scrape-prone toff and pals are suavely manipulated by his gentleman’s personal gentleman.

**14 Wuthering Heights by Emily Brontë**

Out on the winding, windy moors Cathy and Heathcliff become each other’s “souls”. Then he storms off.

**13 David Copperfield by Charles Dickens**

Debt and deception in Dickens’s semi-autobiographical Bildungsroman crammed with cads, creeps and capital fellows.

**12 Robinson Crusoe by Daniel Defoe**

A slave trader is shipwrecked but finds God, and a native to convert, on a desert island.

**11 Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen**

Every proud posh boy deserves a prejudiced girl. And a stately pile.

**10 Don Quixote by Miguel de Cervantes**

Picaresque tale about quinquagenarian gent on a skinny horse tilting at windmills.

**9 Mrs Dalloway by Virginia Woolf**

Septimus’s suicide doesn’t spoil our heroine’s stream-of-consciousness party.

**8 Disgrace by JM Coetzee**

An English professor in post-apartheid South Africa loses everything after seducing a student.

**7 Jane Eyre by Charlotte Brontë**

Poor and obscure and plain as she is, Mr Rochester wants to marry her. Illegally.

**6 In Search of Lost Time by Marcel Proust**

Seven-volume meditation on memory, featuring literature’s most celebrated lemony cake.

**5 Heart of Darkness by Joseph Conrad**

“The conquest of the earth,” said Conrad, “is not a pretty thing.”

**4 The Portrait of a Lady by Henry James**

An American heiress in Europe “affronts her destiny” by marrying an adulterous egoist.

**3 Anna Karenina by Leo Tolstoy**

Tolstoy’s doomed adulteress grew from a daydream of “a bare exquisite aristocratic elbow”.

**2 Moby-Dick by Herman Melville**

Monomaniacal Captain Ahab seeks vengeance on the white whale which ate his leg.

**1 Middlemarch by George Eliot**

“One of the few English novels written for grown-up people,” said Virginia Woolf.