

## Reading beyond the classroom Key Stage 4 English Language and Literature

# BYRCHALL HIGH SCHOOL

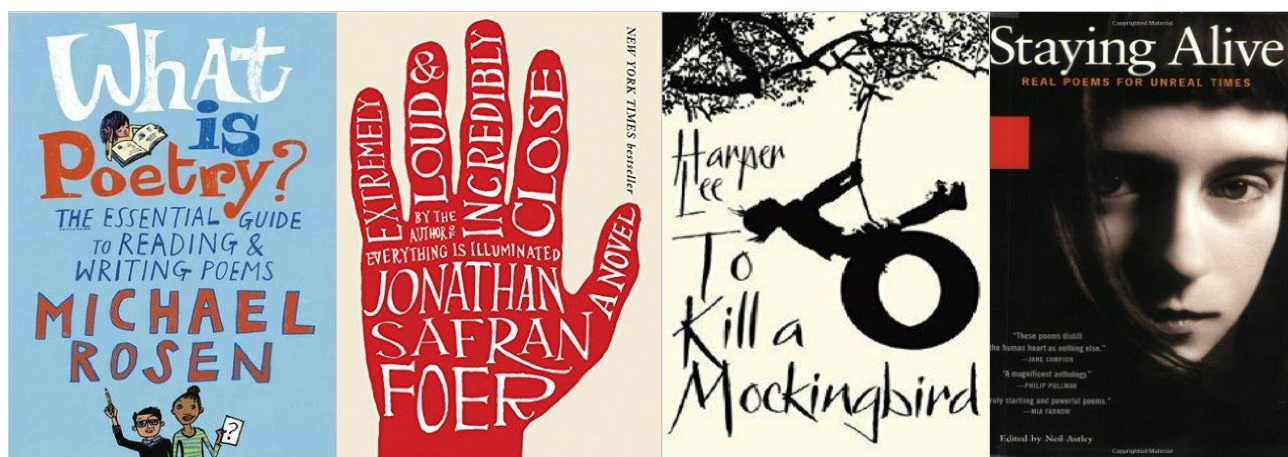
While in Years 10 and 11 students should try and read a wide variety of books and poetry. The more students read then the better and more disciplined they become at writing as they witness a range of writing styles, techniques and deliberate use of structure and punctuation.

You may find the following websites useful in helping to choose suitable reading material for your child.

[www.readingmatters.co.uk](http://www.readingmatters.co.uk)  
[www.booktrustchildrensbook.org.uk/Teenager-Books](http://www.booktrustchildrensbook.org.uk/Teenager-Books)  
[www.cool-reads.co.uk](http://www.cool-reads.co.uk)  
[www.lovereadings4kids.co.uk](http://www.lovereadings4kids.co.uk)  
[www.ukchildrensbooks.co.uk](http://www.ukchildrensbooks.co.uk)  
[www.thepoetryhour.com](http://www.thepoetryhour.com)

These websites will provide you with recommendations from students, parents and critics across the country.

In addition to this, my recommendations follow below. These texts do not form part of our schemes of work so reading them will not spoil students' enjoyment of future lessons. They will most likely complement the work we do.



### Non-fiction

Terry Pratchett      *A Slip of the Keyboard: Collected Non-fiction*

Terry Pratchett earned a place in the hearts of readers the world over with his bestselling Discworld series – but in recent years he became equally well-known as an outspoken campaigner for causes including Alzheimer's research and animal rights. *A Slip of the Keyboard* brings together the best of Pratchett's non-fiction writing on his life, on his work, and on the weirdness of the world: from Granny Pratchett to Gandalf's love life; from banana daiquiris to books that inspired him; from getting started as a writer to the injustices that he fought to end.

Rosemary J Mundhenk      *Victorian Prose: an Anthology*

This anthology covers non-fiction writings from a range of well-known Victorian writers covering a plethora of issues that were central to Victorian life. It is an essential read for students who wish to familiarise themselves with the language of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and the complex vocabulary and sentence structure they are likely to encounter

Maya Angelou                      *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*

Sent by their mother to live with their devout, self-sufficient grandmother in a small Southern town, Maya and her brother, Bailey, endure the ache of abandonment and the prejudice of the local "powhitetrash." At eight years old and back at her mother's side in St. Louis, Maya is attacked by a man many times her age—and has to live with the consequences for a lifetime. Years later, in San Francisco, Maya learns that love for herself, the kindness of others, her own strong spirit, and the ideas of great authors ("I met and fell in love with William Shakespeare") will allow her to be free instead of imprisoned. Poetic and powerful, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* will touch hearts and change minds for as long as people read.

Sal Polisi                              *The Sinatra Club: My Life Inside the New York Mafia*

As a member of New York's feared Colombo Family, Polisi ran The Sinatra Club, an illegal after-hours gambling den that was a magic kingdom of crime and a hangout for up-and-coming mobsters like John Gotti and the three wise guys immortalized in Martin Scorsese's *GoodFellas*—Henry Hill, Jimmy Burke, and Tommy DeSimone. But the nonstop thrills of Polisi's criminal glory days abruptly ended when he was busted for drug trafficking. Already sickened by the bloodbath that engulfed the Mob as it teetered toward extinction, he flipped and became one of a breed he had loathed all his life—a rat. In this shocking, pulse-pounding, and, at times, darkly hilarious first-person chronicle, he paints a never-before-seen picture of a larger-than-life secret underworld that, thanks to guys like him, no longer exists.

### **Fiction: historical/war**

Kurt Vonnegut                      *Slaughterhouse 5*

Kurt Vonnegut's absurdist classic *Slaughterhouse-Five* introduces us to Billy Pilgrim, a man who becomes unstuck in time after he is abducted by aliens from the planet Tralfamadore. In a plot-scrambling display of virtuosity, we follow Pilgrim simultaneously through all phases of his life, concentrating on his (and Vonnegut's) shattering experience as an American prisoner of war who witnesses the firebombing of Dresden.

Don DeLillo                              *Libra*

In this powerful, eerily convincing fictional speculation on the assassination of John F. Kennedy, Don DeLillo chronicles Lee Harvey Oswald's odyssey from troubled teenager to a man of precarious stability who imagines himself an agent of history. When "history" presents itself in the form of two disgruntled CIA operatives who decide that an unsuccessful attempt on the life of the president will galvanize the nation against communism, the scales are irrevocably tipped. A gripping, masterful blend of fact and fiction, alive with meticulously portrayed characters both real and created, *Libra* is a grave, haunting, and brilliant examination of an event that has become an indelible part of the American psyche.

Hilary Mantell                      *Wolf Hall and Bringing Out the Bodies*

England in the 1520s is a heartbeat from disaster. If the king dies without a male heir, the country could be destroyed by civil war. Henry VIII wants to annul his marriage of twenty years and marry Anne Boleyn. The pope and most of Europe opposes him. Into this impasse steps Thomas Cromwell: a wholly original man, a charmer and a bully, both idealist and opportunist, astute in reading people, and implacable in his ambition. But Henry is volatile: one day tender, one day murderous. Cromwell helps him break the opposition, but what will be the price of his triumph?

### **Fiction: action and adventure**

Yann Martel                              *The Life of Pi*

After the tragic sinking of a cargo ship, a solitary lifeboat remains bobbing on the wild, blue Pacific. The only survivors from the wreck are a sixteen year-old boy named Pi, a hyena, a zebra (with a broken leg), a female orang-utan -- and a 450-pound Royal Bengal tiger. The scene is set for one of the most extraordinary and best-loved works of fiction in recent years

Khaled Hosseini      *The Kite Runner*

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.

Markus Zusak      *The Book Thief*

It is 1939. In Nazi Germany, the country is holding its breath. Death has never been busier - and will become busier still. By her brother's graveside, Liesel's life is changed forever when she picks up a single object, abandoned in the snow. It is The Gravedigger's Handbook, and this is her first act of book thievery. So begins Liesel's love affair with books and words, and soon she is stealing from Nazi book-burnings, the mayor's wife's library . . . wherever there are books to be found. But these are dangerous times, and when Liesel's foster family hides a Jew in their basement, nothing will ever be the same again.

### **Fiction: family and relationships**

Arundhati Roy      *The God of Small Things*

Compared favorably to the works of Faulkner and Dickens, Arundhati Roy's Booker Prize winning debut novel is a modern classic that has been read and loved worldwide. Equal parts powerful family saga, forbidden love story, and piercing political drama, it is the story of an affluent Indian family forever changed by one fateful day in 1969. The seven-year-old twins Estha and Rahel see their world shaken irrevocably by the arrival of their beautiful young cousin, Sophie.

Anita Desai      *Fire on the Mountain*

Nanda Kul is old. She has chosen to spend her last years high in the mountains, but her solitude is broken with the arrival of her great-granddaughter, Raka. Through the long hot summer, hidden dependencies and old wounds are uncovered, until tragedy becomes inevitable. This is a heart-breaking and compelling read.

Rohinton Mistry      *A Fine Balance*

With a compassionate realism and narrative sweep that recall the work of Charles Dickens, this magnificent novel captures all the cruelty and corruption, dignity and heroism, of India. The time is 1975. The place is an unnamed city by the sea. The government has just declared a State of Emergency, in whose upheavals four strangers--a spirited widow, a young student uprooted from his idyllic hill station, and two tailors who have fled the caste violence of their native village--will be thrust together, forced to share one cramped apartment and an uncertain future.

Harper Lee      *To Kill a Mockingbird*

The unforgettable novel of a childhood in a sleepy Southern town and the crisis of conscience that rocked it, *To Kill a Mockingbird* became both an instant bestseller and a critical success when it was first published in 1960. It went on to win the Pulitzer Prize in 1961 and was later made into an Academy Award-winning film, also a classic. Compassionate, dramatic, and deeply moving, *To Kill a Mockingbird* takes readers to the roots of human behaviour - to innocence and experience, kindness and cruelty, love and hatred, humour and pathos.

### **Fiction: fantasy**

Terry Pratchett      *The Discworld Series*

This series has been a worldwide phenomenon. Hilarious, bizarre and still somehow utterly connected with reality, these novels really do offer a world for the reader to disappear into. Take care when reading on the bus as Pratchett's unique writing style may have you guffawing loudly and making a fool of yourself. You've been warned.

Philip Pullman                    *Once Upon a Time in the North*

When Lyra is studying at Oxford University, she comes across the story of Lee Scoresby and Iorek Byrnison's first meeting, many years ago, along with much evidence of the adventure that brought them together. When a young Texan balloonist, Lee Scoresby, comes down to earth in the harbour of an Arctic town in the North, little does he realise that he is about to be embroiled in an out-and-out political brawl. Lee and his daemon, Hester, find themselves the target of political factions trying to take over the running (and oil) of the town. And also resident in the town are huge arctic bears, ignored and patronised by the people and treated like second-class citizens. When Lee and Iorek first meet, they cement a friendship that will continue throughout their lives, as the tensions and pressure in town lead to a deadly conclusion...

Neil Gaiman                    *The Norse Mythology*

The great Norse myths are woven into the fabric of our storytelling - from Tolkien, Alan Garner and Rosemary Sutcliff to *Game of Thrones* and Marvel Comics. They are also an inspiration for Neil Gaiman's own award-bedecked, bestselling fiction. Now he reaches back through time to the original source stories in a thrilling and vivid rendition of the great Norse tales. Gaiman's gods are thoroughly alive on the page - irascible, visceral, playful, passionate - and the tales carry us from the beginning of everything to Ragnarok and the twilight of the gods. Galvanised by Gaiman's prose, Thor, Loki, Odin and Freya are irresistible forces for modern readers and the crackling, brilliant writing demands to be read aloud around an open fire on a freezing, starlit night.

### **Fiction: horror**

Charlie Higson                    *The Enemy Series*

Charlie Higson's *The Enemy* is the first in a jaw-dropping zombie horror series for teens. Everyone over the age of fourteen has succumbed to a deadly zombie virus and now the kids must keep themselves alive. When the sickness came, every parent, police officer, politician - every adult fell ill. The lucky ones died. The others are crazed, confused and hungry. Only children under fourteen remain, and they're fighting to survive. Now there are rumours of a safe place to hide.

Stephen King                    *The Bazaar of Bad Dreams: Stories*

Stephen King delivers a collection of stories, featuring revelatory autobiographical comments on when, why, and how he came to write (or rewrite) each story. There are thrilling connections between these works—themes of mortality, the afterlife, guilt, and what we would do differently if we could see into the future or correct the mistakes of the past. Magnificent, eerie, and utterly compelling, *The Bazaar of Bad Dreams* is one of Stephen King's finest gifts to readers everywhere—a master storyteller at his very best.

Henry James                    *The Turn of The Screw*

Widely recognized as one of literature's most gripping ghost stories, this classic tale of moral degradation concerns the sinister transformation of two innocent children into flagrant liars and hypocrites. The story begins when a governess arrives at an English country estate to look after Miles, aged ten, and Flora, eight. At first, everything appears normal but then events gradually begin to weave a spell of psychological terror.

Horace Walpole                    *The Castle of Otranto*

In a faraway medieval realm, Manfred, an arrogant and evil prince, rules with an iron fist. Banishing his wife to the castle dungeon, he confines — and plans to wed — the lovely Isabella, fiancée of his recently deceased son. The prince's plans are foiled, however, when a well-meaning peasant helps the young woman escape through the castle's underground passages. Grisly, supernatural events further aid in fulfilling a prophecy that spells doom for the prince and justice for Isabella's rescuer and rightful heir to the throne. One of the first and greatest of Gothic novels, this thrilling tale ranks among the most influential books in literary history.

## **Fiction: mystery and thriller**

John Green      *Paper Towns*

When Margo Roth Spiegelman beckons Quentin Jacobsen in the middle of the night—dressed like a ninja and plotting an ingenious campaign of revenge—he follows her. Margo's always planned extravagantly, and, until now, she's always planned solo. After a lifetime of loving Margo from afar, things are finally looking up for Q . . . until day breaks and she has vanished. Always an enigma, Margo has now become a mystery. But there are clues. And they're for Q.

Johnathan S. Foer      *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*

Nine-year-old Oskar Schell has embarked on an urgent, secret mission that will take him through the five boroughs of New York. His goal is to find the lock that matches a mysterious key that belonged to his father, who died in the World Trade Center on the morning of September 11. This seemingly impossible task will bring Oskar into contact with survivors of all sorts on an exhilarating, affecting, often hilarious, and ultimately healing journey. Don't be put off by the young protagonist, this is no bedtime story; it's a seriously sassy and compelling narrative with complex ideas and language to challenge any reader.

## **Poetry**

Edna Longley      *The Bloodaxe Book of Twentieth Century Poetry*

This rich and vital anthology of fifty-nine poets and more than 350 poems offers readers intricate conversations between poets and poems, between the living and the dead, between the present and the future. It is a book that will enrich the reader's experience and understanding of modern poetry. Edna Longley shows us the key poets of the century—from England, Scotland, Wales, and the north and south of Ireland—and through inter-linking commentary and biographical sketches points out the connections between them as well as their relationship with the continuing poetic traditions of the British Isles.

Neil Astley      *Staying Alive: Real Poems for Unreal Times*

Assembling a diverse mix of contemporary poets—Mary Oliver, W.H. Auden, Maya Angelou, Billy Collins, Louise Glück, Gwendolyn MacEwen, Rita Dove, and hundreds more—*Staying Alive* is a unique anthology that illuminates the vital force of our humanity, the passion of our aspirations, the power of our spirituality. From the enigma of death to the sweetness of friendship, these poems speak to life's mysteries and consolations and help us navigate the most trying times in recent memory.

Michael Rosen      *What is Poetry?: The Essential Guide to Reading and Writing Poems*

A detailed and very personal guide to reading and writing poetry by one of the country's leading children's poets. Over many years as a working poet, Michael Rosen has thought a great deal about what poems are, what they can do and the pleasure that comes from writing and reading poetry. Starting with a detailed analysis of a number of classic poems, he offers a real "writer's guide" to writing and performing poems, as well as a wealth of technical information and tips. He then takes a fascinating look at a selection of his own poems and explains how and why he wrote them.

*'A room without books is like a body without a soul'*

**Marcus T. Cicero (Philosopher)**