

# British Literature

Selections due  
1/10/21

Here is a list of classic books written by British authors. Choose four books, numbering them 1-4 in order of preference. I have done an initial screening, but I have not read all these books myself (yet). I encourage you and your parents to research the books and make sure you're comfortable with the content. I will go over your book choices and make the final selections with you.

Each book you read on your own will include a project or paper associated with that book. You will be given detailed instructions and deadlines for each project or paper.

Please make your selections and return this page to Mrs. Woody by January 10, signed by a parent.

## Book choices \_\_\_\_\_

### **Adventures of Sherlock Holmes, The (1892), Sir Arthur Conan Doyle**

The novel is set during the Reign of Terror following the start of the French Revolution. The hero and protagonist, a chivalrous Englishman who rescues aristocrats before they are sent to the guillotine. Sir Percy Blakeney leads a double life: apparently nothing more than a wealthy fop, but in reality a formidable swordsman and a quick-thinking master of disguise and escape artist. The band of gentlemen who assist him are the only ones who know of his secret identity. He is known by his symbol, a simple flower, the scarlet pimpernel.

### **Alice's Adventures in Wonderland (1865), Lewis Carroll**

This book is one of the most popular children's fiction book at a time when the genre was new, yet unlike Victorian fiction of the day, it has no moral. It is also the definitive example of nonsense fiction, a sub-genre of fantasy fiction. It follows the adventures of Alice, who follows a rabbit down a hole into the underground, where she encounters one fantastical situation after another, with much adventure.

### **And Then There Were None (1939), by Agatha Christie**

Agatha Christie, the "Queen of Crime," wrote 66 mystery and crime novels, as well as dozens of other titles. She describes this one as the most difficult one to write. Fans in 100 countries voted this their favorite Agatha Christie novel in 2017.

The book opens when 10 strangers are summoned as weekend guests to a private island. Their host, an eccentric millionaire unknown to all of them, is nowhere to be found. All that the guests have in common is a wicked past, and the fact that they will be killed on the island. When they realize that murders are occurring as described in a rhyme which is framed and hung in every room in the mansion, terror mounts. Before the weekend is out, there will be none. The question is, who is killing them?

### **Animal Farm (1945), by George Orwell**

A farm is taken over by its overworked, mistreated animals. With flaming idealism and stirring slogans, they set out to create a paradise of progress, justice, and equality. Thus the stage is set for one of the most telling satiric fables ever penned -- a razor-edged fairy tale for grown-ups that records the slide from revolution against tyranny to a totalitarian state just as terrible. When *Animal Farm* was first published, it was a metaphor for Stalinist Russia. Today, it is a biting and prescient prophecy of communism, leftism, and socialism around the world.

### **Emma (1815), by Jane Austen**

Jane Austen is the most beloved of the Romantic era novelists, whose six books critique and interpret British society around the turn of the 19th century. The title character of this novel, Emma Woodhouse, is one of Austen's most captivating and vivid characters. Beautiful, spoiled, vain and irrepressibly witty, Emma organizes the lives of the inhabitants of her sleepy little village and plays matchmaker with devastating effect.

### **Innocence of Father Brown, The (1911), G. K. Chesterton**

Arguably the greatest writer and thinker of the 20th Century, Chesterton debated and inspired some of the best-known writers, theologians, philosophers, and military strategists in Western civilization. His Father Brown stories delighted audiences with devilishly cunning mysteries and a detective (a Catholic priest) who is likable, compassionate, witty and clever.

### **Ivanhoe, Sir Walter Scott**

Before the genre "historical fiction" had a name, Sir Walter Scott was writing the Waverly novels. The setting is the late 12th Century as Scott draws together the apparently opposing themes of historical reality and chivalric romance, social realism and high adventure, past and present. Ivanhoe is credited as inspiring a renewed interest in medieval England, heavily influencing tales of Robin Hood.

### **Jane Eyre (1847), by Charlotte Bronte**

*Jane Eyre* follows the experiences of the title character through her growth to adulthood her love for a distant and somewhat unattainable man, and the lessons learned along the way. The novel was the first to focus on its protagonist's moral and spiritual development through a first-person account, in which actions and events are colored by a psychological intensity. It is one of the most widely-read romantic novels of all time.

### **Lord of the Flies (1954), William Golding**

This is a first novel for Golding, and when was published, it was described as “beautifully written,” “tragic,” “completely convincing” and “vivid and enthralling.” It opens with a plane crash on a deserted island, on which a group of boys — and no adults — must survive. As time goes by, the boys form alliances, compete for influence, and attempt to govern themselves, with disastrous and violent results.

### **Lord of the Rings, The (1954) J. R. R. Tolkein**

This epic fantasy novel by author and scholar J. R. R. Tolkein was written as a sequel to his 1937 children's book, *The Hobbit*, but eclipsed its prequel in scope, popularity, depth and impact. In it, hobbits Frodo, Sam, Merry and Pippin travel through Middle Earth, pursued by wraiths and a powerful wizard as they try to destroy a ring created to rule the kings of men.

### **Mutiny on the Bounty (1932), Charles Nordoff & James Norman Hall**

This book is based on the historical mutiny against Lieutenant William Bligh, commanding officer of the “Bounty,” in 1789. The novel tells the story through a fictional first-person narrative of Roger Byam, who, although not one of the mutineers, remains with the *Bounty* after the mutiny. He subsequently returns to Tahiti, and is eventually arrested and taken back to England to face a court-martial. He and several other members of the crew are eventually acquitted. Two sequels were eventually written, making this book 1 of a trilogy.

### **Oliver Twist (1837), by Charles Dickens**

In Dickens' second novel, we meet the orphan Oliver Twist, born in a workhouse, and is sold into apprenticeship with an undertaker. After escaping, Oliver travels to London, where he meets the Artful Dodger, a member of a gang of juvenile pickpockets led by the elderly criminal Fagin. *Oliver Twist* unromantically portrays the sordid lives of criminals, and exposes the cruel treatment of the many orphans in London in the mid-19th century.

### **Passage to India, A (1924) E.M. Forster**

This 1924 novel is set against the backdrop of the British Raj and India's independence movement in the 1920s. It was selected as one of the 100 great works of 20th century English literature by the Modern Library and was included in *Time* magazine's "All Time 100 Novels" list. The story revolves around four characters: Dr. Aziz, his British friend Mr. Cyril Fielding, Mrs. Moore, and Miss Adela Quested. During a trip to the fictitious Marabar Caves Adela thinks she finds herself alone with Dr. Aziz in one of the caves (when in fact he is in an entirely different cave). She panics and flees; it is assumed that Dr. Aziz assaulted her. His trial brings to a boil the common racial tensions and prejudices between Indians and the British during the colonial era.

### **Peter Pan (1904), Sir James Matthew Barrie**

Sir James Matthew Barrie (1860-1937), a Scottish playwright, wrote this book in 1902 in memory of his older brother, David, who died in an ice-skating accident the day before he would have turned 14. In their mother's mind, David was always a boy. James was 6 when it happened, but created the character when he was 42. Peter Pan, the mischievous boy who never grows up, comes to the Darling's proper middle-class home to look for his shadow. He befriends Wendy, John and Michael and teaches them to fly (with a little fairy dust). He and Tinker Bell whisk them off to Never-land where they encounter the Red Indians, the Little Lost Boys, pirates and the dastardly Captain Hook.

### **Pilgrim's Progress, The (1678), John Bunyan**

There is a readable modern-day version that brings this well-told allegory to a new generation of readers. It tells the story of Christian, a man who goes on an epic journey to find the Celestial City (heaven). On the way, he must contend with the wisdom and temptations of the world, many faithful and unfaithful people, and even the Valley of the Shadow of Death. One of the most widely-read books, it contains many Biblical truths, and has never been out of print since the 17th century. Countless books and movies have made reference to this book.

### **Rime of the Ancient Mariner, The (1798), Samuel Taylor Coleridge**

The longest major poem by Coleridge, this was a signal shift to modern poetry and the beginning of British Romantic literature. It relates the events experienced by a mariner who has returned from a long sea voyage. The mariner stops a man on his way to a wedding ceremony and begins to narrate a story. The wedding guest's reaction turns from bemusement to impatience, fear, and fascination as the mariner's story progresses.

### **Rob Roy (1817), Sir Walter Scott**

A blood 'n thunder historical romance/ and a sword 'n saber swashbuckling yarn, set during the bloody era of Bonnie Prince Charlie, this is a tale of adventure in the 18th century, set in the Scottish highlands, whose hero is the legendary maverick outlaw, Rob Roy Macgregor. This is part of the 26 “Waverly Novels,” which at the time, were the most popular and widely-read novels in Europe. The great Romantic-era author Jane Austen once said of the author, “Walter Scott has no business to write novels, especially good ones. It is not fair. He has fame and profit enough as a poet, and should not be taking the bread out of other people's mouths. I do not like him, and do not mean to like Waverley if I can help it — but fear I must.”

### **Robinson Crusoe (1719), Daniel Defoe**

Told in the form of a diary (which led many early readers to believe it was a real event), this book follows the adventures of Robinson Crusoe, who sets sail in 1651 against the wishes of his parents, who would like him to pursue a law degree and career. After a shipwreck, Crusoe spends 28 years on a remote tropical island. During that time, he encounters native cannibals, captives, and mutineers, before ultimately being rescued. But the story doesn't end there. He must now deal with the aftermath of his family thinking he was dead. This book is often credited as marking the beginning of realistic fiction as a literary genre. It is generally seen as a contender for the first English novel.

### **Scarlett Pimpernell, The (1905) Baroness Orczy**

This was first a long-running play in London, which was made into a novel by the same author, the Baroness Orczy. A historical fiction, the novel is set during the Reign of Terror following the start of the French Revolution. Its hero and protagonist is a chivalrous Englishman who rescues aristocrats before they are sent to the guillotine. Sir Percy Blakeney leads a double life, apparently nothing more than a wealthy fop, but in reality a formidable swordsman and a quick-thinking master of disguise and escape artist. The band of gentlemen who assist him are the only ones who know of his secret identity. He is known by his symbol, a simple flower, the scarlet pimpernel.

### **Secret Garden, The (1911), by Frances Hodgson Burnett**

*The Secret Garden* first appeared in a series of magazine articles in America, and was then published as a novel (as many of the popular books of the day were). The story follows Mary Lennox, a neglected and spoiled 10-year-old girl, born in India to wealthy British parents who lived high-society lives and ignored her. After an epidemic kills Mary's parents, the few surviving servants flee the house without Mary. She is sent to England to live with her uncle on the Yorkshire moors in a large manor. There, she discovers a neglected, walled garden, as well as Colin, her uncle's son, who is her age and a cripple. As they work to bring the garden to life, they and the people of the manor also come to life. This is a childhood favorite of several generations of readers.

### **Silas Marner (1861), by George Eliot**

Written by Mary Ann Evans under her pen name, this novel is set in the early years of the 19th century. Silas Marner, a weaver, is falsely accused of stealing the congregation's funds while watching over a sick deacon. The woman Silas was to marry breaks their engagement to marry the man who has framed him. With his life shattered, his trust in God lost, and his heart broken, Silas moves to a rural area where he is unknown. There, an orphan wanders into his house and changes his life. It is said to be the author's favorite book that she ever wrote.

### **Tale of Two Cities, A (1859), Charles Dickens**

One of the top-selling novels of all time, *A Tale of Two Cities* is Dickens' best-known novel. Set in London and Paris at the time of the French Revolution, the novel tells the story of French doctor Manette, his 18-year-long imprisonment in the Bastille in Paris, and his release to live in London with his daughter Lucie, whom he had never met. The story is set against the conditions that led up to the French Revolution and the Reign of Terror. A study in contrasts, the novel opens with the oft-quoted line, "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times ..."

### **Tarzan of the Apes (1914), Edgar Rice Burroughs**

This story follows Tarzan's adventures, from his childhood being raised by apes in the jungle to his eventual encounters with other humans and Western society. So popular was the character that Burroughs continued the series into the 1940s with two dozen sequels. Some sexuality and racially out-dated ideation.

### **Utopia (1816), by Thomas Moore**

Originally published in Latin in 1516, this book tells of a fictional island society and its religious, social and political customs. In this delightful fantasy, Moore describes the "ideal" society: an imaginary island where all work is for the common good. Moore suggests solutions to many of the problems that are being faced in English society in the early 16th century, and Utopia has been interpreted to condone every kind of political theory that transfers power and wealth from the people to the reformers.

### **War of the Worlds, The (1897), H. G. Wells**

When an army of invading Martians lands in England, panic and terror seize the population. The aliens traveling around the country in huge three-legged machines, incinerating all in their path with a heat ray, and spreading toxic gases. This is all described through the first-person account of an eye-witness. Inspiring films, radio dramas, comic-book adaptations, television series and sequels, *The War of the Worlds* is a prototypical work of science fiction which has influenced every alien story that has come since, and is unsurpassed in its ability to thrill, well over a century since it was first published.

Student's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## **2021-22 British Literature Book Choices**

NOTE: The books on this list were chosen for their appeal, suitability and literary importance. To the best of my knowledge, they are appropriate, but I have not read all of these books myself (yet).

Parents are advised to research their students' selections to assure they conform to parental standards of propriety. — Mrs. Woody

My selections, in order of preference:

#1 \_\_\_\_\_

#2 \_\_\_\_\_

#3 \_\_\_\_\_

#4 \_\_\_\_\_

I grant my permission for my child to read any of these four book selections.

Parent Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_