What They’re Reading: A Survey of Current Reading in Online Multigenre Workshop I

In the spirit of Francine Prose’s list of 100 Books to Read Immediately in her Reading Like a Writer, the participants in this semester’s OMW-I made their own lists of 50 Books to Read Immediately. We loosely interpreted “to read immediately”—some people listed books that they intend to read in the near future; some listed books that they thought other writers should read in the near future; some listed books on their syllabi this semester; some listed books that they thought every reader should read.

This list is not a ranking of great books, nor of favorite books, nor even a list of the books the workshop participants feel are “best” or most important; it is a reflection of recent, current, and near-future reading habits, with some texts included from more distant reading experience that the workshop members consider of great value to writing students.

The lists are collated here by:

- Authors who were mentioned multiple times (both multiple books on individual lists and on separate lists—not entirely accurate since occasionally an author would be listed with “all books by,” which is not represented in the list. Those authors were: John Ashbery, Donald Barthelme, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Denis Johnson, Toni Morrison, William Shakespeare (2), and Charles Wright. There were also several authors whose Collected Poems and/or Collected Prose were recommended. They were: William Blake [poetry and prose], Blaise Cendrars [poems], Emily Dickinson, Allen Ginsberg [poems], Ernest Hemingway [stories], Zbigniew Herbert [poems], William Matthews [poems], Flannery O’Conner [stories, x3], Frank O’Hara [poems], Grace Paley [poems], Sylvia Plath [poems, x2], Edgar Allan Poe [tales and poems], Theodore Roethke [poems], Wallace Stevens [poems], Robert Penn Warren [poems], Eudora Welty [stories], William Carlos Williams [poems], Ludwig Wittgenstein [work], W. B. Yeats [poems], Walt Whitman [prose and LofG]
- Texts with multiple mentions
- Authors most frequently cited
- All books collated from the lists

Some interesting results were:

- Blame it on the Wolfes: Tom Wolfe (3) and Thomas Wolfe (2) were cited more frequently than Virginia Woolf (1).

- Stephen King was cited four times—3 for On Writing (the fourth was for Hearts in Atlantis).
• The students are reading a lot of creative nonfiction and hardly any poetry—one of the few poets cited more than once was Tim Burton (the director).

• The only Dickens novel cited was *Great Expectations*. Three books by Bill Bryson were cited, one of them twice, which gives him as many mentions as Dante, Milton, Wordsworth, and John Donne combined.

• The most frequently cited living authors were Denis Johnson and Cormac McCarthy.

• The only living poets who are not primarily film directors who were mentioned twice were Dean Young, David Kirby, and Russell Edson (a prose poet).

• Laurie Notaro and Lynne Truss received the same number of citations (3) as God (of Moses, et al.).
### Multiple Mentions—Authors

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Studs Terkel (2)  Walt Whitman (7)
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Leo Tolstoy (2)  Thomas Wolfe (2)
Lynne Truss (3)  Tom Wolfe (3)
Mark Twain (5)  William Wordsworth (3)
John Updike (2)  Richard Wright (4)
Kurt Vonnegut (2)  W. B. Yeats (3)
Eudor Welty (2)  Dean Young (2)
Multiple Mentions—Text

Leaves of Grass by Walt Whitman (6)
Invisible Man by Ralph Ellison (4)
The Sound and the Fury by William Faulkner (4)
Frankenstein, Mary Shelley (4)
Grapes of Wrath by John Steinbeck (4)
Jane Eyre by Charlotte Bronte (3)
Great Expectations by Charles Dickens (3)
Collected Poems, Emily Dickinson (3)
The Great Gatsby, F. Scott Fitzgerald (3)
The Bible, the God of Moses, et al. (3)
The Sun Also Rises, Ernest Hemingway (3)
The Kite Runner, Khaled Hosseini (3)
On Writing, Stephen King (3)
To Kill a Mockingbird, Harper Lee (3)
Atonement, Ian McEwan (3)
The Complete Stories by Flannery O’Connor (3)
American Pastoral by Philip Roth (3)
The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn by Mark Twain (3)
Native Son by Richard Wright (3)
Collected Poems, W. B. Yeats (3)
Lysistrata, Aristophanes (2)
The Handmaid’s Tale by Margaret Atwood (2)
Wizard of Oz, L. Frank Baum (2)
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One Hundred Years of Solitude, Gabriel Garcia Marquez (2)
Fairy Tales, Brothers Grimm (2)
For Whom the Bell Tolls, Ernest Hemingway (2)
A Moveable Feast, Ernest Hemingway (2)
The Odyssey, Homer (2)
The Triggering Town by Richard Hugo (2)
Jesus’ Son, Denis Johnson (2)
Dubliners, James Joyce (2)
Ulysses, James Joyce (2)
A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man by James Joyce (2)
The Liar’s Club by Mary Karr (2)
Diary of a Catholic Girlhood, Mary McCarthy (2)
Moby Dick, Herman Melville (2)
Death of a Salesman by Arthur Miller (2)
The Things They Carried, Tim O’Brien (2)
The Orchid Thief, Susan Orlean (2)
Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance, Robert Pirsig (2)
Collected Poems, Sylvia Plath (2)
Interview with a Vampire, Ann Rice (2)
The Tempest by William Shakespeare (2)
White Teeth, Zadie Smith (2)
Elements of Style, Strunk & White (2)
Working by Studs Terkel (2)
The Hobbit, J. R. R. Tolkien (2)
Lord of the Rings, J. R. R. Tolkien (2)
War and Peace, Leo Tolstoy (2)
Eats, Shoots & Leaves, Lynne Truss (2)
House of Mirth, Edith Wharton (2)
The Collected Poems of William Carlos Williams (2)
Look Homeward Angel by Thomas Wolfe (2)
The Electric Kook Aid Acid Test, Tom Wolfe (2)
The Prelude by William Wordsworth (2)
**Most Frequently Cited—Authors**

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All Lists Collated (Alphabetical by Author/Editor)

In the Belly of the Beast, Jack Henry Abbott
Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy, Douglass Adams
Watership Down, Richards Adams
The Poet’s Companion, Kim Addonizio and Dorianne Laux
Aesop’s Fables
Party Train (anthology), Robert Alexander, et al., ed.
The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven by Sherman Alexie
The Poetics of the New American Poetry, Donald Allen, editor
The Evil BB Chow and Other Stories, Steve Almond
Lucky Jim, Kingsley Amis
Money, Martin Amis
Flowers in the Attic, V. C. Andrews
Let Me Finish, Roger Angell
I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings, Maya Angelou
Beowulf, Anonymous
Lysistrata, Aristophanes (2)
Bitten, Kelley Armstrong
Every book by John Ashbery
Best American Essays Annual, Robert Atwan, ed.
The Handmaid’s Tale by Margaret Atwood (2)
Cat’s Eye, Margaret Atwood
Oryx and Cake, Margaret Atwood
Pride and Prejudice, Jane Austen
Emma, Jane Austen
Land of Little Rain, Mary Austin
Peter Pan, J. M. Barrie
The Sot-Weed Factor, John Barth
Lost in the Funhouse, John Barth
The Dead Father, Donald Barthelme
City Life, Donald Barthelme
Every book by Donald Barthelme
Paris Spleen, Charles Baudelaire
Wizard of Oz, L. Frank Baum (2)
A Long Way Gone, Ishmael Beah
Libby: The Alaskan Diaries of Libby Beaman
Waiting for Godot by Samuel Beckett (2)
Herzog, Saul Bellow
The Hedgehog and the Fox, Isaiah Berlin
A Poetics, Charles Bernstein
The Dream Songs by John Berryman
The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake
City of a Hundred Fires, Richard Blanco
Weetzie Bat, Francesca Lia Block
A Dance at the Slaughterhouse, Lawrence Block
Leaping Poetry, Robert Bly
*A Man for All Seasons*, Robert Bolt
*The Pine Barrens Odyssey*, Howard Boyd
*World’s End*, T. C. Boyle
*Here if You Need Me*, Kate Braestrup
*Manifestoes of Surrealism*, André Breton
*Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Bronte (3)
*Conversations with Denise Levertov*, ed. Jewell Spears Brooker
*Nine Parts of Desire*, Geraldine Brooks
*World War Z: An Oral History of the Zombie War*, Max Brooks
*Manchild in a Promised Land*, Claude Brown
*The Da Vinci Code*, Dan Brown
*A Walk in the Woods*, Bill Bryson (2)
*The Lost Continent*, Bill Bryson
*A Short History of Nearly Everything*, Bill Bryson
*A Clockwork Orange*, Anthony Burgess
*Cimarron Rose*, James Lee Burke
*Running with Scissors*, Augusten Burroughs
*Naked Lunch*, William S. Burroughs
*The Melancholy Death of Oyster Boy and Other Stories*, Tim Burton (2)
*Too Soon to Say Goodbye*, Art Buchwald
*Bullfinch’s Mythology*
*Floor Sample*, Julia Cameron
*If Chins Could Kill: Confessions of a B-Movie Actor*, Bruce Campbell
*The Inner Reaches of Outer Space*, Joseph Campbell
*The Stranger*, Albert Camus
*Cowboy Poetry, A Gathering*, ed. Hal Cannon
*Ender’s Game*, Orson Scott Card
*Love You, Mean It*, Patricia Carrington et al., ed.
*Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, Lewis Carroll
*Glass, Irony, and God*, Anne Carson
*Silent Spring*, Rachel Carson
*The Bloody Chamber*, Angela Carter
*Settin’ the Woods on Fire*, Dan Carter
*What We Talk About When We Talk About Love*, Raymond Carver
*Where I’m Calling From: Selected Stories* by Raymond Carver
*The Price of a Child*, Lorene Cary
*My Antonia*, Willa Cather
*O Pioneers*, Willa Cather
*Collected Poems*, Blaise Cendrars
*Don Quixote*, Cervantes
*Mysteries of Pittsburgh*, Michael Chabon
*Canterbury Tales*, Geoffrey Chaucer
*The Stories of John Cheever* by John Cheever
*Falconer*, John Cheever
*Alexander Hamilton*, Ron Chernow
The Jack Reacher, Lee Child
The Perks of Being a Wallflower, Stephen Chbosky (2)
The ABC Murders, Agatha Christie
Wit and Wisdom of Winston Churchill
My Life, Bill Clinton
Living History, Hillary Rodham Clinton
Sailing Alone Around the Room, Billy Collins
Heart of Darkness, Joseph Conrad
Some Things Words Can Do, Martha Collins
The Wingless Bird, Catherine Cookson
The Pioneers, James Fenimore Cooper
Giovanna's 86 Circles, Paola Corso
A Feast of Snakes, Harry Crews
Jurassic Park, Michael Crichton
On Humour, Simon Critchle
The Hours, Michael Cunningham
The Inferno, Dante
My Brilliant Career, Miles Davis
The Red Tent, Anita Diamant
Ubik, Philip K. Dick
Great Expectations by Charles Dickens (3)
James Dickey: The Selected Poems by James Dickey
Collected Poems, Emily Dickinson (3)
Slouching Toward Bethlehem, Joan Didion (2)
The Year of Magical Thinking, Joan Didion
Verses, Ani DiFranco
The Living, Annie Dillard
Teaching a Stone to Talk, Annie Dillard
An American Childhood, Annie Dillard
Modern American Memoirs, Annie Dillard, ed.
Ragtime, E. L. Doctorow (2)
The love poems of John Donne
Dinosaur's Halloween, Liza Donnelly
Riding in Cars with Boys, Beverly Donofrio
Crime and Punishment, Fyodor Dostoevsky (2)
Notes from the Underground, Fyodor Dostoevsky
Source, Mark Doty
Hard Country, Sharon Doubiago
A Star Called Henry, Roddy Doyle
What's So Great About America, Dinesh D'Souza
Suburban Nation, Andres Duany, et al.
We Are Their Heaven, Allison Dubois
House of Sand and Fog, Andre Dubus
River Teeth, David James Duncan
Geek Love, Katherine Dunn
Walking Light, Stephen Dunn
Chronicles, Bob Dylan
The Tunnel, Russell Edson (2)
A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius, Dave Eggars
Nickel and Dimed, Barbara Ehrenreich (2)
Founding Brothers, Joseph Ellis
Invisible Man by Ralph Ellison (4)
Twinkie, Deconstructed, Steve Ettlinger
The Virgin Suicides, Jeffrey Eugenides
Medea, Euripides
A Fan’s Notes by Frederick Exley
As I Lay Dying, William Faulkner (2)
The Sound and the Fury by William Faulkner (4)
Light in August by William Faulkner
The History of Tom Jones: A Foundling by Henry Fielding (2)
The Great Gatsby, F. Scott Fitzgerald (3)
This Side of Paradise, F. Scott Fitzgerald
The Short Stories of F. Scott Fitzgerald
The Angel of History, Carolyn Forché
Aspects of the Novel, E. M. Forster
The Coquette, Hannah Webster Foster
The French Lieutenant’s Woman, John Fowles
On the Road with Francis of Assisi, Linda Bird Francke
The Discomfort Zone, Jonathan Franzen
Cold Mountain, Charles Frazier (2)
The Interpretation of Dreams, Sigmund Freud
A Million Little Pieces, James Frey
The Poetry of Robert Frost by Robert Frost (2)
Outlander, Diana Gabaldon
The Sandman, Neil Gaiman
The Poet in New York, Federico Garcia Lorca
One Hundred Years of Solitude, Gabriel Garcia Marquez (2)
Everything by Gabriel Garcia Marquez
Ellen Foster, Kaye Gibbons
Neuromancer, William Gibbons
The Great Fires, Jack Gilbert
Monolithos, Jack Gilbert
Dick for a Day, Fiona Giles
Hypocrite in the Pouffy White Dress, Susan Jane Gilman
Collected Poems, Allen Ginsberg
Can Poetry Matter? Dana Gioia
Blink, Malcolm Gladwell
The Bible, the God of Moses, et al. (3)
The Torn Skirt, Rebecca Godfrey
Kitchen Sink: New and Selected Poems, Albert Goldbarth
Memoirs of a Geisha, Arthur Golden
Spike and Dru: Pretty Maids All in a Row, Christopher Golden
I Never Promised You a Rose Garden, Joanne Greenberg
Still Life with Waterfall, Eamon Grennan
Foul Matter, Martha Grimes
Fairy Tales, Brothers Grimm (2)
Water for Elephants, Sara Gruen
The Game of Humor, Charles Gruner
Snow Falling on Cedars, David Guterson
Born to Win, Woody Guthrie
In Fact: The Best Creative Nonfiction, Lee Gutkind, ed.
Sin and Syntax: Constance Hale
Claims for Poetry, Donald Hall, editor
Far from the Madding Crowd, Thomas Hardy
Letters to a Christian Nation, Sam Harris
A Brief History of Time, Stephen Hawking
The Tools of Empire: Technology and European Imperialism in the 19th Century, Daniel R. Headrick
Funny, Jennifer Michael Hecht
Being and Time Martin Heidegger
Poetry, Language, Though, Martin Heidegger
Stranger in a Strange Land, Robert A. Heinlein
Catch-22, Joseph Heller
Six Plays by Lillian Hellman by Lillian Hellman
The Complete Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway
Nick Adams stories, Ernest Hemingway
The Sun Also Rises, Ernest Hemingway (3)
Farewell to Arms, Ernest Hemingway
For Whom the Bell Tolls, Ernest Hemingway (2)
Old Man and the Sea, Ernest Hemingway
To Have and to Have Not, Ernest Hemingway
A Moveable Feast, Ernest Hemingway (2)
Collected Poems, Zbigniew Herbert
Dispatches, Michael Herr
Siddhartha, Herman Hesse
Steppenwolf, Herman Hesse
Nature Girl, Carl Hiaasen
This Clumsy Living, Bob Hicok
Hard Rain, Tony Hoagland
What Narcissism Means to Me, Tony Hoagland
How to be Idle by Tom Hodgkinson
The Iliad, Homer
The Odyssey, Homer (2)
The Kite Runner, Khaled Hosseini (3)
A Thousand Splendid Suns, Khaled Hosseini
World of Our Fathers, Irving Howe
Things I Didn’t Know, Robert Hughes
The Triggering Town by Richard Hugo

Afterimage, Helen Humphries

The Hotel New Hampshire, John Irving

Until I Find You, John Irving

The Lottery, Shirley Jackson

Life Among the Savages, Shirley Jackson

Raising Demons, Shirley Jackson

Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, Harriet Jacobs

Turn of the Screw, Henry James

Portrait of a Lady, Henry James

The Beast in the Jungle, Henry James

Findings: Essays on the Natural and Unnatural World, Kathleen Jamie

Bitchfest: Ten Years of Cultural Criticism from the Pages of Bitch Magazine, Lisa Jervis and Andi Zeisler, ed.

Jesus’ Son, Denis Johnson

Fiskadoro, Denis Johnson

The Incognito Lounge, Denis Johnson

Everything by Denis Johnson

The Embrace, Aphrodite Jones

The Known World, Edward P. Jones

Salvation Blues by Rodney Jones

Dubliners, James Joyce

Ulysses, James Joyce

A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man by James Joyce

The Trial, Franz Kafka

The Metamorphosis, Franz Kafka

The Liar’s Club by Mary Karr

The Laramie Project, Moises Kaufman, et al.

Girl, Interrupted, Susana Kaysen

The Rackets, Thomas Kelly

Payback, Thomas Kelly

Peeping Tom’s Cabin, X.J. Kennedy

In a Prominent Bar in Seacaucus, X.J. Kennedy

On the Road, Jack Kerouac

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On Writing, Stephen King

Hearts in Atlantis, Stephen King

The Poisonwood Bible, Barbara Kingsolver

Prodigal Summer, Barbara Kingsolver

Animal Dreams, Barbara Kingsolver

The Ha-Ha, David Kirby

I Think I Am Going to Call My Wife Paraguay, David Kirby

Sex, Drugs, and Cocoa Puffs: A Low-Culture Manifesto, Chuck Klosterman

Fargo Rock City, Chuck Klosterman
Neon Vernacular, Yusef Komunyakaa
The Bhagavad Gita, Krishna, et al.
The Book of Laughter and Forgetting, Milan Kundera
The Unbearable Lightness of Being, Milan Kundera
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Masculine Interest, Robert Lang
Devil in the White City, Erik Larsen
Aloft, Change-Rae Lee
To Kill a Mockingbird, Harper Lee (3)
Rose, Li Young Lee
Best American Poetry Annual, David Lehman, ed.
La Brava, Elmore Leonard
Freaky Deaky, Elmore Leonard
New Selected Poems by Philip Levine
The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe, CS Lewis
Paris 1919, Margaret MacMillan
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Film Theory and Criticism, Mast and Cable
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The Painted Veil, Somerset Maugham
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All the Pretty Horses, Cormac McCarthy
The Crossing, Cormac McCarthy
Suttree, Cormac McCarthy
Blood Meridian, Cormac McCarthy
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Teacher Man, Frank McCourt
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Amsterdam, Ian McEwan
Atonement, Ian McEwan (3)
The Point is to Change It: Poetry and Criticism in the Continuing Present, Jerome McGann
Bright Lights, Big City, Jay McInerney
Lonesome Dove, Larry McMurtry
The Evening Star, Larry McMurtry
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Moby Dick, Herman Melville (2)
The Witness of Poetry, Czeslaw Milosz
The Crucible, Arthur Miller
Death of a Salesman by Arthur Miller (2)
Paradise Lost, John Milton
Revelations: Diaries of Women, Mary Jane Moffat and Charlotte Painter, ed.
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Song of Solomon, Toni Morrison
The Language of Life, Bill Moyers
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Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms, Ross Murfin
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Residence on Earth, Pablo Neruda
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We Thought You Would Be Prettier, Laurie Notaro
Faithless, Joyce Carol Oates
The Best American Essays of the Century, Joyce Carol Oates, ed.
The Things They Carried, Tim O’Brien (2)
The Habit of Being: Letters of Flannery O’Connor
The Complete Stories by Flannery O’Connor (3)
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West Wind, Mary Oliver
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The Orchid Thief, Susan Orlean (2)
1984, George Orwell
Homage to Catalonia, George Orwell
The Gnostic Gospels, Elaine Pagels
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Fight Club, Chuck Palahniuk
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Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance, Robert Pirsig (2)
Best American Short Stories, Heidi Pitlor, ed.
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Complete Tales and Poems, Edgar Allan Poe
The Omnivore’s Dilemma, Michael Pollan
The Open Society and Its Enemies, Karl Popper
ABCs of Reading, Ezra Pound
The Shipping News by Annie Proulx
Swann’s Way, Marcel Proust
His Dark Materials, Philip Pullman
Gravity’s Rainbow, Thomas Pynchon
The Crying of Lot 49, Thomas Pynchon
Atlas Shrugged, Ayn Rand
The Fountainhead, Ayn Rand
Resurrection Men, Ian Rankin
Where the Red Fern Grows, Wilson Rawls
Wide Sargasso Sea by Jean Rhys
Interview with a Vampire, Ann Rice (2)
The Trees, the Fields, and the Town, Conrad Richter
Letters to a Young Poet, Rainer Maria Rilke
Still Life with Woodpecker, Tom Robbins
The Collected Poems of Theodore Roethke
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Harry Potter (series), J. K. Rowling
Songs of Ourselves: The Uses of Poetry in America, Joan Shelley Rubin
The Farewell Chronicles, Anneli Rufus
Why I Am Not a Christian, Bertrand Russell
Straight Man, Richard Russo
Empire Falls, Richard Russo
Sarum, Edward Rutherford
Russka, Edward Rutherford
Palestine, Joe Sacco
Catcher in the Rye, JD Salinger
Nine Stories, JD Salinger
Bambi, Felix Salten
Fast Food Nation, Eric Schlosser
The Story of Poetry, Michael Schmidt
Themes for English B, JD Scrimgeour
Naked, David Sedaris
Dress Your Family in Corduroy and Denim, David Sedaris
Any book by David Sedaris
The Incompleat Folksinger, Pete Seeger
The Winthrop Woman, Anya Seton
Katherine, Anya Seton
The Thirteenth Tale, Diane Setterfield
Transformations by Anne Sexton
Complete Works of Shakespeare (2)
Midsummer Night’s Dream, William Shakespeare
The Tempest by William Shakespeare (2)
Othello, William Shakespeare
Shakespeare’s Sonnets by William Shakespeare
Frankenstein, Mary Shelley (4)
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Dimestore Alchemy, Charles Simic
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Father Said, Hal Sirowitz
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White Teeth, Zadie Smith (2)
On Beauty, Zadie Smith
In America, Susan Sontag
Oedipus Rex, Sophocles
The Notebook, Nicholas Sparks
The Klone, Danielle Steel
Grapes of Wrath by John Steinbeck (4)
Cannery Row, John Steinbeck
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The Kitchen God’s Wife by Amy Tan
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Lord of the Rings, J. R. R. Tolkien (2)
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Talk to the Hand, Lynne Truss
Here, Bullet, Brian Turner
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The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn by Mark Twain (3)
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Breakfast of Champions, Kurt Vonnegut
The Comic Toolbox, John Vorhaus
Take the Cannoli, Sara Vowell
Revolutionary Petunias & Other Poems by Alice Walker
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The Glass Castle, Jeannette Walls
The Boxcar Children, Gertrude Chandler Warner
The Collected Poems of Robert Penn Warren by Robert Penn Warren
Ideas Have Consequences, Richard M. Weaver
War of the Worlds, H. G. Wells
The Ponder Heart, Eudora Welty
The Collected Stories by Eudora Welty
Day of the Locust, Nathanael West
House of Mirth, Edith Wharton (2)
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Leaves of Grass by Walt Whitman (6)
Night, Elie Wiesel
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The Electric Kook Aid Acid Test, Tom Wolfe (2)
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The Prelude by William Wordsworth (2)
War & Remembrance, Herman Wouk
Every book by Charles Wright
Native Son by Richard Wright (3)
Black Boy by Richard Wright
Prozac Nation, Elizabeth Wurtzel
Revolutionary Road, Richard Yates
Collected Poems, William Butler Yeats (3)
Skid, Dean Young
Embryoyo, Dean Young
Without End, Adam Zagajewski

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Concise Roget’s International Thesaurus
Tao Te Ching