

American Literature You Should Read

Dear students,

About 60 years ago, when Perry Miller, an important scholar of American Studies, edited his anthology *Major Writers of America*, his list of authors that any student of American literature should read comprised only 23 authors. They were all white, and there was only one woman among them, Emily Dickinson. Today, the canon has been considerably expanded, and nobody can read everything that is worth reading because our ideas of what is considered worth reading have changed completely. Just thinking about what one could (or should) read can be overwhelming. Therefore, we have put together a list with suggestions. We have been really selective and made some tough choices, but it is still very long. You won't be able to read all of it, but we encourage you to read as many texts as possible during your time at university (and afterwards). Give it a try, and we are sure you will enjoy it.

Michael Butter, Marina Pingler, Janine Schwarz, and Annika Thiem

1492–1699

1. Christopher Columbus, *The Journal of Christopher Columbus* (1492–1493)
2. Cabeza de Vaca, *The Narrative of Cabeza de Vaca* (1527)
3. John Smith, *The Generall Historie of Virginia, New-England, and the Summer Isles* (1624)
4. John Winthrop, "A Model of Christian Charity" (1630)
5. William Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation* (1651)
6. Anne Bradstreet, "In Memory of My Dear Grandchild Elizabeth Bradstreet" (1665), "The Author to Her Book" (1678)
7. Edward Taylor, "Upon Wedlock and Death of Children" (1682), "Huswifery" (1685)
8. Mary Rowlandson, *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God* (1682)

1700–1830

9. Ebenezer Cooke, "The Sot-weed Factor, or A Voyage to Maryland" (1708)
10. Phillis Wheatley, "On Being Brought from Africa to America" (1773), "To His Excellency, General Washington" (1776)
11. Abigail Adams, "Abigail to John Adams (March 31, 1776)" (1776)
12. John Adams, "John to Abigail Adams (April 14, 1776)" (1776)
13. Thomas Jefferson, *The Declaration of Independence* (1776)
14. Lemuel Haynes, "Liberty Further Extended" (1776)
15. Philip Freneau, "The Wild Honey Suckle" (1786), "The Indian Burying Ground" (1787)
16. Royall Tyler, *The Contrast* (1787)
17. William Hill, *The Power of Sympathy; or the Triumph of Nature* (1789)
18. Judith Sargent Murray, "On the Equality of the Sexes" (1790)
19. Benjamin Franklin, *The Autobiography* (1791)
20. Susanna Rowson, *Charlotte Temple* (1791), *Slaves in Algiers* (1794)
21. Charles Brockden Brown, *Wieland: or, The Transformation: An American Tale* (1798)

22. Tabitha Tenneys, *Female Quixotism* (1801)
23. James Nelson Barker, *The Indian Princess* (1808)
24. George Watterston, *The Lawyer* (1808)
25. William Cullen Bryant, "To a Waterfowl" (1818), "Thanatopsis" (1821)
26. Washington Irving, "Rip Van Winkle" (1819), "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" (1820)
27. Lydia Maria Child, *Hobomok, A Tale of Early Times* (1824)
28. James Fenimore Cooper, *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826)
29. Catharine Sedgwick, *Hope Leslie* (1827)

1831 to 1865

30. Nathaniel Hawthorne, "Young Goodman Brown" (1835), *The Scarlet Letter* (1850)
31. Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Nature* (1836), "The American Scholar" (1837)
32. Edgar Allan Poe, "The Fall of the House of Usher" (1839), "The Raven" (1845)
33. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, *Poems on Slavery* (1843)
34. Margaret Fuller, *Summer on the Lakes* (1843), *Women in the Nineteenth Century* (1844)
35. Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* (1845)
36. Henry David Thoreau, "Resistance to Civil Government" (1849), *Walden* (1854)
37. Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852)
38. Solomon Northup, *Twelve Years a Slave* (1853)
39. Hermann Melville, "Bartleby, the Scrivener" (1853), "Benito Cereno" (1855)
40. William Wells Brown, *Clotel; or the President's Daughter* (1853)
41. John Rollin Ridge, *The Life and Adventures of Joaquín Murieta, the Celebrated California Bandit* (1854)
42. Fanny Fern, *Ruth Hall* (1854)
43. Laura Curtis Bullard, *Christine: or, Women's Trail and Triumphs* (1854)
44. Walt Whitman, "Song of Myself" (1855), "I Hear America Singing" (1861)
45. Rose Terry Cooke, "My Visitation" (1858)
46. Frances Harper, "The Two Offers" (1859)
47. Harriet A. Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861)
48. Rebecca Harding Davis, "Life in the Iron Mills" (1861)
49. Martin Delany, *Blake; or the Huts of America* (1862)
50. Emily Dickinson, "I Heard a Fly Buzz" (1862), "Because I Could Not Stop for Death" (1863), "My Life Had Stood a Loaded Gun" (1863)
51. Mark Twain, "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County" (1865)

1866 to 1910

52. Augustin Daly, *Under the Gaslight* (1867)
53. Walt Whitman, "O Captain! My Captain!" (1867)
54. Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, *The Gates Ajar* (1868)
55. Louisa May Alcott, *Little Women* (1868/69)
56. Henry James, *Daisy Miller* (1878), "The Real Thing" (1892)
57. Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884)

58. Sarah Orne Jewett, "A White Heron" (1886)
59. Edward Bellamy, *Looking Backward 2000-1887* (1888)
60. William Dean Howells, *A Hazard of New Fortunes* (1890), "Editha" (1905)
61. Ambrose Bierce, "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge" (1890)
62. Mary E. Wilkins Freeman, "A New England Nun" (1891)
63. Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "The Yellow Wallpaper" (1892)
64. Kate Chopin, "Désirée's Baby" (1893), *The Awakening* (1899)
65. Stephen Crane, "An Experiment in Misery" (1894), *The Red Badge of Courage* (1895)
66. Charles W. Chesnutt, "Po' Sandy" (1899), "The Dumb Witness" (1899)
67. Frank Norris, *McTeague* (1899)
68. Pauline E. Hopkins. *Of One Blood; or The Hidden Self* (1903)
69. W.E.B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903)
70. Jack London, *The Call of the Wild* (1903), "To Build a Fire" (1908)
71. Paul Laurence Dunbar, "The Lynching of Jube Benson" (1904)
72. Upton Sinclair, *The Jungle* (1905)
73. Edith Wharton, *The House of Mirth* (1905)
74. Gertrude Stein, "Melanctha" (1909)

1911 to 1945

75. Mary Antin, *The Promised Land* (1912)
76. Sui Sin Far (Edith Maude Eaton), "Mrs. Spring Fragrance" (1912)
77. Gertrude Stein, "Sacred Emily" (1913)
78. Ezra Pound, "In a Station of the Metro" (1913)
79. Sherwood Anderson, "Hands" (1919)
80. H.D. (Hilda Doolittle), "Oread" (1915)
81. T.S. Eliot, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" (1915), "The Waste Land" (1922)
82. Susan Glaspell, *Trifles* (1916)
83. Robert Frost, "The Road Not Taken" (1916), "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" (1922)
84. Eugene O'Neill, *The Emperor Jones* (1920)
85. Claude McKay, "America" (1921), "Harlem Shadows" (1922)
86. Willa Cather, *One of Ours* (1922)
87. Jean Toomer, *Cane* (1923)
88. William Carlos Williams, "The Red Wheelbarrow" (1923)
89. F. Scott. Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* (1925)
90. Langston Hughes, "I Too" (1925), "Harlem" (1951)
91. John Dos Passos, *Manhattan Transfer* (1925)
92. Ernest Hemingway, "Hills Like Wild Elephants" (1927)
93. Nella Larsen, *Quicksand* (1928)
94. William Faulkner, *The Sound and the Fury* (1929), *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936)
95. Sinclair Lewis, *It Can't Happen Here* (1935)
96. Clifford Odets, *Waiting for Lefty* (1935)
97. Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937)
98. John Steinbeck, *Grapes of Wrath* (1939)

99. Richard Wright, *Native Son* (1940)
100. Ellen Glasgow, *In This Our Life* (1941)
101. Jade Snow Wong, *Fifth Chinese Daughter* (1945)

1946 – 2000

102. Ann Petry, *The Street* (1946)
103. Tennessee Williams, *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947)
104. Gwendolyn Brooks, *Annie Allen* (1949)
105. Arthur Miller, *Death of a Salesman* (1949)
106. J.D. Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951)
107. Ernest Hemingway, *The Old Man and the Sea* (1951)
108. Raymond Chandler, *The Long Goodbye* (1953)
109. Ray Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451* (1953)
110. James Baldwin, *Go Tell It on the Mountain* (1953), “Sonny’s Blues” (1957)
111. Flannery O’Connor, “A Good Man Is Hard to Find” (1953)
112. Patricia Highsmith, *The Talented Mr. Ripley* (1955)
113. Allen Ginsberg, “Howl” (1956)
114. Eugene O’Neill, *Long Day’s Journey Into Night* (1956)
115. Jack Kerouac, *On the Road* (1957)
116. Lorraine Hansberry, *A Raisin in the Sun* (1959)
117. Harper Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1960)
118. John Updike, *Rabbit* (1960)
119. Shirley Jackson, “The Lottery” (1961)
120. Philip K. Dick, *The Man in the High Castle* (1962)
121. Sylvia Plath, *The Bell Jar* (1963), “Daddy” (1965)
122. Thomas Pynchon, *The Crying of Lot 49* (1965)
123. Frank Herbert, *Dune* (1965)
124. Joyce Carol Oates, *A Garden of Earthly Delights* (1967)
125. N. Scott Momaday, *House Made of Dawn* (1968)
126. Maya Angelou, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (1969), “Still I Rise” (1978)
127. Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969)
128. Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye* (1970), *Beloved* (1987)
129. Rita Mae Brown, *Rubyfruit Jungle* (1973)
130. Alice Walker, “The Flowers” (1973), *The Color Purple* (1983)
131. Stephen King, *Carrie* (1974)
132. John Ashbery, *Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror* (1975)
133. Maxine Hong Kingston, *The Woman Warrior* (1976)
134. Leslie Marmon Silko, *Ceremony* (1977)
135. Sam Shepard, *Buried Child* (1978)
136. Norman Mailer, *The Executioner’s Song* (1979)
137. William Styron, *Sophie’s Choice* (1979)
138. Sandra Cisneros, *The House on Mango Street* (1984)
139. Louise Erdrich, *Love Medicine* (1984)

140. Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider* (1984)
141. Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985)
142. August Wilson, *The Piano Lesson* (1987)
143. Don DeLillo, *White Noise* (1985), *Libra* (1988)
144. Bharati Mukherjee, *The Middleman and Other Stories* (1988)
145. Tony Kushner, *Angels in America: A Gay Fantasia on National Themes* (1991)
146. Cristina García, *Dreaming in Cuban* (1992)
147. Octavia Butler, *Parable of the Sower* (1993)
148. Amy Tan, *The Joy Luck Club* (1998)
149. Philip Roth, *American Pastoral* (1998)
150. Michael Chabon, *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay* (2000)

2001 – today

151. Jeffrey Eugenides, *Middlesex* (2002)
152. Jonathan Safran Foer, *Everything Is Illuminated* (2002)
153. Margaret Atwood, *Oryx and Crake* (2003)
154. Siri Hustvedt, *What I Loved* (2003)
155. Philip Roth, *The Plot Against America* (2004)
156. Natasha Trethewey, *Native Guard* (2006)
157. André Aciman, *Call Me By Your Name* (2007)
158. Sherman Alexie, *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* (2007)
159. Junot Díaz, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (2007)
160. Philip Metres, *Abu Ghraib Arias* (2011)
161. Dave Eggers, *The Circle* (2013)
162. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *Americanah* (2013)
163. Gillian Flynn, *Gone Girl* (2014)
164. Rupi Kaur, *Milk and Honey* (2014)
165. Viet Thanh Nguyen, *The Sympathizer* (2015)
166. Colson Whitehead, *The Underground Railroad* (2016)
167. Cherie Dimaline, *The Marrow Thieves* (2017)
168. Richard Powers, *The Overstory* (2018)
169. Darcie Little Badger, *Elatsoe* (2020)
170. Charlotte McConaghy, *Migrations* (2020)
171. Ayad Akhtar, *Homeland Elegies* (2020)
172. Louise Erdrich, *The Night Watchman* (2020)
173. Percival Everett, *The Trees* (2021)
174. Franny Choi, *The World Keeps Ending, and the World Goes On. Poems* (2022)
175. Daniel Kraus, *Whalefall* (2023)