

**Prescribed NOVELS for Junior Cycle  
English.  
For students commencing Junior Cycle  
in September 2018, 2019, 2020**

An tSraith Shóisearach



ACHEBE, Chinua	<i>Things Fall Apart</i>
ALMOND, David	<i>The Savage</i>
AUSTEN, Jane	<i>Sense and Sensibility</i>
BLACKMAN, Malorie	<i>Noughts and Crosses</i>
CONNOLLY, John	<i>The Book of Lost Things</i>
CROSSAN, Sarah	<i>The Weight of Water</i>
DOWD, Siobhan	<i>Bog Child</i>
GLEITZMAN, Morris	<i>Once</i>
GOLDING, William	<i>Lord of the Flies</i>
HINTON, S.E	<i>The Outsiders</i>
KIERNAN, Celine	<i>Into the Grey</i>
LEE, Harper	<i>To Kill a Mockingbird</i>
MULLIGAN, Andy	<i>Trash</i>
ORWELL, George	<i>Animal Farm</i>
SCOTT, Orson	<i>Ender's Game</i>
SEPETYS, Ruta	<i>Between Shades of Grey</i>
STEINBECK, John	<i>Of Mice and Men</i>
STEVENSON, Robert Louis	<i>The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr. Hyde</i>
SWINDELLS, Robert	<i>Stone Cold</i>
TAMAKI, Mariko and Jillian	<i>This One Summer</i> (Graphic novel)

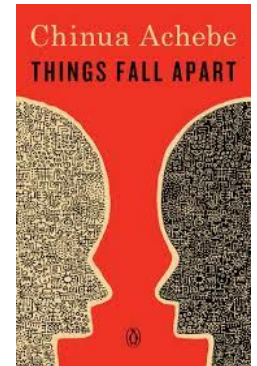
## THINGS FALL APART – CHINUA ACHEBE

**Publisher: Heinemann, 1958. Pages: 209**

*Things Fall Apart* is the first of three novels in Chinua Achebe's critically acclaimed African Trilogy. It is a classic narrative about Africa's cataclysmic encounter with Europe as it establishes a colonial presence on the continent. Told through the fictional experiences of Okonkwo, a wealthy and fearless Igbo warrior of Umuofia in the late 1800s, *Things Fall Apart* explores one man's futile resistance to the devaluing of his Igbo traditions by British political and religious forces and his despair as his community capitulates to the powerful new order.

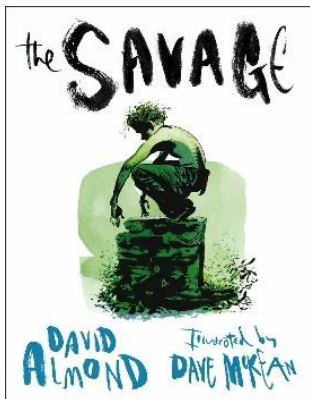
**Themes:** conflict, culture, power, identity

A challenging read that deals with complex subjects.



## THE SAVAGE – DAVID ALMOND

**Publisher: Random House, 2008. Pages: 80**



Mysterious and utterly mesmerizing, this graphic-novel-within-a-novel pairs the extraordinary prose of David Almond with the visual genius of Dave McKean. Blue Baker is writing a story – not all that stuff about wizards and fairies and happily ever after – a real story, about blood and guts and adventures, because that's what life's really like. At least it is for Blue, since his dad died and Hopper, the town bully, started knocking him and the other kids around. But Blue's story has a life of its own – weird and wild and magic and dark – and when the savage pays a night-time visit to Hopper, Blue starts to wonder where he ends, and his creation begins.

**Themes:** loss, bullying, hope and healing.

This is an accessible read, evocatively told. Set in Newcastle, Blue Baker is a character that will appeal to all students.

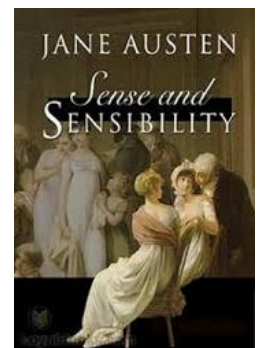
## SENSE AND SENSIBILITY – JANE AUSTEN

**Publisher: Thomas Egerton, 1811. Pages: 409**

Marianne Dashwood wears her heart on her sleeve, and when she falls in love with the dashing but unsuitable John Willoughby, she ignores her sister Elinor's warning that her impulsive behaviour leaves her open to gossip and innuendo. Meanwhile Elinor, always sensitive to social convention, is struggling to conceal her own romantic disappointment, even from those closest to her. Through their parallel experience of love - and its threatened loss - the sisters learn that sense must mix with sensibility if they are to find personal happiness in a society where status and money govern the rules of love.

**Themes:** love, relationships, family

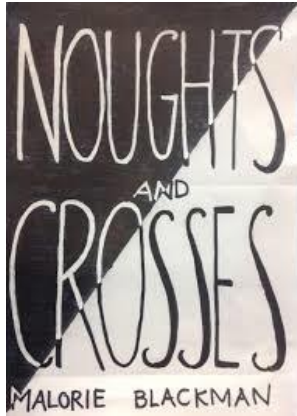
This 19th century novel is a complex and challenging read.



## NOUGHTS AND CROSSES – MALORIE BLACKMAN

**Publisher: Corgi, 2008. Pages: 440**

In this novel by Malorie Blackman, the population is divided into two main groups; the white Noughts who are inferior and are second-class citizens, and the black Crosses who are highly respected and seen as the superior race.



15-year-old Callum is a Nought, and his best friend, Sephy, as well as being a Cross, is also the daughter of one of the most powerful and ruthless politicians in the country. In their hostile world noughts and crosses do not mix. When Callum and Sephy's childhood friendship grows into a deeper love, they are determined to find a way to be together. The story focuses on their relationship, which is frowned upon by society, and explores the discrimination they meet as a result.

By reversing traditional racial stereotypes and presenting the white population as the oppressed race, the novel depicts racial prejudice from a different perspective. As well as being a story of love and friendship, this is a thought-provoking look at the futility of prejudice.

**Themes:** racial injustice, conflict/violence, relationships, family, courage, class in society.

*Noughts and Crosses* is a novel that will appeal to most young readers and is suitable for intermediate to advanced readers. Possible cross-curricular areas include C.S.P.E and R.E.

## THE BOOK OF LOST THINGS – JOHN CONNOLLY

**Publisher: Hodder, 2006. Pages: 502**

High up in his attic bedroom, twelve-year-old David mourns the death of his mother, with only the books on his shelf for company. But those books have begun to whisper to him in the darkness. Angry and alone, he takes refuge in his imagination and soon finds that reality and fantasy have begun to blend. While his family falls apart around him, David is violently propelled into a world that is a strange reflection of his own — populated by heroes and monsters and ruled by a faded king who keeps his secrets in a mysterious book, *The Book of Lost Things*.



Taking readers on a vivid journey through the loss of innocence into adulthood and beyond, New York Times bestselling author John Connolly tells a dark and compelling tale that reminds us of the enduring power of stories in our lives.

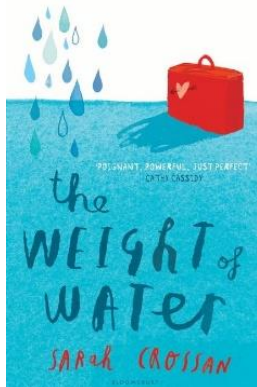
**Themes:** childhood, loss of innocence, death, family, the role of the imagination.

A challenging but rewarding read for more advanced and independent student readers.

## THE WEIGHT OF WATER – SARAH CROSSAN

**Publisher: Bloomsbury, 2006. Pages: 228**

Armed with a suitcase and an old laundry bag filled with clothes, Kasienska and her mother head for England. Life is lonely for Kasienska. At home her mother's heart is breaking and at school friends are scarce. But when someone special swims into her life, Kasienska learns that there might be more than one way for her to stay afloat.



*The Weight of Water* is a startlingly original piece of fiction; most simply a brilliant coming of age story, it also tackles the alienation experienced by many young immigrants. Moving, unsentimental and utterly page-turning, we meet and share the experiences of a remarkable girl who shows us how quiet courage prevails.

**Themes:** bullying, racism, friendship, family, isolation, young love.

*The Weight of Water* is a novel written in poetic form which will appeal to all young readers.

## BOG CHILD – SIOBHAN DOWD

**Publisher: David Fickling Books, 2007. Pages: 321**

Digging for peat in the mountain with his Uncle Tally, Fergus finds the body of a child, and it looks like she's been murdered. As Fergus tries to make sense of the mad world around him - his brother on hunger-strike in prison, his growing feelings for Cora, his parents arguing over the Troubles, and him in it up to the neck, blackmailed into acting as courier to God knows what- a little voice comes to him in his dreams, and the mystery of the bog child unfurls.

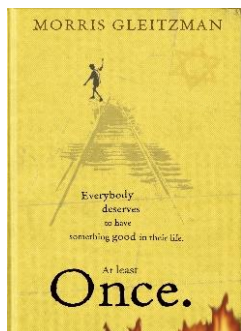
**Themes:** coming of age, mystery, sacrifice

Imaginative narration and an accessible read. The central mystery will hold readers' attention.



## ONCE – MORRIS GLEITZMAN

**Publisher: Puffin, 2006. Pages: 150**



*Once* is the first in a series of children's novels about Felix, a Jewish orphan caught in the middle of the Holocaust. Morris Gleitzman is one of Australia's bestselling authors. *Once* is the story of a young Jewish boy who is determined to escape the orphanage, he lives in, to save his Jewish parents from the Nazis in the occupied Poland of the Second World War.

"Once I escaped from an orphanage to find Mum and Dad. Once I saved a girl called Zelda from a burning house. Once I made a Nazi with a toothache laugh. My name is Felix. This is my story."

**Themes:** The Holocaust/anti-Semitism, war, family, childhood.

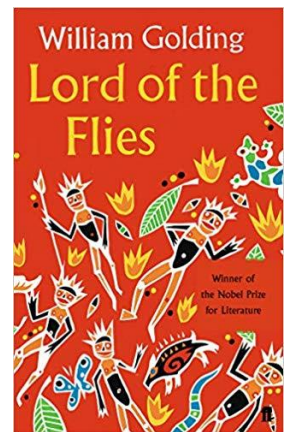


*Once* is a novel which will appeal to all readers and abilities. It is a similar novel to John Boyne's *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*. Students will find the story funny in parts, but the novel does deal with how Felix experiences the unspeakable horrors of war, and what was really going on in Poland in 1942. It has possible cross-curricular links with history, C.S.P.E and R.E.

## LORD OF THE FLIES – WILLIAM GOLDING

**Publisher: Faber & Faber, 1958. Pages: 225**

*Lord of the Flies* is an allegorical tale about the conflict between “civilization” and “savagery”. Amid a nuclear war, a group of schoolboys become abandoned on an island when their plane goes down. Separated at first, but using a conch (shell), Ralph, a twelve-year-old summons the boys together and we soon learn that they are of all age groups, toddlers and adolescents. They learn that there are no adults on the island and initially this gives cause for some general enjoyment. Without adult supervision they must work together to survive and they elect a leader, the boy Ralph: ‘the being that had blown that (conch), had sat waiting for them on the platform with the delicate thing balanced on this knees, and was set apart.’



However, seeds of rivalry are sown early in the novel as this election disheartens the more ambitious Jack who gradually builds his own team and rebels against Ralph. Piggy, a fat boy who is a sharp thinker but is physically weaker than the others, is a central character in the novel. He is shown as the voice of reason, someone who counsels Ralph and possesses a strong revulsion for Jack. As the novel progresses, we soon learn what can happen when reason is replaced by ambition and greed.

**Themes:** civilisation v savagery, evil, violence, power, relationships, fear, rules and order, the loss of innocence.

While challenging to some readers, *Lord of the Flies* will yield good rewards in the exploration of its themes.

## THE OUTSIDERS – S.E. HINTON

**Publisher: Puffin, 1967. Pages: 218**

*The Outsiders* is a classic American novel set in the city of Oklahoma in the 1960s that tells the tale of a group of boys that survive in a world where their social status is a way to get them terrorised daily. It is the story of two gangs: The Greasers (the poor and underprivileged section of the city) and the Socs (the high society rich kids) and their constant war with each other. The Socs go around looking for trouble and Greasers to beat up, and then the Greasers are blamed for it, because they are poor and cannot influence the authorities. Curtis, a 14-year-old Greaser, tells the story as he brings us into a world where belonging and survival are the twin desires for all the boys.



**Themes:** society and class, violence, isolation (as linked to the title of the novel), friendship/loyalty,

The novel has 218 pages and will be enjoyed by all readers.

## INTO THE GREY – CELINE KIERNAN

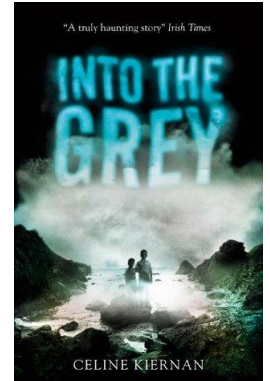
**Publisher: The O'Brien Press, 2013. Pages: 296**

It is 1974. The Finnertys, an ordinary, boisterous family of twin brothers Dom and Pat, baby sister Dee, and their parents and grandma, set off from Dublin to their annual summer getaway by the beach. The family's holiday drive is "vivid with fresh grass, diesel fumes, and the crusty-bright smell of the sea."

Upon arrival, Pat thinks the cosy house seems shabby, dark, and stale; he knows something is wrong. We soon find out what it is; a goblin of sorts is haunting Dom, and Pat is the only one who knows it. We share his mounting horror as he watches his brother go where the goblin leads him, helpless to do anything about it.

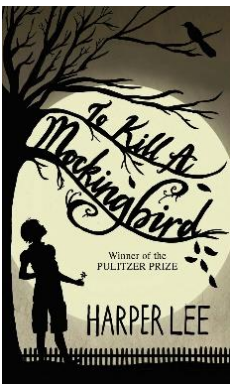
**Themes:** The supernatural/ fantasy, loss, family.

A supernatural thriller challenging in parts which will hold the attention of the reader with its imaginative narration.



## TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD – HARPER LEE

**Publisher: Arrow Books, 1960 Pages: 309**



In *To Kill a Mockingbird* Harper Lee uses memorable characters to explore civil rights and racism in the segregated Southern United States of the 1930s. Told through the eyes of Scout Finch, you learn about her father Atticus Finch, an attorney who hopelessly strives to prove the innocence of a black man, Tom Robinson, unjustly accused of rape; and about Boo Radley, a mysterious neighbour who saves Scout and her brother Jem from being killed.

**Themes:** racism/prejudice, justice, childhood/growing up, life in a small-town community, integrity.

While challenging in parts, students will benefit greatly from an exploration of the themes in the novel.

## TRASH – ANDY MULLIGAN

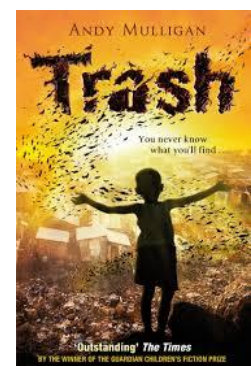
**Publisher: Ember, 2011. Pages: 210**

The book is told from the perspective of various characters but our first narrator and where the heart of the story lies is with Raphael. Raphael lives with his aunt and various family members on the Behala dump in an unspecified city and country. Mulligan said he was inspired by the dump he saw when he visited Manila in the Philippines. Raphael has always lived on the dump and makes his living by finding and selling paper, plastic and other materials that can be sold on. The story begins when Raphael finds something out of the ordinary amidst the rubbish, a bag with a wallet and letter inside. When the police visit the dump later to ask if anyone found anything, Raphael realises he has discovered something important and with his friends Gardo and Rat, sets out to find out what he has found.

Given the subject matter, this book has some disturbing scenes. It is plot driven.

**Themes:** Poverty, violence, political corruption, childhood, family.

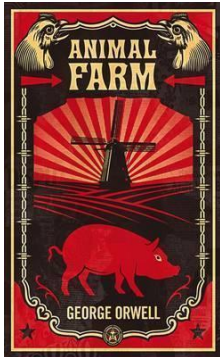
*Trash* is a novel which will hold the interest and attention of all readers. It has cross-curricular links with C.S.P.E and R.E.



## ANIMAL FARM – GEORGE ORWELL

**Publisher: Penguin Books, 1945, Pages: 95**

The drunken farm owner of Manor Farm, Mr Jones, arrives home and forgets to feed his animals. Old Major the eldest of the pigs gathers the animals together into the barn and tells them of a dream he has had about what the earth will be like when man has vanished. He outlines how man is the only creature that consumes without producing and encourages the neglected animals to rebel and run the farm themselves, with one important qualification: everyone should be equal. The rebellion takes place with the pigs being the smartest animals, naturally taking the leadership role. The animals succeed and the initial excitement of their actions has a unifying effect on them, and a set of rules is drawn up which seem to offer equality for all animals. All too soon, the unity begins to break up and two pigs, Napoleon and Snowball, vie for control. As time passes, the rules begin to change, and the newly named Animal Farm becomes a place of fear and terror.



**Themes:** a novel with political themes and moral messages. It will require some direction from teacher to establish the context, but it will engage.

This is a brilliant little 95-page novel that young people will enjoy, as it seems, on the surface, to tell a simple imaginative story that will arrest their interest and pose many questions. On a deeper reading, it will allow them to explore the idea of satire and the corrupting influence of power.

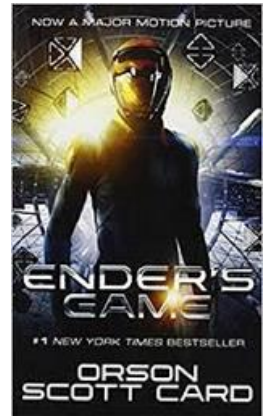
## ENDER'S GAME – ORSON SCOTT CARD

**Publisher: Tor Books, 1985, Pages: 324**

Andrew "Ender" Wiggin thinks he is playing computer simulated war games; he is, in fact, engaged in something far more desperate. The result of genetic experimentation, Ender may be the military genius Earth desperately needs in a war against an alien enemy seeking to destroy all human life. The only way to find out is to throw Ender into ever harsher training, to chip away and find the diamond inside, or destroy him utterly. Ender Wiggin is six years old when it begins. He will grow up fast.

**Themes:** Love, hate, prejudice

An accessible piece of science fiction, all readers will find Ender an engaging character.



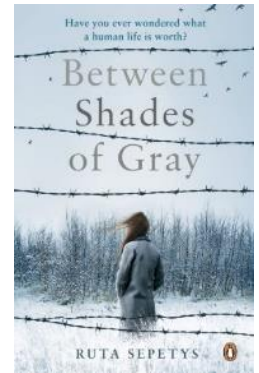
## BETWEEN SHADES OF GREY – RUTA SEPETYS

**Publisher: Random House, 2012, Pages: 384**

Fifteen-year-old Lina is a Lithuanian girl living an ordinary life—until Soviet officers invade her home and tear her family apart. Separated from her father and forced onto a crowded train, Lina, her mother, and her young brother make their way to a Siberian work camp, where they are forced to fight for their lives. Lina finds solace in her art, documenting these events by drawing. Risking everything, she imbeds clues in her drawings of their location and secretly passes them along, hoping her drawings will make their way to her father's prison camp. But will strength, love, and hope be enough for Lina and her family to survive?

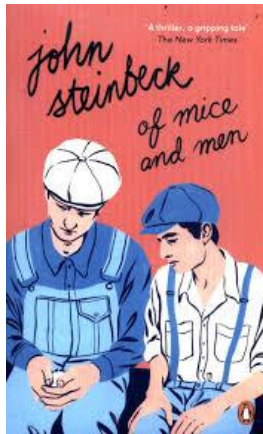
**Themes:** hope, love, freedom, sacrifice, family.

A beautifully told piece of historical fiction. A challenging read.



## OF MICE AND MEN – JOHN STEINBECK

**Publisher: Penguin, 1937. Pages: 102**



*Of Mice and Men* is a touching tale of the friendship between two men set against the backdrop of the United States during the depression of the 1930s. Subtle in its characterisation, the book addresses the real hopes and dreams of working-class America. This short novel raises the lives of the poor and dispossessed to a higher, symbolic level.

Its powerful ending is climactic and shocking to the extreme but we also come to an understanding of the tragedy of life. Regardless of the sufferings of those who live it, life goes on.

**Themes:** loneliness, friendship, strength and weakness, the impossibility of the American dream, fate and destiny, nature, the corruptible power of women.

A novel to be enjoyed by all students.

## THE STRANGE CASE OF DR JEKYLL AND MR HYDE – ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

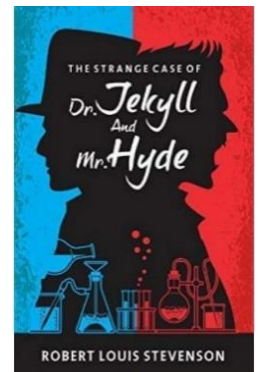
**Publisher: Penguin, 1886. Pages: 96**

Everyone has a dark side.

Dr Jekyll has discovered the ultimate drug. A chemical that can turn him into something else. Suddenly, he can unleash his deepest cruelties in the guise of the sinister Hyde. Transforming himself at will, he roams the streets of fog-bound London as his monstrous alter-ego.

It seems he is master of his fate. It seems he is in complete control. But soon he will discover that his double life comes at a hideous price...

**Themes:** good vs. evil, duality of human nature



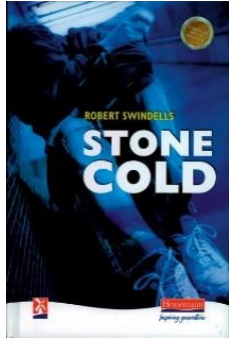


This 19th century, gothic horror, will appeal to readers who like a complex and challenging read

## STONE COLD – ROBERT SWINDELLS

**Publisher: Puffin Books, 1995. Pages: 135**

Homeless on the streets of London, 16-year-old Link feels he has become an invisible outcast. When he meets streetwise Ginger, life becomes more bearable and he learns the tricks of survival. However, when Ginger goes missing, Link feels a sickening sense of foreboding....



The first-person narrative of the novel switches between Link, as he adjusts to life on the streets, and 'Shelter', an ex-army officer scorned after being dismissed from his job and now determined to rid society of 'street people'.

**Themes:** homelessness, prejudice, vulnerability.

An exciting and disturbing thriller, *Stone Cold* is an accessible read.

## THIS ONE SUMMER - JILLIAN AND MARIKO TAMAKI

**Publisher: First Second Books, 2012. Pages: 320**

Rose and Windy are summer friends whose families have visited Awago Beach for as long as they can remember. But this year is different, and they soon find themselves tangled in teen love and family crisis. This graphic novel is an investigation into the mysterious world of adults.

Pretty soon everything is messed up. Rose's father leaves the cottage and returns to the city, and her mother becomes more and more withdrawn. While her family is falling to pieces, Rose focuses her attention on Dunc, a teenager working at the local corner store. When Jenny, Dunc's girlfriend, claims to be pregnant, the girls realize that the teenagers are keeping just as many secrets as the adults in their lives.

**Themes:** Coming of age, identity, friendship, family.

This graphic novel will appeal to many teenagers. Evocatively told, it deals with difficult subjects in a relatable way.



## Junior Cycle for Teachers

LMETB | Chapel Street,  
Dundalk, Co. Louth.

Tel.: 042 9364603

[www.jct.ie](http://www.jct.ie)



@JCforTeachers

## Links:

[www.jct.ie](http://www.jct.ie) [www.jcsp.ie](http://www.jcsp.ie)

[www.pdst.ie](http://www.pdst.ie)

[www.reading.ie](http://www.reading.ie)

[www.writing.ie](http://www.writing.ie)

[www.booktrust.org.uk](http://www.booktrust.org.uk)

[www.goodreads.com](http://www.goodreads.com)