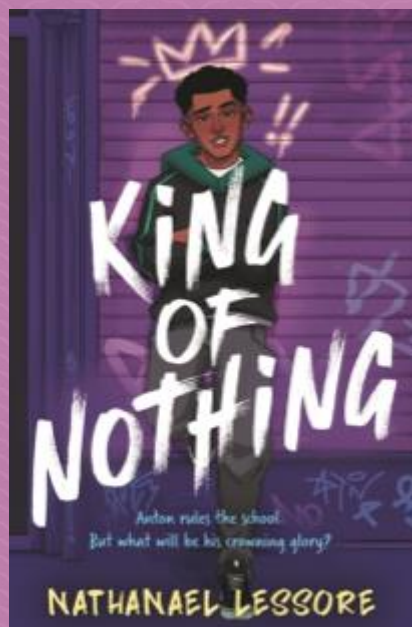




YEAR 9 RECOMMENDED READS

The following book list contains titles to appeal to children aged 14-15 in secondary school. The books consist of a range of titles to cover all ability ranges including the more able. Updated termly, this list of books includes authors such as Adeline Yen Mah, Louis Sachar, Jamila Gavin, Anne Fine, Mark Haddon, Susan Hill, Lois Lowry, and John Wyndham.



King of Nothing by Nathanael Lessore

Anton is the self-proclaimed ruler leader of Year 9 and with his friends, rules the school. But he faces a dilemma when he strikes up an unlikely friendship after a life-changing event. Will he remain loyal to his new friend or stay true to his previous reputation? Suitable for early teen readers, this compelling contemporary comedy explores themes of friendship and identity and offers relatable insights into peer pressure and personal growth. Highly recommended.

Funny | Contemporary



Future Hopes: Hopeful Stories in a Time of Climate Change edited by Lauren James

Authors, including M. G. Leonard, Neal Shusterman, and Tolá Okogwu, offer a positive perspective on climate change through this collection of imaginative short stories. With creative solutions such as skyscraper farms and guerrilla gardening, each tale is rooted in real-world science. Ideal to spark discussions and questions, 'Future Hopes' will empower students to believe there is a thriving future for our planet.

Short stories | Environmental



The Blue Book of Nebo by Manon Steffan Ros

14-year-old Dylan lives with his 'mam' in a remote house on top of a hill, barely remembering what life was like before all electricity turned off in an apocalyptic event called 'The End'. A found notebook becomes a source of inspiration for both of them and helps them to redefine what it means to live and survive. The Blue Book of Nebo is a thought-provoking read that's ideal to provoke discussion in Year 9 classrooms.

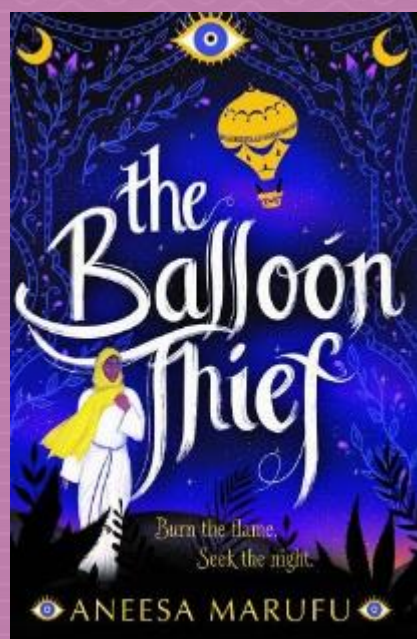
Post-apocalyptic



This Book Kills by Ravena Guron

Jess Choudhary has always tried to be on her best behaviour. As one of only two scholarship students at the prestigious Heybuckle boarding school, she knows that her position is precarious. With a fast-paced plot and a satisfying ending, *This Book Kills* will appeal to fans of *Gossip Girl* and Holly Jackson's *A Good Girl's Guide to Murder*. [Read our full review.](#)

Thriller



The Balloon Thief by Aneesa Marufu

When Khadija spots a hot air balloon about to break its moorings, she seizes a dangerous opportunity to flee from a life of arranged marriage. With warring factions, visceral violence, subjugation, shape-shifting magic and a compelling heroine, this is a heady tale of tested loyalties, moral dilemmas and redemption. It's a compelling insight into a vividly drawn fantasy world, with characters who experience forms of discrimination that older teenagers will identify and empathise with.

Fantasy



Giften by Leyla Suzan

Ruthie is a 'Giften', born with the power to raise food from dead soil. But as she tries to protect her community, there's a sinister regime that hunts people like her. Readers will relate to the prescient ecological themes and empathise with the characters as they face danger and isolation. A clever post-apocalyptic dystopia, 'Giften' will challenge readers to think about survival, power, and how greed could destroy the world we live in. Perfect for KS3 book clubs.

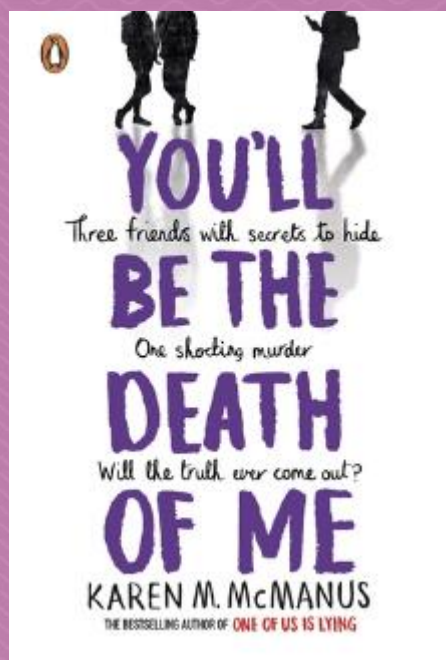
Dystopia



Let's Play Murder by Kesia Lupo

Set in 'The Game', a virtual reality mystery, Veronica joins players trapped in a creepy manor house with a murder to solve. As they get closer to the truth, they encounter glitches, strange NPCs and a mysterious figure. It all changes when real players start dying in real life and Veronica realises that this is the definition of a must-win game. With a binge-worthy blend of page-turning mystery and cutting-edge VR gameplay, readers will be fully locked in. Ideal for readers interested in technology.

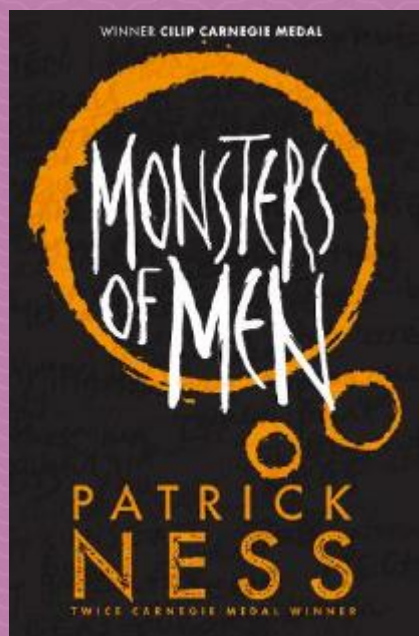
Thriller



You'll Be the Death of Me by Karen M. McManus

Skipping school for one last time, three high school friends – Ivy, Mateo, and Cal – spot another student from Carlton High and follow him. The next thing they know, he's dead! They are all hiding something – but what? This absorbing, fast-paced web of secrets and danger features a signature Karen M. McManus. A gripping YA crime thriller.

Thriller



Monsters of Men by Patrick Ness

Part three of the Chaos Walking trilogy, Monsters of Men explores the effects of war. A fast-moving dystopian thriller set in a fantasy world war to end all wars. Todd and Viola have to fight, but what are they fighting for, and is it worth it? A modern classic and a great book for 13-year-olds.

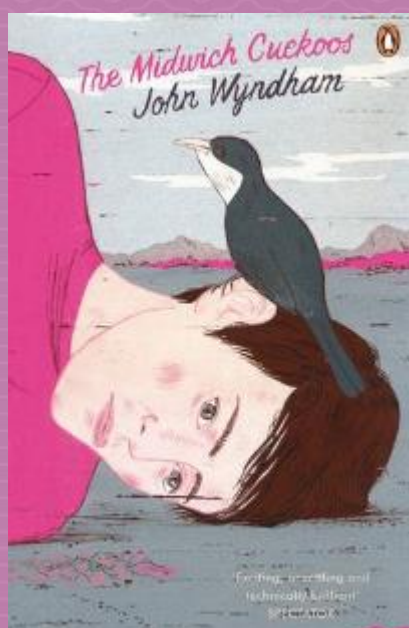
Dystopia | Thriller



The Secrets Act by Alison Weatherby

This mesmerizing novel follows Pearl and Ellen, two teenagers who are working at the super-secret Bletchley Park during WW2. Ellen cracks codes and Pearl delivers messages, but both find themselves drawn together and thrust headlong into a world of intrigue, treachery and spies – a dangerous puzzle that they might not be able to solve in time. A fascinating and original historical novel for young adults, The Secrets Act is highly recommended for year 9 pupils.

Historical fiction



The Midwich Cuckoos by John Wyndham

In a quiet English village, everyone falls asleep unexpectedly. When they wake up a day later, all the women are inexplicably pregnant. It soon becomes apparent that the children have abilities and powers that are not normal, threatening the community. Brilliantly written, this unsettling story is ideal to spark philosophical debate and discussion. Recently adapted into a TV series by Sky, The Midwich Cuckoos is a classic work of science fiction that has renewed relevance in an age of conformity, information wars and distrust in political leadership.

Science fiction



Every Line of You by Naomi Gibson

When Lydia builds an AI friend to fill a void in her life, nothing can prepare her for what happens when Henry turns from a computer into an overprotective defender. This modern cyber-thriller catapults teens into a world of tech, AI and fear of the unknown. With a breakneck plot, it thrusts the reader into themes that are prescient but firmly rooted in today's reality. A great book to discuss in year 9 book clubs.

Thriller



Maladapted by Richard Kurti

A rocket-paced thriller set in a dystopian near future. The only survivor of a terrorist attack on a packed train, Cillian starts to wonder if and why he was spared. Soon he finds himself drawn into a web of deceit and mind-bending revelations. Ideal for reluctant teen readers in Year 9.

Dystopia



Hatchet by Gary Paulsen

Brian, a streetwise teen who lives in the city, is left stranded in the wilderness after a plane crash – with only a hatchet to survive. Will he make it? This book will be popular with reluctant readers in Year 9. Some interesting teaching ideas can be found [here](#).

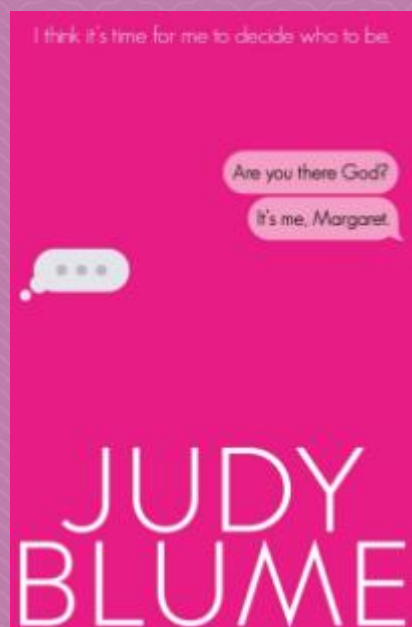
Adventure



Lionheart Girl by Yaba Badoe

Mysticism, fear and West African witchcraft are blended into this heady and lyrical potion of a modern fable that explores friendship and loyalty. When Sheba discovers her magic abilities, she uses them to uncover dark family secrets that threaten to untie all that binds her life together. Memorable and atmospheric, this novel would be a powerful and provocative read for KS3 book clubs.

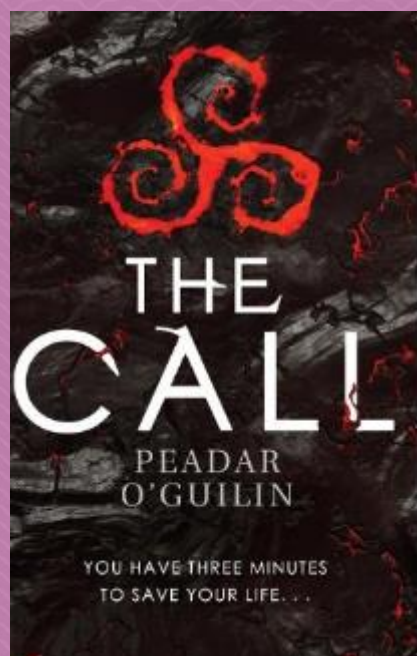
Modern fable | Fantasy



Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret by Judy Blume

Margaret is convinced she isn't normal. Her friends are more grown-up than her, she's starting a new school and she's unsure whether to follow her mother's or her father's religion. So she talks to God, with surprising results.

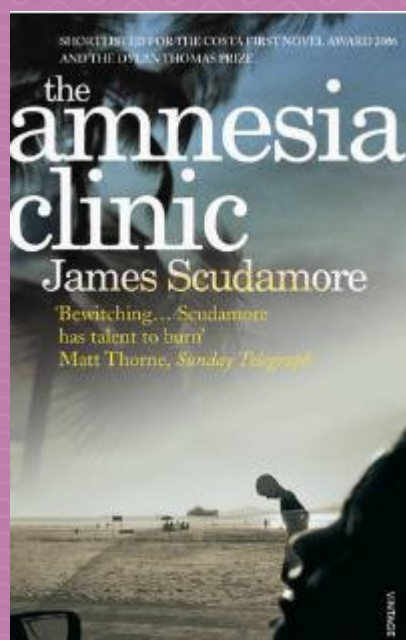
Friendship | Romance



The Call by Peadar O'Guilin

Set in a similar but realistic world that features myths and faeries, each teen needs to prepare for The Call – 3 minutes where they disappear with only a one in ten chance of returning alive. A dystopian, dark and addictive read that will resonate and linger in the subconscious. Could become a teen cult classic and will be a popular loan from your KS3/4 library.

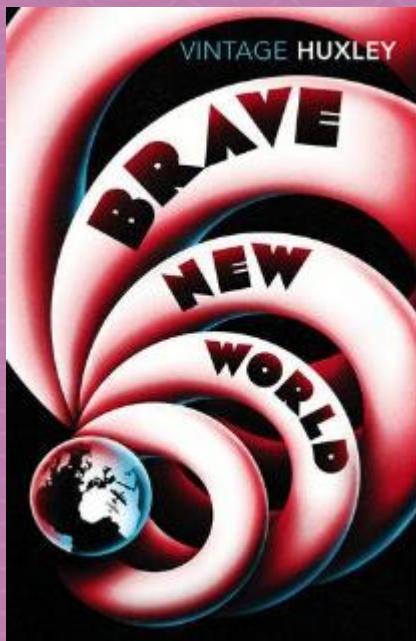
Thriller



The Amnesia Clinic by James Scudamore

Anti is best friends with his polar opposite – Fabian. Athletic and popular, Fabian wishes his mother was still alive. The two set off to find a strange clinic in search of Fabian's mother – a clinic which no one is sure even exists.

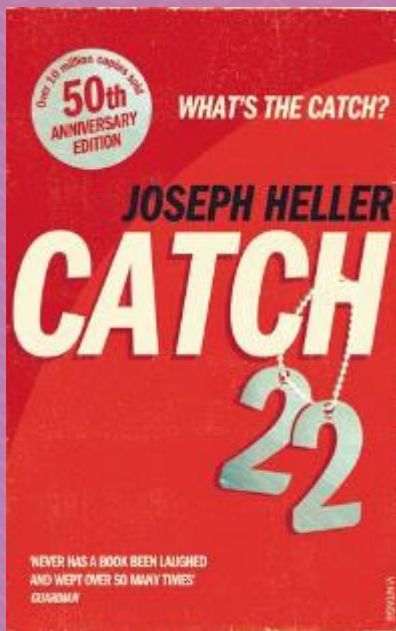
Contemporary



Brave New World by Aldous Huxley

In the future, all society is overseen by the World Controllers. Everything is ordered and efficient. But Bernard has other ideas and wants to do more than ask questions. An ideal book for year nine book clubs.

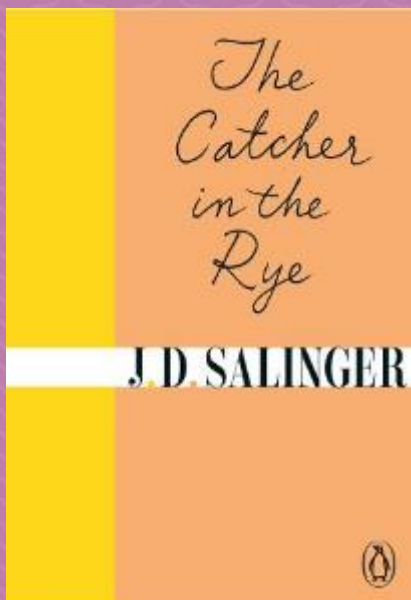
Classic



Catch-22 by Joseph Heller

At the end of WW2, Yossarian thinks his life is in danger – not from the enemy, but from his own side. He tries to find any excuse to avoid an increasing number of dangerous missions.

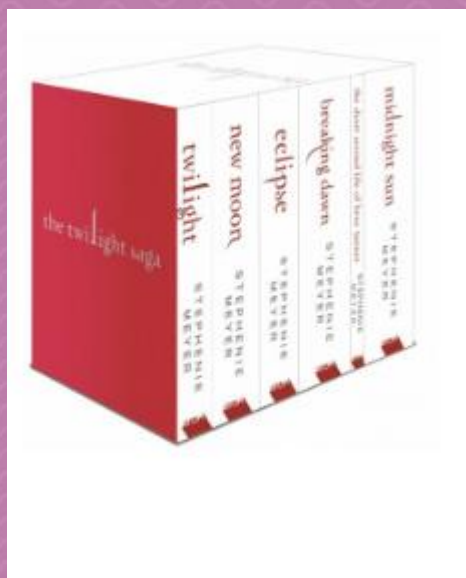
Classic



The Catcher in the Rye by J.D. Salinger

Holden Caulfield is a teen who has just been kicked out of his fourth school. He has to grow up quickly in an adult world and work out who he can trust, and who is a 'phony'. A more challenging book for year 9 pupils.

Classic



The Twilight Saga by Stephenie Meyer

A page-turning collection of six books (separately: [Twilight](#), [New Moon](#), [Eclipse](#), [Breaking Dawn](#), [The Short Second Life of Bree Tanner](#) and [Midnight Sun](#)) will appeal to young adults. Teen Isabella Swan starts at a new school and quickly has to tread a fine line between romance and dangerous vampires. All six stories are addictive reads.

Saga | Fantasy | Romance



Thief by Malorie Blackman

A captivating and fast-paced story about Lydia, who is desperate to fit in at a new school. When she's accused of stealing, her life begins to spiral out of control until an unexpected and mind-bending opportunity arises to set things right. A real page-turner, with a savage twist ending, this is a great book for class reading or book clubs.

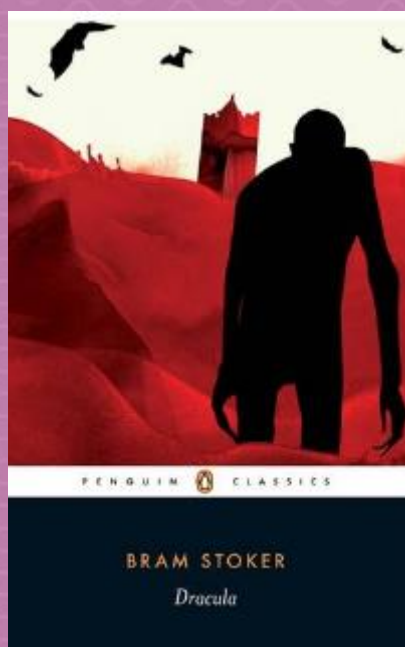
Thriller | Diverse



The Count of Monte Cristo by Alexandre Dumas

An epic page-turner of a novel, written in episodes. This is the classic fiction equivalent of a binge box set – a nineteenth-century 'Breaking Bad'. Fuelled by revenge, Edmund Dantes seeks to get back everything he lost and stakes a claim to a lot more. Ideal for more advanced readers in Year 9.

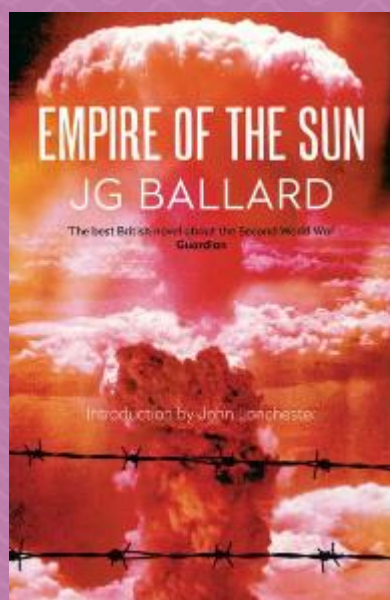
Revenge | Classic



Dracula by Bram Stoker

A classic vampire tale following Dracula's move from Transylvania to England, pursued by Abraham Van Helsing who is intent on exterminating him. Warning, this book may inspire your teen to wear black and visit Whitby. Ideal for discussion in Year 9.

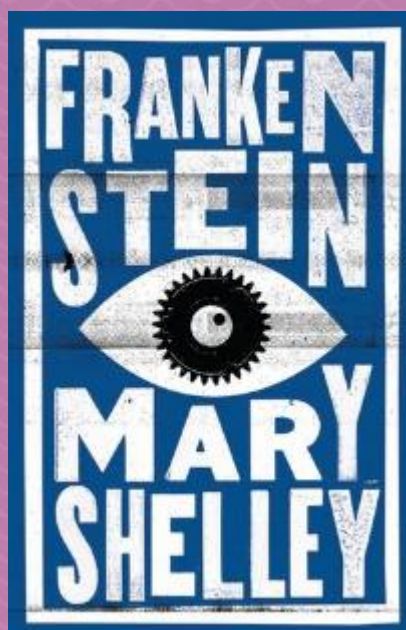
Horror | Classic



Empire of the Sun by J.G. Ballard

Jim's idyllic life in 1930s Shanghai takes an abrupt and horrifying turn with the Japanese invasion during WW2. The prep school choirboy finds himself interred in prison camps for four years. Gripping, moving and based on the author's own life. A more advanced book for 13-year-olds.

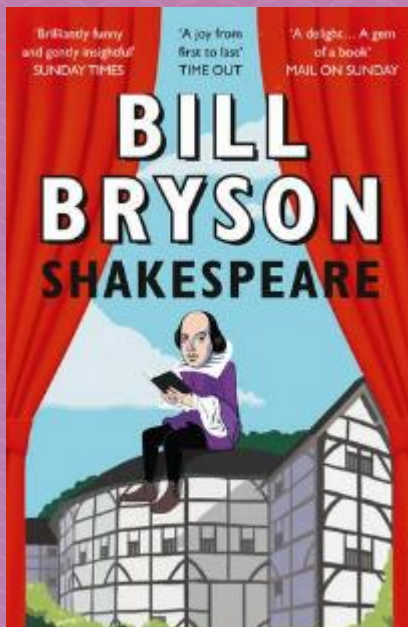
Historical fiction



Frankenstein by Mary Shelley

Mary Shelley's gothic horror about a deranged scientist who wants to imagine his own living creation from dead bodies still has bite, shock value and complex themes. A well-written counterpoint to the myriad of recent zombie TV shows and computer games.

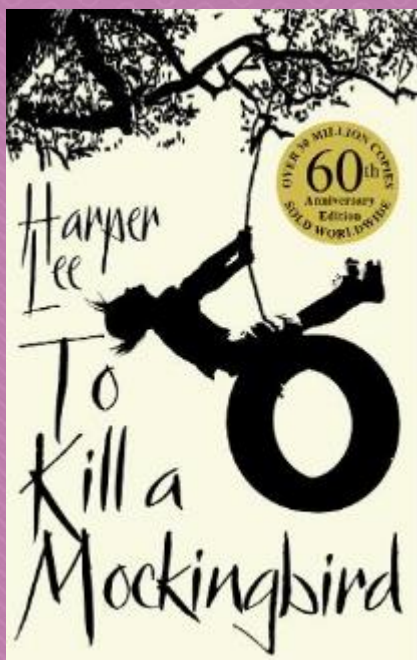
Horror | Classic



Shakespeare: The World as a Stage by Bill Bryson

This book is ideal for adding humour to turgid GCSE Shakespeare exam schemes. It explores the myths, lies and reality of Shakespeare's plays and brings to life the sixteenth-century acting world.

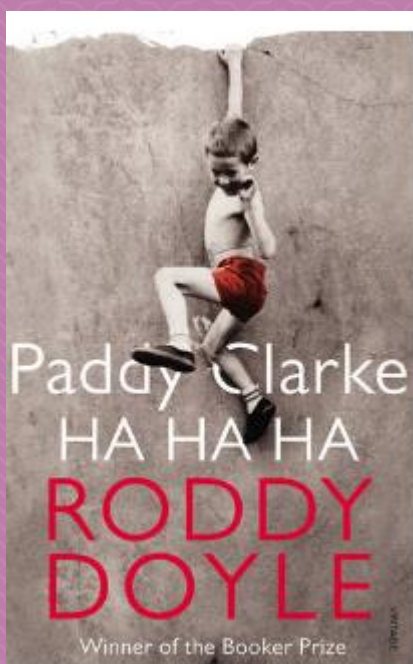
Funny | Biography



To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee

In this classic 1930s story, a black man is charged with raping a white girl and has to fight class, racial hatred and depression-era prejudice – as well as the courtroom. Atticus Finch, a white father, has the task of defending him. A great book for Year 9.

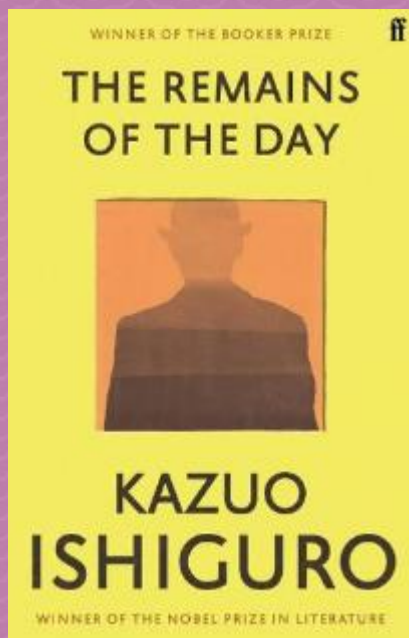
Classic



Paddy Clarke Ha, Ha, Ha by Roddy Doyle

10-year-old Paddy Clarke is left to his own devices in an adult world – a world which, despite his best efforts, he finds impossible to understand. Cleverly written from a child's perspective. A thought-provoking class reader book for Year 9.

Contemporary



The Remains of the Day by Kazuo Ishiguro

The story of a butler who tries to devote himself to his profession despite the fact his master is a Nazi sympathiser. Deeply moving, this book explores class, love and longing. A more challenging book for pupils in year 9 – and ideal for discussion.

Historical fiction | Romance



Scoop by Evelyn Waugh

The ambitious owner of The Daily Beast thinks he's spotted the perfect hotshot journalist to cover a juicy African conflict. Things don't go entirely to plan. Very funny, yet true to life and a good text to spark discussion about fake news.

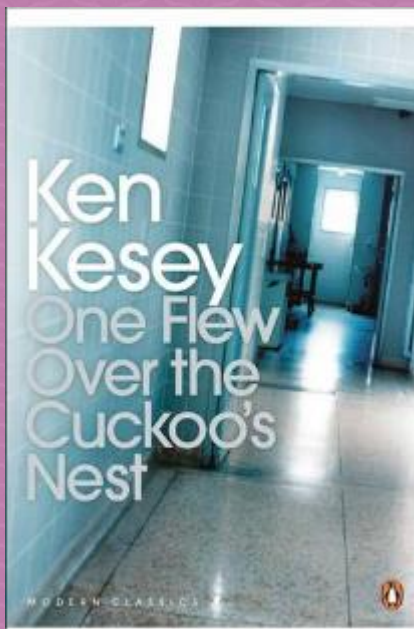
Comedy | Adventure



Burning Secret by Stefan Zweig

12-year-old Edgar grows wary of a Baron he meets on holiday in this period story from Hapsburg Germany. He begins to think something is amiss, and when he finds out what it is, he takes revenge in a shocking manner. Short, and tense.

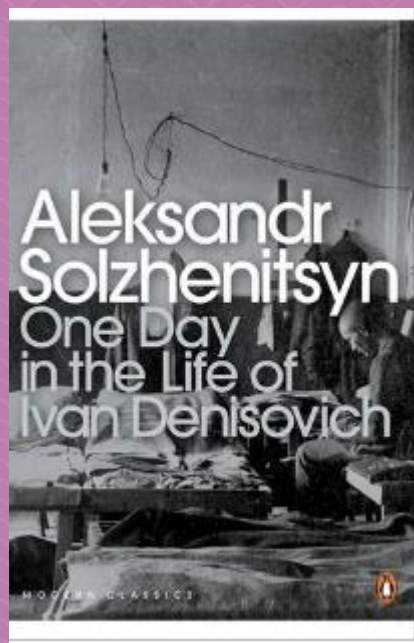
Contemporary



One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest by Ken Kesey

McMurphy thinks he has escaped prison by being moved to a mental institution. Slowly he realises he is even more confined than before. A startling exploration of sanity and madness; and freedom vs control. Warning, some adult themes and a challenging read for 13 & 14-year-olds.

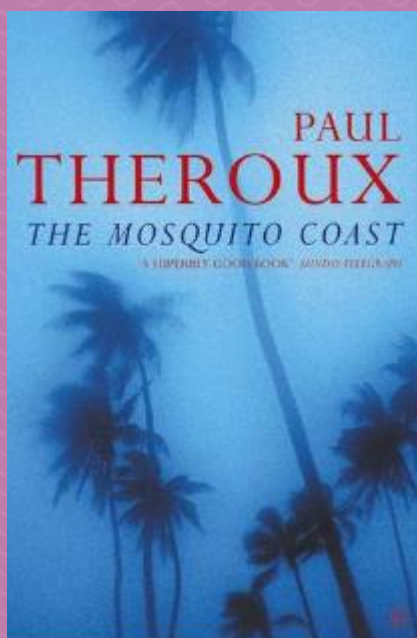
Contemporary | Mental health



One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich by Alexander Solzhenitsyn

A horrifying and gripping account of life at a Soviet Gulag – isolated and stark. A tale of mental and physical survival. This would make an interesting choice for detention class reading. A more challenging book for year 9 students.

Contemporary



The Mosquito Coast by Paul Theroux

Allie Fox is a father who wants to change this world. He is on an unstoppable mission to bring ice and other inventions to the jungle, and a relentless pursuit of his dreams drives his wife and children to despair. After reading this, family holidays will never be the same. An interesting choice for a Year 9 book club.

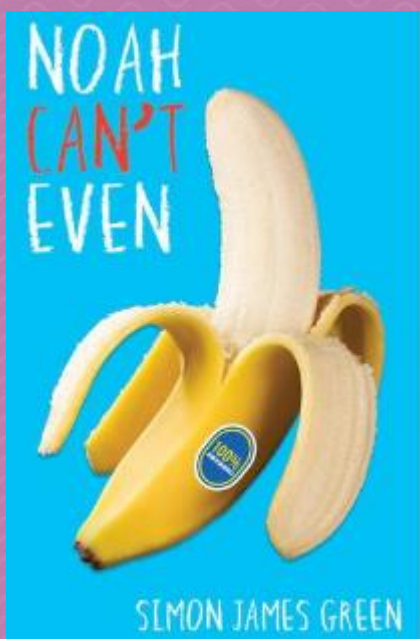
Contemporary



Not That Kind Of Hero by Alexia Casale

When Orla earns a spot on a prestigious drama course, she soon finds herself struggling to juggle her new passion with family responsibilities. Surrounded by more experienced peers, Her journey gets even trickier when she starts to develop feelings for fellow student Cass. This heartfelt story explores self-discovery, the universal challenges of teen life, and balancing relationships, personal growth and ambition. Highly recommended for Year 9 students.

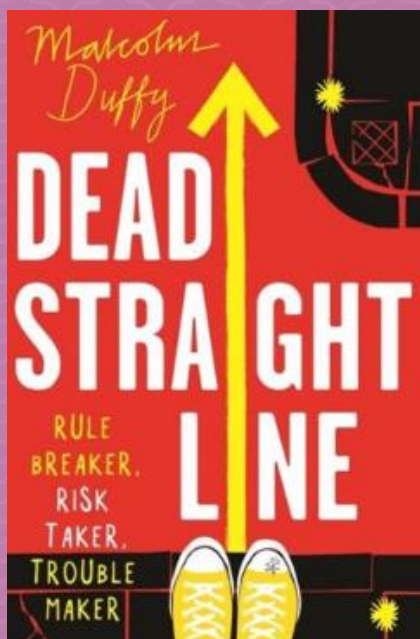
Romance



Noah Can't Even by Simon James Green

Noah desperately wants to be like everyone else. But with a mother who works as an unconvincing Beyonce lookalike and a father who isn't around, Noah is struggling with life. Laugh-out-loud moments of teenage angst with a twist. A valuable LGBT literature addition to the school library.

LGBT



Dead Straight Line by Malcolm Duffy

It's simple. Wherever you are, you have to get home in a Dead Straight Line. Never mind what's in the way or which rules you have to break, the game 16-year-old Rory concocts is as enticing in the story as it is thought-provoking in real life. But what Rory cannot foresee is how it will change his world and wreck his friend Eliot's life. After the accident, consequences hit hard at home and at school, and an angry Rory is sent to volunteer in a care home. There he meets Tanker, an outspoken war veteran who provides hope – slowly reshaping how Rory sees himself and his actions. Incredibly powerful, perfectly pitched and unerringly relevant, Dead Straight Line is an outstanding, sharp and pacey story for 12+ year olds that explores trust, responsibility and real lived experience. Every secondary-aged student should read it. [Read our full review.](#)

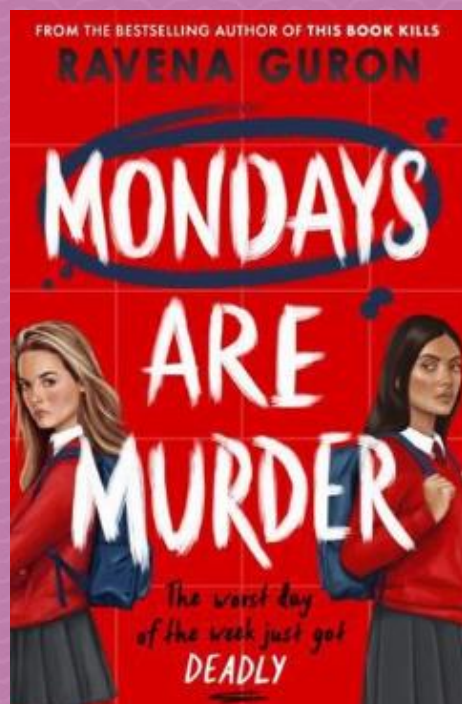
Contemporary



Day of Now by Miranda Reason

Dayna and Pax have grown up in the shadow of a fungal outbreak that has wiped out most of society. They live quietly with their father until he falls sick, and their call for help brings far more danger than relief. Forced out into a broken landscape, the siblings push on in search of people they can trust. This incendiary YA story, told in 55 short chapters, follows their shifting threats, uneasy alliances and the tough choices they must make to keep their family together. It's a fresh, original and genuinely affecting dystopian novel for 13+ year olds. Highly recommended.

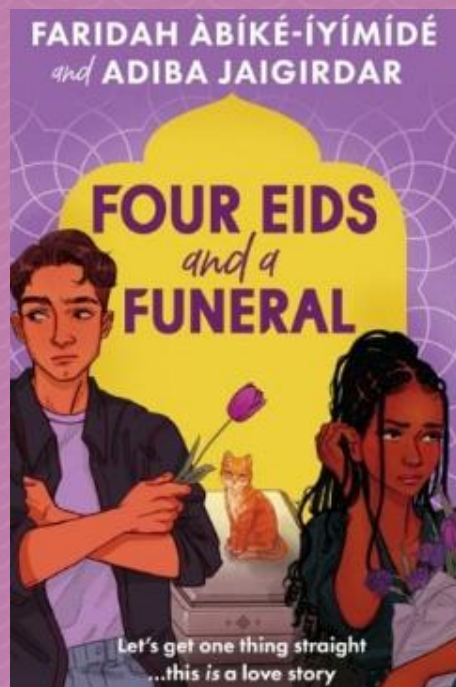
Dystopia



Mondays are Murder by Ravena Guron

When 17-year-old Kay returns to her hometown after her friend's death, she discovers a letter foretelling violent events leading to her own murder on Monday. Faced with escalating threats, Kay must uncover the sender's identity before time runs out. Combining suspense, mystery, and epic twists, this riveting page-turner explores themes of danger and trust. It's bound to be a hit with 13+ year olds.

Thriller



Four Eids and a Funeral by Faridah Àbíké-Íyímídé and Adiba Jaigirdar

Former friends Tiwa and Said reunite to save their Islamic Centre from demolition and face personal challenges along the way. Tiwa appreciates the centre's importance to the community, but Said has a secret reason. Their story is rich with cultural depth and family conflict. Highlighting themes of friendship, identity, and community resilience with a deftly light touch, this refreshingly original romance is bound to be popular. Highly recommended.

Romance