

VCE Literature Text List 2015

The following texts proposed by the Literature Text Advisory Panel have been approved by the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) as suitable for study in Units 3 and 4 in 2015. Texts were selected in accordance with the following criteria and guidelines.

Criteria for text selection

Each text selected for the VCE Literature text list will:

- have literary merit and be worthy of close study
- be an excellent example of form and genre
- sustain intensive study, raising interesting issues and providing challenging ideas
- be appropriate for both male and female students
- be appropriate for the age and development of students and, in that context, reflect current community standards and expectations.

The text list as a whole will:

- be suitable for a wide range of students, including students studying English as an additional language
- reflect the cultural diversity of the Victorian community
- include a balance of new and established works
- include texts that display affirming perspectives
- include texts by or about Australians, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- reflect engagement with Asia.

Guidelines for text selection

The text list for VCE Literature is determined within the following guidelines:

1. Texts in both List A and List B should be suitable for the areas of study and as the basis for achieving outcomes in the school-assessed coursework.
2. The texts in List B should be suitable as the basis for examination responses.
3. Forty texts should be available for List A.
4. Thirty texts should be available for List B.
5. The list must represent a range of forms, experiences and voices, as described in the study design.
6. Genres for List A must be represented in the following approximate numbers:
 - ten novels
 - ten plays, films or television mini-series
 - eight collections of poetry
 - six collections of short stories
 - six other works of literature
7. Genres for List B must be represented in the following approximate numbers:
 - nine novels
 - nine plays
 - six collections of poetry
 - three collections of short stories
 - three other works of literature
8. One-third of the texts should be Australian.
9. Approximately 75 per cent of the texts must be texts that would be expected to be familiar to most Literature teachers.

10. The text list must contain no titles in common with those on the VCE English/EAL text list.
11. The text list must be reviewed annually, with approximately 25 per cent of the texts being changed. No text should appear for more than four consecutive years or fewer than two years.
12. Full bibliographic details must be supplied where necessary.

Text selection – advice to schools

Text selection advice is published on page 19 of the *VCE Literature Study Design*.

When selecting texts, teachers should ensure that students experience a range of literature from early to contemporary works, dealing with a diversity of cultural experiences and a range of points of view:

- At least two texts should be Australian.
- At least two texts should be selected from List A and two texts from List B.

Selections from the text list should include:

- one novel
- one play, film or television mini-series
- between 10 and 15 poems
- collection of short stories, letters, memoirs, essays, tales, myths and short extracts from a variety of sources
- two further texts selected from novels, plays, collections of poetry, collections of short stories, biographies, autobiographies, collections of essays, letters or memoirs.

Note: While the VCAA considers all the texts on this list suitable for study, teachers should be aware that with some texts there may be sensitivities in relation to certain issues. In selecting texts for study, teachers should make themselves aware of these issues prior to introducing the text to students.

The VCAA does not prescribe editions; any complete edition may be used. However, it should be noted that editions nominated for titles from List B are those from which the passages for the examination will be selected. The bibliographic information in this list is provided to assist teachers to obtain texts and is correct, as far as possible, at the time of publication. Publishing details may change from time to time and teachers should consult the *VCAA Bulletin VCE, VCAL and VET* regularly for any amendments or alterations to the list.

In List A, the choice of poems for study is a teacher decision. Poems may be sourced from any edition of a poet's works and editions nominated for List A are not prescriptive. For List B, on the other hand, listed poems are prescriptive.

Key to codes

This list is presented alphabetically by author, grouped according to the kind of text. Abbreviations in brackets after the titles signify the following.

- (A) This text meets the Australian requirement.
- (#) Bracketed numbers indicate the number of years that a text has appeared on the Literature text list: (1) for example, indicates that 2015 is the first year a text has appeared on the list.

List A

Novels

Crane, Stephen, *The Red Badge of Courage* (2)
Desai, Kiran, *The Inheritance of Loss* (2)
Dick, Philip K, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (3)
Dunmore, Helen, *The Betrayal* (3)
Flanagan, Richard, *Wanting* (A) (4)
James, Henry, *The Turn of the Screw* (2)
Malouf, David, *Harland's Half Acre* (A) (1)
Park, Ruth, *Swords and Crowns and Rings* (A) (1)
Parrett, F, *Past the Shallows* (A) (3)
Temple, Peter, *The Broken Shore* (A) (4)

Plays, films or television mini-series

Beckett, Samuel, *Happy Days* (1)
Campion, Jane (director), *The Piano* (A) (3)
Cornelius, Patricia, *Do Not Go Gentle* (A) (2)
Elliot, Adam (director), *Mary and Max* (A) (4)
Orton, Joe, *Loot* (3)
Rame, Franca and Fo, Dario, *A Woman Alone & Other Plays* (1)
Schepisi, Fred (director), *The Eye of the Storm* (A) (1)
Shaffer, Peter, *Amadeus* (2)
Shepard, Sam, *Buried Child* (1)
Smith, Sue, *Bastard Boys* (film script) (A) (4)

Poetry

Note: No specific editions or poems are nominated for poets in List A as the choice of poems is a teacher decision.

Duffy, Carol Ann, *New Selected Poems* (4)
Gray, Robert, *Cumulus: Collected Poems* (A) (1)
Laskey, Michael, *The Man Alone – New and Selected Poems* (3)
Leonard, John (ed.), *Young Poets: An Australian Anthology* (A) (1)
Noonuccal, Oodgeroo, Australian Poetry Library (website) (A) (2)
Porter, Dorothy, *The Bee Hut* (A) (3)
Whitman, Walt, *The Complete Poems* (2)

Short stories

The Best Australian Stories: A Ten-Year Collection (A) (2)
Drewe, Robert, *The Rip* (A) (4)
Gilman, Charlotte Perkins, *The Yellow Wall-Paper and Other Stories* (3)
Narayan, RK, *Malgudi Days* (1)
Parker, Dorothy, *Complete Stories* (2)
Waugh, Evelyn, *The Complete Short Stories* (2)

Other literature

Bryson, Bill, *The Life and Times of The Thunderbolt Kid* (3)
de Botton, Alain, *Status Anxiety* (4)
Gaskell, Elizabeth, *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* (2)
Hyland, Adrian, *Kinglake-350* (A) (3)
Voltaire, *Candide, or Optimism*, Theo Cuffe (ed. and trans.) (1)
Walker, Brenda, *Reading by Moonlight* (A) (3)

List B

Novels

Austen, Jane, *Persuasion* (3)
Brontë, Charlotte, *Jane Eyre* (3)
Fowles, John, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (4)
Franklin, Miles, *My Brilliant Career* (A) (2)
Márquez, Gabriel García, *Love in the Time of Cholera* (4)
McCarthy, Cormac, *All the Pretty Horses* (3)
Ondaatje, Michael, *The Cat's Table* (2)
Scott, Kim, *That Deadman Dance* (A) (1)
Woolf, Virginia, *Mrs Dalloway* (4)

Plays

Aeschylus, 'Agamemnon', in *The Oresteia*, Robert Eagles (trans.) (1)
Albee, Edward, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* (3)
Ibsen, Henrik, *A Doll's House* (2)
Ionesco, Eugène, 'Rhinoceros', Derek Prouse (trans.), in *Rhinoceros, The Chairs, The Lesson* (1)
Shakespeare, William, *Antony and Cleopatra* (3)
Shakespeare, William, *Coriolanus* (1)
Shaw, George Bernard, *Pygmalion* (2)
Stoppard, Tom, *Arcadia* (3)

Poetry

Note: Each poem listed must be studied. In the case of longer poems, extracts from the poem may be used in the examination.

Dobson, Rosemary, *Collected* (A) (1)

Poems for study: 'The Fisherman and the Moon', 'The Ship of Ice', 'Painter of Umbria', 'The Mirror', 'The Tiger', 'Out of Winter', 'Annunciations', 'The Passionate Poet and His Muse', 'The Passionate Poet and the Moon', 'Eutychus', 'Over the Frontier', 'The Greek Vase', 'The Sanctuary on Overton Hill, Wiltshire', 'The Almond-tree in the King James Version', 'Reading Aloud', 'Poems a Long Way after Basho'

Eliot, TS, *Collected Poems 1909–1962* (4)

Poems for study: 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock', 'Portrait of a Lady', 'Preludes', 'Rhapsody on a Windy Night', 'Gerontion', 'Whispers of Immortality', 'The Waste Land' (five parts), 'The Hollow Men', 'Ash-Wednesday' (six parts), 'Journey of the Magi', 'Marina', 'Four Quartets (Burnt Norton)'

Heaney, Seamus, *Opened Ground* (2)

Poems for study: 'Death of a Naturalist', 'Follower', 'Mid-Term Break', 'Poem', 'Requiem for the Croppies', 'The Tollund Man', 'Limbo', 'Funeral Rites', 'Punishment', 'Act of Union', 'The Strand at Lough Beg', 'The Otter', 'In Memoriam Francis Ledwidge', 'A Transgression', 'The Swing'

Rich, Adrienne, *The Fact of a Doorframe: Selected Poems 1950–2001* (4)

Poems for study: 'Storm Warnings', 'Aunt Jennifer's Tigers', 'Ideal Landscape', 'Necessities of Life', 'The Trees', 'Jerusalem', 'A Valediction Forbidding Mourning', 'Diving into the Wreck', 'The Fact of a Doorframe', 'Twenty-One Love Poems' (V–IX), 'North American Time', 'Dreamwood', 'Harpers Ferry', 'What Kind of Times Are These', 'Rusted Legacy'

Rossetti, Christina, *Selected Poems* (3)

Poems for study: 'Song ["When I am dead, my dearest"]', 'Remember', 'The World', 'Three Stages', 'Echo', 'My Dream', 'The heart knoweth its own bitterness', 'A Birthday', 'Winter: My Secret', 'Maude Clare', 'Up-Hill', 'L.E.L.', 'Goblin Market', 'Memory', 'Amor Mundi'

Szyborska, Wislawa, *Sounds, Feelings, Thoughts: Seventy Poems by Wislawa Szymborska* (2)

Poems for study: 'Two Monkeys by Brueghel', 'Atlantic', 'The Museum', 'Travel Elegy', 'Water', 'The Joy of Writing', 'Pieta', 'Tarsier', 'Advertisement', 'Autonomy', 'Psalm', 'The Terrorist, He Watches', 'Life While You Wait', 'Utopia'

Short stories

Carey, Peter, *Collected Stories* (A) (4)

Stories for study: 'Do You Love Me?', 'Life & Death in the South Side Pavilion', 'Room No. 5 (Escribo)', 'Peeling', 'A Windmill in the West', 'Concerning the Greek Tyrant', 'Conversations with Unicorns', 'American Dreams', 'The Fat Man in History', 'A Schoolboy Prank', 'The Chance', 'He Found Her in Late Summer'

Kennedy, Cate, *Dark Roots* (A) (2)

Stories for study: 'What Thou and I Did, Till We Loved', 'A Pitch Too High for the Human Ear', 'Habit', 'Flotsam', 'Cold Snap', 'Resize', 'The Testosterone Club', 'Dark Roots', 'Angel', 'Seizure', 'The Light of Coincidence', 'Soundtrack', 'Direct Action', 'The Correct Names of Things', 'Wheelbarrow Thief', 'Sea Burial', 'Kill or Cure'

Proulx, Annie, *Close Range: Brokeback Mountain and Other Stories* (2)

Stories for study: 'The Half-Skinned Steer', 'People in Hell Just Want a Drink of Water', 'The Bunchgrass Edge of the World', 'A Lonely Coast', 'Brokeback Mountain'

Other literature

Barnes, Julian, *A History of the World in 10½ Chapters* (2)

Capote, Truman, *In Cold Blood* (4)

Orwell, George, *Down and Out in Paris and London* (3)

Stanner, WEH, *The Dreaming & Other Essays* (A) (1)

Essays for study: 'Durmugam: A Nangiomeri', 'The Dreaming', 'The Aborigines', 'Continuity and Change among the Aborigines', 'Aborigines and Australian Society', 'Aboriginal Humour'

Annotations

These annotations are provided to assist teachers with text selection. The comments are not intended to represent the only possible interpretation or a favoured reading of a text. The list is arranged alphabetically by author in text types. Films are listed by title.

List A

Novels

Crane, Stephen, *The Red Badge of Courage*, Penguin Classics, 2005 (2)

Henry Fleming is newly enlisted in the Union Army. Initially aflame with patriotic fervour, he learns that the reality of war bears little resemblance to his dreams of glory. Terrified, he flees the battlefield, only to return to lead his regiment into battle. Stephen Crane wrote this classic novel about the American Civil War despite never having seen combat. One of the first examples of modern American impressionism, the brutal descriptions of war are less important to Crane than the psychological dilemma of the protagonist. This gives the novel a permanency and relevance that it might have otherwise lacked. Crane's self-described 'plain and unadorned prose' is nihilistic and ironic, for Fleming's ultimate 'red badge' is the bloody wound of death.

Desai, Kiran, *The Inheritance of Loss*, Penguin, 2007 (2)

In a house on the edge of the Himalayas, a retired judge lives cosseted in bitter memories with his teenage granddaughter. The judge's cook cares for them both, although his thoughts are often on his son, who is eking out a living as an illegal worker in the United States. Desai's novel is both panoramic and intimate; its world is international in scope and yet her characters' most personal joys, secrets and shames are tenderly revealed. Her characters' various predicaments illuminate the tragic consequences of colonialism, not the least of which is a profound loneliness borne from the loss of heritage and culture.

Dick, Philip K, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, Orion Publishing, 1968 (3)

In 2012, Earth is dying. Animals are rare and ownership of them is coveted, a practice that promotes the production of animal 'replicants'. Androids also exist, but these have become a problem. Enter Rick Deckard, who earns his living as a bounty hunter, 'retiring' rogue androids on the run from enslavement. Deckard's job was easy enough when the distinction between robot and human was preserved, quantifiable through 'empathy tests'. But his quest reveals an increasingly blurred line. What if androids do dream? Dick's writing is a genre fusion of hardboiled and sci-fi. Ridley Scott's 1982 cult classic, *Blade Runner*, used the novel as a premise for the film.

Dunmore, Helen, *The Betrayal*, Penguin 2010 (3)

Set in Stalin's USSR, this novel opens with a moral dilemma. The son of a Secret Police boss is admitted to hospital with an aggressive tumour in his leg. In a time when politics and fear invade every aspect of life, Andrei must decide whether to risk taking on the case and treating the boy, knowing that failure will have terrifying consequences. Exploring the conflict between personal and political accountability, *The Betrayal* is a fascinating glimpse into life under Stalin, giving an insight into the extraordinary pressures the regime placed on ordinary people.

Flanagan, Richard, *Wanting*, Vintage, Random House, 2009 (A) (4)

Richard Flanagan's fiction draws on historical fact to create imaginative truth. With the reader as an active player, *Wanting* weaves together a cast of diverse characters: Charles Dickens and the woman for whom he left his wife, the actress Ellen Ternan; Dickens's biographer John Forster; the British explorer John Franklin and his wife, Jane; the Aboriginal child Mathinna; and the Protector George Robinson. Flanagan sets the rich narratives in which these figures feature in the very different 19th-century worlds of urban London and colonial Tasmania. *Wanting* is about desire, about different kinds of desire – it is a very 21st-century text.

James, Henry, *The Turn of the Screw*, Penguin Classics, 2011 (2)

A young woman agrees to take the position of governess to orphaned Miles and Flora in the remote country estate of Bly. While charmed by the children and rambling grounds, the unnamed protagonist also comes to believe that malevolent ghosts are stalking her charges. As chilling visions and encounters increase in intensity, each 'turn of the screw' leads the reader to question the veracity of the governess' claims. Are supernatural forces threatening to overtake the children? Or is dangerously repressed desire the key? The deliberate ambiguity of the text leaves this haunting tale open to rich interpretation.

Malouf, David, *Harland's Half Acre*, Vintage, 2013 (A) (1)

Malouf paints a picture of Australia from the perspective of character Phil Vernon, and through the life and work of painter Frank Harland. Stylistically evocative of DH Lawrence and Patrick White, the novel explores Australia's attempts to distinguish itself from Europe although, as the author notes, it 'is really a book about families and the effect of families and how people become isolated in them and how people try to manage them'. Malouf weaves the story with first-person narration and letters, and 'with a period of political upheaval and social change, both domestically and in the great world beyond'. Malouf reflects on childhood, success, the process of artistic creation and family ties in this often tragic text.

Park, Ruth, *Swords and Crowns and Rings*, Text Classics, 2012 (A) (1)

Set in the first three decades of the 20th century, primarily in rural New South Wales, this tale of Dickensian sweep won Ruth Park the Miles Franklin award in 1977. Jackie Hanna is a grocer's son and a dwarf. His childhood friend, Cushie Moy, lives just across the road, but comes, metaphorically, from the other side of the tracks. Their childhood friendship sustains them both and they imagine they will be together forever. But class consciousness and the Depression intervene, and the novel charts the hardship of each as they make their way to an adulthood identity forged through struggles of very different kinds. Rural Australia, poverty, difference, human cruelty, kindness and nobility pervade the changing moods of this cracking Australian love story.

Parrett, Favel, *Past the Shallows*, Hachette, 2011 (A) (3)

This lyrical and haunting debut novel explores the connections between landscape, memory and relationships. Three brothers are growing up on the remote southern coast of Tasmania. Their father, an abalone fisherman, carries a dark secret that has left him as unpredictable and dangerous as the coastal waters he fishes. The novel is an exploration of the ties that bind, both in families and in nature. Evocative, spare prose renders the simple beauty of 'a cuttlefish bone, a nice bit of driftwood ... a shark egg', a striking contrast to the complexity of human emotion.

Temple, Peter, *The Broken Shore*, Text Publishing, 2010 (A) (4)

This novel employs, and also subverts and transcends, many of the conventions of the crime genre. The pervading mood is dark; the past weighs on the flawed and damaged hero, homicide detective Joe Cashin. Seeking healing, escape and oblivion as a country cop in the Victorian coastal town where he grew up, Cashin encounters corruption that Temple suggests is endemic in our world. In his depiction of racism, institutionalised brutality and broken lives, Temple utilises the metaphor of the broken shore to critique society. A broken man himself, Cashin struggles to retain integrity and regain wholeness.

Plays, films or television mini-series

Beckett, Samuel, *Happy Days*, Faber and Faber, 2010 (1)

Set on an endless beach, on an endless summer day, Samuel Beckett's *Happy Days* opens with the central character, Winnie, buried waist deep in sand. Her predicament is unexplained and almost entirely unacknowledged as she prattles with unshakeable optimism to her monosyllabic husband, Willie, who inhabits a cave nearby. Her life is governed by the ringing of a bell and is filled with trivial routines that barely conceal the terror lurking in her mind that her life might be futile. In the second act, Winnie is buried up to her neck but her optimism and philosophical approach to life remain almost undimmed. *Happy Days* manages to avoid the angst that can render the theatre of the absurd genre inaccessible.

Cornelius, Patricia, *Do Not Go Gentle*, Currency Press, 2011 (A) (2)

Winner of the 2006 Patrick White Playwrights' Award, *Do Not Go Gentle* is a play by the multi-award winning Australian playwright Patricia Cornelius. Blending tragedy and comedy, and taking its title from Dylan Thomas's exquisite villanelle, 'Do not go gentle into that good night', Cornelius vividly explores the travails of old age. The story of seven people in an old-age home is juxtaposed with Robert Scott's ill-fated expedition to the South Pole, becoming a metaphor for the ultimate battle of life and death. Inventively poetic, wry and unsentimental, Cornelius's play grapples with fundamental existential questions about love, life, ageing and death.

***Mary and Max*, Director: Adam Elliot, 2009 (A) (4)**

Mary and Max is a claymation film written and directed by Adam Elliot, Oscar-winning creator of *Harvie Krumpet*. It follows the lives of two unlikely pen pals. Mary is a lonely young girl in suburban Melbourne who finds life with an alcoholic mother and a downtrodden father uninspiring. She selects Max Horovitz's address randomly from the New York phone book and the correspondence begins. Max is also an isolate, a hermit with Asperger's syndrome who is at odds with the world around him. The setting alternates with each letter and the film explores a range of social issues with a mixture of bleak humour and slapstick cartoon comedy. (Rating: PG)

Orton, Joe, *Loot*, Methuen Drama, 1993 (3)

Joe Orton's 1960s play, involving a bank robbery and subsequent attempts to hide the evidence, has been described as a black farce that targets conventional morality, institutionalised religion and the British legal system. Set in the house of the working class McLeavy family, the action revolves around the corpse of Mrs McLeavy, her coffin and the efforts of her son and his partners in crime to hide the cash and escape arrest. The dialogue is fast, witty and acerbic, deserving of the comparisons that have been made to Oscar Wilde.

Rame, Franca and Fo, Dario, *A Woman Alone & Other Plays*, Methuen Drama, 1991 (1)

A Woman Alone & Other Plays gathers together the feminist monologues of Italian activists and dramatists Franca Rame and Dario Fo. Predominantly written in the 1970s, the issues these plays discuss – reproductive freedom, the yearning for equality in relationships and in the workplace, and the power of language to limit and define – still resonate with us in our purportedly post-feminist era. Theatrically, the monologues mesh the ancient popular theatre of Italy with more contemporary activist theatre traditions. Although mostly comedies, these monologues often have tragic events at their core and sometimes combine slapstick humour with searingly honest self-revelation. Teachers should be aware that the collection contains coarse language and adult concepts.

Shaffer, Peter, *Amadeus*, Penguin, 1979 (2)

Set in Vienna in 1823 and recalling the events of the decade 1781–91, Shaffer's play explores the relationship that existed between two composers: Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, depicted as an infuriating, mercurial musical genius, and Antonio Salieri, portrayed as a merely ordinary, second-rate musical talent. A compelling study of the nature and deadly consequences of Salieri's personal and professional jealousy of Mozart, the play highlights the effects of other deadly sins, such as lust, pride and anger, as well as the wonders of Mozart's music. This much admired and performed play was made into a successful film (1984) and Shaffer, who wrote the screenplay, won an Academy Award for his adaptation.

Shepard, Sam, *Buried Child*, Random House, 2006 (1)

'What's happened to this family anyway?' asks Shelley, the bewildered outsider in *Buried Child*, the play that launched Sam Shepard's career as a playwright and won a Pulitzer Prize for drama. A surreal elegy for the lost ideal of the American family, *Buried Child* is the story of Vince, who, returning to his family after a six-year absence, finds that they do not recognise him. What started as a journey through bucolic childhood memories descends into a Gothic nightmare of brutality, failed dreams and corrosive family secrets. *Buried Child* is one of Shepard's most accessible works. A true American original, Shepard's savagely witty subversion of family archetypes remains as relevant today as when it was first written.

Smith, Sue, *Bastard Boys*, Currency Press, 2007 (A) (4)

This screenplay takes as its subject the industrial dispute that erupted in Australia on 7 April 1998, when Patrick Stevedores sacked its workforce, ejected them from the waterfront and began to replace them with a non-unionised workforce. It tells the story of this dispute as seen by four of the protagonists, while also tracing its effect on their lives. Mixing the genres of historical documentary, popular drama and bildungsroman, 'Bastard Boys' raises questions about the limits of power, the development of individual character, the tension between politics and family life, and the competing demands of history and fiction.

***The Eye of the Storm*, Director: Fred Schepisi, 2011 (A) (1)**

Directed by Fred Schepisi, this faithful adaptation of the Patrick White novel traces the last days of a cruel and self-absorbed matriarch, the wealthy Elizabeth Hunter. Her children, the son a successful West End actor and the daughter who is divorced from a French aristocrat, have left Australia for Europe. They return out of a sense of filial duty, but with a clear focus on securing their inheritance. While 'the eye of the storm' reflects the arrogance of the mother and her desire to control those around her, it also represents a search for peace and stillness – a state that eludes her and the other characters in the film. Teachers should be aware that this film contains sex scenes, adult concepts and coarse language. (Rating: MA15+)

***The Piano*, Writer and Director: Jane Campion, 1993 (A) (3)**

Ada, a young 19th-century Scottish woman who has not spoken since she was a child, is sent, along with her young daughter Flora, to a rugged and remote part of New Zealand to marry a man she has never met. Her piano is her prized possession, her 'voice' and an emotional outlet. In this story of passion, jealousy, obsession and love, two men vie for Ada's affections, dividing Flora's loyalties, with tragic consequences. Cultures clash and flawed characters inhabit a harsh environment in this tense and moody film. The film is a study of the complexity and power of language. (Rating: M)

Poetry

Duffy, Carol Ann, *New Selected Poems*, Picador, 2004 (4)

Appointed poet laureate in 2009, Duffy is a multi-award winning Scottish poet and playwright. This selection, including poems from five of her collections, showcases her wide range and her evocative use of language. Duffy is renowned as a ventriloquist, able to inhabit widely disparate characters such as the violent teenager in the controversial 'Education for Leisure' and the Jewish woman whose visceral experience of execution is rendered in 'Shooting Star'.

Gray, Robert, *Cumulus: Collected Poems*, John Leonard Press, 2012 (A) (1)

Although Gray writes primarily about Australian landscapes, he is strongly influenced by Buddhism, English romanticism (William Wordsworth in particular) and imagism (as represented by the American poet William Carlos Williams). These disparate influences frame the chief themes of his poetry: the relationship between words and things, self and environment, mindscape and landscape, and active and passive modes of thought. These influences also condition the forms Gray uses, which range from haiku, gathered like beads on a necklace, to longer poems in free verse, structured as a flow of vivid images. Gray is widely regarded as one of Australia's most important contemporary poets.

Laskey, Michael, *The Man Alone – New and Selected Poems*, Smith/Doorstop Books, 2008 (3)

Michael Laskey is of the UK's leading contemporary poets. His poems speak of the intricacies of domestic relationships, family, friendship and everyday routines. The poems are gently observational, the images homely and at times deceptively benign. Laskey's characters, some of whom are semi-autobiographical, seldom reference literary or mythological allusions, academia or the esoteric; they are more concerned with navigating the concrete realities of love, work and the weekend. While the works are distinctly English in their setting, there is much that is recognisable, accessible and poignant for Australians.

Leonard, John (ed.), *Young Poets: An Australian Anthology*, John Leonard Press, 2011 (A) (1)

The 'young poets' anthologised here add youthful voices to a venerated literary tradition. Elizabeth Campbell draws on the language of medieval troubadour songs, and the poetry of Blake and Dante. She creates an often disturbing, romantic landscape and raises questions about the nature of love. Bonny Cassidy's majestic landscapes are recognisably Australian; her sharply observed detail and lyrical style endow the land with a sense of timelessness and infinite space. Sarah Holland-Batt's evocations of the natural world are rich with sensory imagery, inviting the reader to contemplate the mystery of life and the finality of death. These young poets exemplify many of the features of the anthology as a whole and, as John Leonard puts it in his very useful introduction, 'the writing of each is beautifully idiosyncratic, indeed mercurial'.

Noonuccal, Oodgeroo, in the Australian Poetry Library (website) (A) (2)

www.poetrylibrary.edu.au/poets/noonuccal-oodgeroo

Oodgeroo Noonuccal was known until 1988 as Kath Walker. Following a recommendation from Jacaranda's poetry reader, Judith Wright, her first collection was published in 1964 as *We Are Going*. The work was an immediate commercial success, selling more than 10,000 copies and making Walker the bestselling Australian poet since C.J. Dennis. The plain-speaking style of her poetry and the strong element of protest in it precluded literary acclaim for her work, but the role of a political 'protest poet' was one in which Walker would come to revel.

Porter, Dorothy, *The Bee Hut*, Black Inc., 2009 (A) (3)

Porter completed this posthumously published collection shortly before she died in 2008. She wrote five verse novels in all, along with stand-alone collections, libretti and two novels for children. Twice nominated for the Miles Franklin, she won awards for her edgy and passionate verse novel *The Monkey's Mask*. 'The most powerful presence / is absence': *The Bee Hut* contains poems written in the last five years of her life. Sometimes elegiac, often humorous and frequently beautiful, the poems range across mythological and personal themes, conveying an intense awareness of the brevity and brutality, but ultimate richness, of life: 'Something in me / despite everything / can't believe my luck' ('View from 417').

Whitman, Walt, *The Complete Poems*, Penguin Classics, 2004 (2)

'Incomparable things said incomparably well' was how Emerson greeted Whitman's publication of the first edition of *Leaves of Grass* in 1855. Revelatory and incantatory, powerfully sublime, emblematic of the spirit of America, Whitman has subsequently become the centre of the American literary canon. Penguin's *The Complete Poems* gives us the 1891–92 'deathbed' edition, including the unnervingly original 'Song of Myself', 'Crossing Brooklyn Ferry', 'As I Ebb'd with the Ocean of Life', 'Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking' and Whitman's transcendent, yet utterly human, threnody for the martyred Abraham Lincoln, 'When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd'.

Short stories

Drewe, Robert, *The Rip*, Penguin, 2008 (A) (4)

The setting of the stories in *The Rip* is the coastal Australia of the 'sea changers', the affluent, seemingly stable middle class whose lives can veer off course in a moment. Drewe has said that in an instant a rip can take you by the legs and change your life forever. Water is a unifying motif in these unsettling, allusive and entertaining stories, in which the inhabitants of the metaphoric Garden of Eden come face to face with the serpent. The stories are tightly structured and compressed, the endings often chilling and complex with a disturbing 'sting in the tail'.

Gilman, Charlotte Perkins, *The Yellow Wall-Paper and Other Stories*, Oxford University Press, 1995 (3)

The narrator in the title story, suffering a depressive illness after the birth of a child, is prescribed the 'rest cure' and confined to a room with distinctive yellow wallpaper. Alone with her troubled thoughts and no useful occupation, she hallucinates, imagining other women trapped beneath the wallpaper. Fusing the Gothic with prescient social criticism, Gilman's feminism is vividly demonstrated throughout the collection. She explores the concept of 'madness', proposes alternate realities, challenges gendered identities, and creatively explores issues of class and power.

Narayan, RK, *Malgudi Days*, Penguin Classics, 2006 (1)

The imaginary small town of Malgudi was created by RK Narayan in 1935. The short stories collected in *Malgudi Days* are representative of life in post-independence, urban India. The lives of Narayan's characters are vividly portrayed in their local setting while also being shown as representative of universal concerns. Malgudi is populated by frauds and thieves, entertainers, public servants, small traders, individuals searching for happiness and families in conflict. There are stories that are hilarious and others yet that are gently ironic. In these stories, humanity confronts itself in all its absurdity, pettiness and seriousness.

Parker, Dorothy, *Complete Stories*, Penguin Classics, 2003 (2)

Dorothy Parker's complete short stories, published between 1922 and 1958, tell readers of the lives of American women. Parker ridicules social pretence, ironically describing the banalities of suburban marriage and exposing life's delusions and illusions. She coolly portrays the yearning for and the bitter heartbreak of love, and explores the differences between the sexes, illustrating panic, stupidity, estrangement, envy, distress and despair. Her writing of the foibles and unhappiness of the women's lives she so candidly recorded is characterised by wry humour, sardonic wit and a moving intensity that captures many of the prevailing values and attitudes of the period.

***The Best Australian Stories: A Ten-Year Collection*, Black Inc., (A) (2)**

This anthology of modern stories is an eclectic and ambitious collection that represents a decade of the *Best Australian Short Stories* series. The selected stories cover a range of styles, from the autobiographical work of Nam Le and the wryly observational style of Delia Falconer, through to the more surreal fiction of Gerald Murnane. Many stories reflect the tension between the idealised and mythologised rural Australia and the reality of our urbanised world. Some stories explore complex, dark and challenging themes that face contemporary Australia.

Waugh, Evelyn, *The Complete Short Stories*, Penguin Modern Classics, 2010 (2)

George Orwell grudgingly recorded in his notebook that 'Waugh is about as good a novelist as one can be (as novelists go today) while holding untenable opinions'. Scathingly satirical and humorously malicious, even Waugh's literary opponents could not but help admire his comedic and technical gifts. *The Complete Short Stories* provides an excellent introduction to this most wonderfully British of authors, one whose devastatingly accurate and incisive observations of human foibles renders his shorter fiction 'tiny masterpieces of suave, polished and cruel irony'.

Other literature

Bryson, Bill, *The Life and Times of The Thunderbolt Kid*, Black Swan, 2007 (3)

This memoir travels to the heart of 1950s Middle America, a 'simpler' time epitomised by *I Love Lucy*, innocent faith in material possessions and a naive, determined optimism blended with conservatism. Bryson takes readers through the cultural and geographic landscape of his childhood. The account is unified and filtered by his adopted persona of superhero, which parallels the national confidence in American invincibility. The past, as panoramically depicted here, is, indeed, 'another country'. Bryson combines facts, quirky anecdotes and often hilarious narration to evoke this lost 'wonderful world'.

de Botton, Alain, *Status Anxiety*, Penguin, 2010 (4)

Status Anxiety offers a philosophical diagnosis of Western contemporary culture. de Botton's thesis turns on a simple but compelling premise: in a society where all are theoretically equal, the realities of fundamental inequality often lead to corroding bitterness, resentment and shame, and thus 'status anxiety'. Covering a wide spectrum of disciplines, including history, marketing, economics, literature, politics, art, religion and philosophy, the text investigates both the causes of and cures for this malaise. de Botton's writing intrigues and entices; it soothes with its sustained humour and compassion.

Gaskell, Elizabeth, *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*, Penguin Classics, 1997 (2)

Gaskell describes the life of her friend, Charlotte Brontë, as composed of 'two parallel currents'; in one she was Currer Bell, the author, in the other she was Charlotte Brontë, the woman. Her biography presents the events of these twin lives in sequence, from her earliest literary efforts to the publication of *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*, and from childhood to her schooldays, adult life, marriage and then her death soon after. Enlivened by Brontë's letters and Gaskell's reminiscences, the biography remains popular and influential. It has powerfully shaped views of women's writing, literary friendship, and Brontë's life and literary achievements.

Hyland, Adrian, *Kinglake-350*, Text Publishing, 2010 (A) (3)

Hyland, in this story about heroism and human decency, recreates the all-too-real events and aftermath of the Black Saturday bushfires. For the most part seen through the eyes of local police officer Roger Wood, the book reveals a community dealing with the tragedy of the day. At times, fire itself becomes a character and, at times, Hyland uses imagination to tell the stories of those who faced the fires and did not survive. This powerful human story acts also as an indictment of those authorities who failed the people of the local area.

Voltaire, *Candide, or Optimism*, Theo Cuffe (ed. and trans.), Penguin Classics, 2005 (1)

Published in 1759, *Candide, or Optimism* is Voltaire's savagely satirical attack on the popular 18th-century idea advocated by Candide's tutor, Pangloss, that the most appalling human animosity and stupidity, and the unavoidable physical evils that occur in life – such as the Lisbon earthquake – all happen for some ultimate, morally good end. As Candide and his companions travel the Old and New Worlds, Voltaire's praise for rational conduct perhaps provides readers with some cause for hope that the problem of evil – physical and human-made – can be reconciled with the existence of an all-good, all-knowing, omnipotent God.

Walker, Brenda, *Reading by Moonlight*, Penguin, 2010 (A) (3)

As she leaves her home for hospital, Brenda Walker thinks carefully about the book she will take with her – a book to sustain and console her in ‘an empty room ... an almost unimaginable place’. Walker dovetails her own story of breast cancer with the story of the books that she reads on her journey from diagnosis through to survival. The text serves as an introduction to authors such as Dickens, Nabokov, Beckett, Dante, Tolstoy and White. *Reading by Moonlight* is a poignant but ultimately uplifting memoir that carries a simple message: reading can begin a process of healing.

List B

Novels

Austen, Jane, *Persuasion*, Penguin, 2003 (3)

Anne Elliot at 27 is ‘thin and faded’. Seven years earlier, persuaded by a well-meaning friend, she gave up the one man she truly loved. Now, neglected and ignored by a vain and narcissistic father and her two equally shallow sisters, Anne’s existence looks empty and bleak. Frederick Wentworth, the rejected suitor, has not forgiven Anne for breaking his heart. What happens when he returns? Different in many ways from Austen’s previous novels, this one is just as rich in cleverly handled social comment, but it is the moral debate about the nature of persuasion that makes it truly profound.

Brontë, Charlotte, *Jane Eyre*, Penguin, 2006 (3)

Brontë’s classic novel traces the life of its orphan heroine from her painful and unloved childhood at Gateshead and Lowood School, through early adulthood at Thornfield as governess to Mr Rochester’s ward, and with her cousins at Marsh End, to a fulfilling marriage at Ferndean. As each stage and place gives way to the next, Brontë explores a different aspect of what it is to belong, with the novel’s early sections a bitter critique of the treatment of children. A strong character possessed of both determination and integrity, Jane eventually finds a place where she is both happy and loved.

Fowles, John, *The French Lieutenant’s Woman*, Vintage Classics, 2005 (4)

The novel combines aspects of Victorian fiction with experimental narrative devices. Victorian gentleman Charles Smithson becomes infatuated with the enigmatic, impoverished Sarah Woodruff. Suspected of a relationship with a French sailor, she is ostracised by the community. Both the characters and the reader shift back and forth between centuries. Fowles uses a number of different ‘voices’ throughout. Time is manipulated – events are shown as though in sequence, when in fact they are simultaneous. The novel seldom proceeds as expected. Fowles takes us through a dislocated structure, ultimately abandoning the conventional ending in favour of two alternate outcomes.

Franklin, Miles, *My Brilliant Career*, Text Classics, 2012 (A) (2)

Franklin’s protofeminist work tells the story of Sybylla Melvyn, the daughter of an impoverished Australian farmer. Disillusioned with her life, she rejects an offer of marriage to the wealthy squatter, Harry Beecham, who offers her everything but control. Franklin’s character provides a unique insight into the desperate life of the rural poor and the hunger for another life. Written at the time just prior to Federation, the choices facing Sybylla are seen to reflect those facing the new country. Described by the author as a ‘yarn’, this passionate voice is as fresh and as compelling today as it was in 1901.

Márquez, Gabriel García, *Love in the Time of Cholera*, Edith Grossman (trans.), Penguin, 2007 (4)

Márquez explores life and love, yet his novel opens with the deaths of two old men, one a suicide and the other comically undignified. Interwoven in the narrative are the stories of Dr Juvenal Urbino, his wife, Fermina Daza, and her rejected suitor, Florentino Ariza. Florentino engages in numerous affairs as the decades go by, until, following the death of Urbino, he reunites with Fermina. Often with wry humour and with mesmerisingly vivid language, Márquez explores the tensions of love, ageing and death. While not the focus of the novel, the text includes references to potentially confronting material, including suicide and incest involving a 14-year-old girl. Schools should exercise due caution in determining whether to select this novel.

McCarthy, Cormac, *All the Pretty Horses*, Pan Macmillan, 2010 (3)

This novel has the epic quality of the great journey stories of mythology. It turns on the will of its protagonist, John Grady, to overcome and respond to the tests of love, betrayal and injustice. A late 20th-century novel, it is set in the Mexican north and is unashamedly American in tone and voice. McCarthy’s prose is lyrical, even in the most stark of circumstances, and scenes describing the horse work undertaken by Grady and his partner are mesmerising in their evocation of that world. The dialogue is sparse and laconic, and the resolution of the drama, while violent, is more than plausible.

Ondaatje, Michael, *The Cat's Table*, Jonathan Cape, 2011 (2)

In the port of Colombo in the early 1950s, 11-year-old Michael boards the huge ocean liner, the *Oronsay*, bound for England. At mealtimes, he is placed at the lowly 'cat's table' with an eccentric group of adults and two other unaccompanied minors, Cassius and Ramadhin. As the ship makes its way across the Indian Ocean, the boys become involved in the worlds and stories of the adults around them. Ondaatje charts the mischievous antics of the trio as they move from one discovery to the another, until they make the most mysterious discovery of all – that of the shackled prisoner, whose crime and fate will haunt them forever.

Scott, Kim, *That Deadman Dance*, Picador, 2013 (A) (1)

This novel by Aboriginal writer Kim Scott tells the story of white settlement on the south-west coast of Western Australia between 1826 and 1844. Initially, there are largely peaceful exchanges between Indigenous and settler cultures; later, the two groups come to the brink of war due to the actions of the newcomers. The heterogeneity of the novel's narrative form and its multiple points of view mirror the treaty proposed by the central character, Bobby Wabalanginy (but rejected by the settlers), in which all would have a voice. In so doing, it offers a powerful vehicle for rethinking relations between the first and later Australians.

Woolf, Virginia, *Mrs Dalloway*, Penguin, 2000 (4)

Who is Clarissa Dalloway? How is a sense of self determined? How do others see us? In *Mrs Dalloway*, Woolf presents us with the complexity of individual identity; her prose is preoccupied with the language-constructed rendering of self. Clarissa is both a private and a public person. In her privileged London life, she encounters the horror of war as well as the problem of love, of genuine relationships and of isolation. She walks through the streets of London making preparations for the party, where she hopes to connect people, authentically, in the evening. Isolation and madness are present, but Woolf offers the potential for connection and wholeness.

Plays

Aeschylus, 'Agamemnon', in *The Oresteia*, Robert Fagles (trans.), Penguin Classics, 1979 (1)

The first play in *The Oresteia*, 'Agamemnon' opens after the fall of Troy with the king's return to Argos, ruled by his wife, Clytemnestra, in his long absence. Agamemnon brings with him the Trojan princess, Cassandra, who speaks of the ancestral curse on the house of Agamemnon, predicting his death and her own, and the arrival of an avenger. Clytemnestra kills them to avenge the death of their daughter, Iphigenia, whom Agamemnon sacrificed to Artemis in exchange for a fair wind for the Greek ships. When Clytemnestra and her lover, Aegisthus, assume government, the Chorus sing of the return of the avenger, Orestes. The play is a chilling exploration of rivalry for power, family betrayal and guilt, in a cycle of violence where one act of vengeance leads to the next.

Albee, Edward, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*, Vintage, 2001 (3)

George and Martha, a worldly, jaded, older academic couple, invite campus newcomers Nick and Honey over for drinks. What ensues is an alcohol-fuelled unravelling of lives and marriages as George and Martha take aim at each other and at their guests with a stinging precision that is both humorous and devastating. Albee's play opened on Broadway in 1962, presenting a challenge to the white-picket-fence complacency of the American bourgeoisie.

Ibsen, Henrik, *A Doll's House*, Penguin Classics, 1965 (2)

Set against the backdrop of a Norwegian winter in 1879, Ibsen's play was both controversial and innovative for the times. The protagonist, Nora, finds herself trapped in a 'doll-like' state by her patronising and domineering husband, Torvald Helmer. Like Nora, Torvald avoids reality until it is too late. Both characters, to some degree, live in a world of illusion. Nora escapes from the reality of her marriage through reckless spending, while Torvald's treatment of his wife maintains his control over her and, thus, contributes to the final unexpected outcome of the play. This popular classic play continues to resonate with modern audiences and provides students with a rich discussion around themes such as marriage, truth, self-sacrifice and honour.

Ionesco, Eugène, 'Rhinoceros', Derek Prouse (trans.), in *Rhinoceros, The Chairs, The Lesson*, Penguin Modern Classics, 2000 (1)

Berenger, the protagonist of Eugène Ionesco's play, 'Rhinoceros', must choose to remain human or conform and become a rhino like those around him. Ionesco was active in the theatre of the absurd genre, which emphasised the meaninglessness of the modern condition as defined by existential thinkers, such as Jean-Paul Sartre. Ionesco sought to portray these philosophical ideas theatrically through allegory, symbolism and humour. In the context of post-Holocaust Europe, the play reveals the insidiousness of 'group-think' and shows how people can fall victim to collective, unconscious thought by allowing their wills to be manipulated by others.

Shakespeare, William, *Antony and Cleopatra*, Cambridge Student Edition, 1994 (3)

Shakespeare's account of the love between the eponymous protagonists is also a political portrayal of the point in history when Octavius became Caesar Augustus. Antony embodies the conflict in values between Rome and Egypt: the playful, flowing sensuality represented by Egypt and its queen ('in the East my pleasure lies'), and the duty and ethics of Rome ('...all be done by th'rule'). The richness and hyperbole of Shakespeare's language seductively evokes the passion between characters that would, originally, have been both played by male actors. *Antony and Cleopatra*, a play about the paradoxes of political power, invites the reader to consider also the monarchs of Shakespeare's own time.

Shakespeare, William, *Coriolanus* (The Pelican Shakespeare), Penguin Books, 1999 (1)

Composed in the twilight of the great tragedies, *Coriolanus* is Shakespeare's tragic epilogue. Manifestly an intensely political play, it lays bare the complex, often capricious relationship between the rulers and the ruled. Its protagonist, the Roman general, Caius Martius Coriolanus, is an incisive study in the evanescence of charisma; here is a man of action seen in action, possessed of enormous bravery and valour, yet one whose pride and obstinacy deny him the capacity to inspire loyalty or love. *Coriolanus* is a bitter meditation on a man who fights alone and who chooses to find no place in the common world.

Shaw, George Bernard, *Pygmalion*, Penguin, 2003 (2)

The phonetician, Professor Henry Higgins, in order to win a bet, undertakes to turn a Cockney flower-seller, Eliza Doolittle, into a duchess. He teaches her to speak standard English and successfully introduces her to society. Higgins wins his bet and reinforces his point about English speech and the class system. For her part, Eliza rebels against Higgins's insensitive and tyrannical behaviour and emerges as 'a tower of strength: a consort battleship'. Shaw's brilliantly witty 'romance in five acts' reveals the new Eliza as a transformed human being who now understands, as Higgins does not, that what really matters is not how she acts, but how people speak and act towards her.

Stoppard, Tom, *Arcadia*, Faber and Faber, 1993 (3)

This sparklingly witty play interweaves two generations of the Coverly household, nearly two hundred years apart, at Sidley Park in Devonshire. Young Thomasina Coverly, a mathematical prodigy, clearly outstrips her tutor, Septimus Hodge. Around them, a web of social dalliances is played out against a backdrop of the transformation of the classical gardens into a picturesque wilderness. In the present, two rival researchers, Hannah Jarvis and Bernard Nightingale, try to interpret the events of the earlier period. This sophisticated play, with its complex ideas about mathematical theories, classicism and romanticism, free will and determinism, and its poignant ending, is both challenging and accessible.

Poetry

Dobson, Rosemary, *Collected*, University of Queensland Press, 2012 (A) (1)

Rosemary Dobson is one of Australia's most important poets. Her oeuvre represents a search for illumination, born from a desire to see something more than just 'through a glass, darkly'. Elegantly restrained and deceptively austere, her poetry meditates on the transcendent potential of art, the paradox of time, the poignancy of existence and the mystery of death. These beautiful poems, replete with the author's deep passion for life, are, as Dobson herself said, 'part of a search for something only fugitively glimpsed; a state of grace which one once knew, or imagined, or from which one was turned away ... a doomed but urgent wish to express the inexpressible'.

Eliot, TS, *Collected Poems 1909–1962*, Faber and Faber, 2005 (4)

TS Eliot's poems reflect the philosophies and concerns of Modernist literary culture in the early 20th-century, particularly the sense of disillusionment and fragmentation expressed by writers and artists after the First World War. His poems are both accessible and complex. They draw on voices and views taken from contemporary Europe, from classical, philosophical and religious texts, and from popular culture. Eliot's literary style reflects the evolution of 'modern' poetry and allows students to understand the way Eliot creates new forms while drawing on the voices and forms of past centuries.

Heaney, Seamus, *Opened Ground*, Faber and Faber, 2005 (2)

For Seamus Heaney, 'opened ground' is a necessity, a way of getting right to the core of things and this is one of his main concerns in this body of his work that spans three decades. The Nobel Laureate draws his inspiration from a range of sources, including the natural world, contemporary Ireland and his family history. Through his poems, he explores enduring themes such as personal identity, love, death and the individual's place in history. The selected poems offer a variety of insights into Heaney's interest in the poetic form and his ability to create powerful sensory experiences for his readers. The book closes with Heaney's Nobel Lecture, 'Crediting Poetry'.

Rich, Adrienne, *The Fact of a Doorframe: Selected Poems 1950–2001*, WW Norton & Company, 2002 (4)

Ranging across half a century, the poems of Adrienne Rich are at once personal and political. Her style is lyrical, eloquent and often confronting. Earlier poems, such as 'Aunt Jennifer's Tigers', acknowledge the emergent feminism of the 1950s. Later works, 'Twenty-One Love Poems' and 'Harpers Ferry', develop threads of Rich's passionate concerns with cultural difference, social justice, sexuality and ageing. With her sharp intelligence and eye for detail, Rich delivers poems that are linguistically lavish as well as politically significant; they are imbued with a timeless quality that makes them a pleasure to read.

Rossetti, Christina, *Selected Poems*, Penguin, 2008 (3)

Rossetti's superbly crafted lyrical poems are full of riddles, paradoxes and elisions where self, nature, love and religion collide. If she had produced nothing else but 'Goblin Market', her fame would have still been assured. This cryptic fable of sisterhood in a daemonic fairyland, with its tripping metre and lush imagery, has generated a multiplicity of readings. With the death of Tennyson in 1892, Rossetti was touted as the next poet laureate. She wrote some of the most resonant poems of the Victorian age. Virginia Woolf said, in an address to her, 'some of the poems you wrote in your little back room will be found adhering in perfect symmetry when the Albert Memorial is dust and tinsel'.

Szyborska, Wislawa, *Sounds, Feelings, Thoughts: Seventy Poems by Wislawa Szymborska*, Princeton University Press, 1981 (2)

Wislawa Szymborska is a Polish Nobel Laureate. Her poetry often explores the sense of fulfillment experienced in re-imagining the particulars of life. In her own words, she focuses on the 'importance of the unimportant'. Without becoming obscure, her carefully crafted verse rarely makes categorical statements or provides definitive answers; there is an awareness that truth is complex and ambiguous, that reality consists of a myriad details. The poetry is often deceptively simple and engaging; greater complexity emerges upon reflection and study. In describing her work, she has observed, 'I am, a question answering a question'.

Short stories

Carey, Peter, *Collected Stories*, Vintage, 2005 (A) (4)

The collection contains stories from *The Fat Man in History* and *War Crimes*, and three stories not previously published in book form. With incisive wit and stunning imagination, Carey explores the notions of identity, power, masculinity, colonialism, American domination, alienation, human relationships and communication breakdown. Set in an unspecified place and time, these quirky, speculative stories critique Australian culture and are as relevant today as when first published in the 1970s.

Kennedy, Cate, *Dark Roots*, Scribe, 2006 (A) (2)

Dark Roots provides 14 self-contained glimpses of life in Melbourne and rural Victoria. In 'Seizure', as a woman watches a stranger tend to a man in the midst of an epileptic fit, she realises that the handsome man she is involved with lacks all compassion. In 'Cold Snap', a boy takes revenge on a pompous tree-changing interloper. In 'Soundtrack', a woman's relationship with her teenage daughter must adjust to the news of an unexpected midlife pregnancy. With a clear voice and strong sense of place, Kennedy reveals the hopes, disappointments and small epiphanies of ordinary people.

Proulx, Annie, *Close Range: Brokeback Mountain and Other Stories*, Harper Perennial, 2006 (2)

Set against the backdrop of the barren landscape in the mountain region of Wyoming in the western United States, this collection of stories by Annie Proulx includes the well-known 'Brokeback Mountain'. Sometimes confronting, the stories describe the grim reality of life on the land and the difficulties faced by her characters as they eke out an existence in such an unforgiving physical environment. Proulx uses spare and lyrical prose to bring her characters to life, creating a sense of immediacy and authenticity that has become a trademark of her craft. Teachers should be aware that some stories contain content that some readers may find distressing.

Other literature

Barnes, Julian, *A History of the World in 10½ Chapters*, Vintage, 2009 (2)

This hybrid text begins with a subversive revision of the story of Noah's Ark and, from there, takes readers on a captivating and witty journey through the history of civilisation, where 'one good story leads to another'. The blend of fiction and history provides opportunities to explore our concepts of historical truth and our interpretation of fact. Moving effortlessly between high drama and humour, Barnes challenges readers to consider their roles as participants within the grand scale of history. The past intriguingly becomes 'just voices echoing in the dark; images that burn ... and then fade; stories ... strange links ... impertinent connections'.

Capote, Truman, *In Cold Blood*, Penguin Books, 2008 (4)

Capote's true fiction is a chilling reminder of the randomness with which murder can touch innocent lives. Capote recounts the brutal murders of the Clutter family in Holcomb, Kansas, in 1959 and the subsequent efforts of law enforcers to capture the murderers and bring them to trial. With the help of his friend Harper Lee, Capote interviewed the family, friends, law enforcers and criminals. Hickock and Smith are revealed as products and pursuers of the same American dream as community-spirited Herb Clutter, a self-made, hard-working and prosperous farmer. Capote exploits and exposes the human fascination with murder, challenging populist notions of 'justice' and the practice of capital punishment. Using the creative journalism he invented, Capote reveals the vulnerability of victims and perpetrators, and the frustrations and delays inherent in the justice system.

Orwell, George, *Down and Out in Paris and London*, Penguin Classics, 2001 (3)

Orwell's vivid memoir of his time living among the desperately poor and destitute is a moving tour of the underworld of society. Written when Orwell was a struggling writer in his 20s, it documents his 'first contact with poverty': sleeping in bug-infested hostels and dosshouses of last resort, working as a dishwasher in Paris, surviving on scraps and cigarette butts, and living alongside tramps, a star-gazing pavement artist and a starving Russian ex-army captain. Orwell gave a human face to the statistics of poverty and, in doing so, found his voice as a writer.

Stanner, WEH, *The Dreaming & Other Essays*, Black Inc. Agenda, 2011 (A) (1)

WEH Stanner, an Australian anthropologist and essayist, spent many decades from the early 1930s in close contact and friendship with the peoples of the Daly River in the Northern Territory. His aim was to preserve the knowledge encompassed in their language and belief systems. The essays that emerged from this work, written between 1938 and 1972, convey the complexity and uniqueness of Aboriginal culture. The collection includes a portrait of a Nangiumeri elder, a fine account of the Dreaming and a piece on Aboriginal humour. The essays vary in tone from the dispassionate observation characteristic of the social scientist, to empathetic despair as they chart the devastating impact of cultural change and dispossession. The essay 'Durmugam: A Nangiumeri' has been described by Robert Manne as 'the finest essay by an Australian I have ever read'.