

ADLC Senior High English Novel Descriptions

Each High School English course requires the study of ONE novel to be chosen from the list of novels authorized by Alberta Education.

English 10-1 ADLC – Print and Online Course

- A. *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee is a world-famous novel written in 1960. The narrator and main character remembers her experiences as a young girl growing up in a small town in the Southern United States. She and her brother have several adventures when they try to learn more about the mysterious man who lives next door. They discover the real nature of their town when their lawyer father defends a local man. The story is about innocence, loss, and learning to see the world for what it really is. It is about issues of understanding and accepting differences.
- B. *Speak* by Laurie Halse Anderson is a mature novel about a grade nine student who is attempting to deal with the trauma of rape. Melinda Sordino is the main character who is struggling with depression and fitting into high school. Confronting her fears allows Melinda to stand up for the injustice she has experienced. The journey that the narrator takes us on is a difficult but inspirational one.
- C. *The Secret Life of Bees* by Sue Monk Kidd is set on a farm in South Carolina where Lily Owens lives. The death of her mother, when Lily was four, has devastated and forever shaped her life. Her housekeeper, Rosaleen, cares for Lily, but the setting of the novel during 1964 (Civil Rights era) reveals the racial violence that explodes during that period. Rosaleen is a victim of this violence, causing the two to leave town in search of information about Lily's mother. The story reveals their search for identity and a sense of belonging during this difficult time.
- D. *Waiting for the Rain* by Sheila Gordon, published in 1987, is set in South Africa during the apartheid era. The main character is a black boy whose best friend is white. The black boy wants to learn and attend school; the white boy wants to live on the farm. The black boy is denied the rights of his white friend because of colour. As time passes, injustice in society becomes more important in the lives of these two boys. The simple story questions accepted ways of their society and looks for new answers. The novel is part of the protest literature of that era, but it is also about innocence and awareness as well as issues of understanding and accepting differences.

English 10-2 ADLC – Print and Online Course

- A. *Deathwatch by Robb White* is a fast-paced story. It has as a central issue a life and death struggle between two men - the hunter and the hunted - set in the burning heat of the desert. The characters are believable and interesting and their struggle proves even more exciting as the two main characters not only must compete against one another, they must also survive the dangers of the desert.
- B. *Speak by Laurie Halse Anderson* is a mature novel about a grade nine student who is attempting to deal with the trauma of rape. Melinda Sordino is the main character who is struggling with depression and fitting into high school. Confronting her fears allows Melinda to stand up for the injustice she has experienced. The journey that the narrator takes us on is a difficult but inspirational one.
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English 20-1 DLRB (with ADLC Assignment Booklets) – Print Course

- A. *Lord of the Flies by William Golding* is set on an uninhabited tropical island where a group of English schoolboys were stranded after an airplane crash meant to evacuate them because of nuclear war. All goes well at first, thanks to the leadership of Ralph and the support of pragmatic Piggy and visionary Simon. However, by exploiting the irrational fears of the boys, Jack assumes leadership. Irresponsible behavior results in the release of evil and the killing of Simon. Help arrives as a naval officer lands on the beach, and the reader assumes the boys will return to an adult world at war. 1954; 243 pages

The DLRB resource for English 20-1 requires *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding. However, ADLC students may contact ADLC's English department to request *Obasan* by Joy Kogawa if they wish.

- B. *Obasan* by Joy Kogawa is set in southern Alberta with memories of the evacuation, internment, and dispersal of Japanese Canadians from British Columbia's Lower Mainland during World War II. Despite being treated as outcasts, Naomi and her brother and others maintain their identity and dignity through a time when racism and intolerance were promoted by policies of Canadian governments. The novel presents contrasts of hope and despair, anger and resignation, beauty and ugliness, and pleasure and pain. The calm documentation and lyric style invite personal response to an 'unfair' situation. 1981; 250 pages

English 20-1 ADLC – Online Course

- A. *A Separate Peace* by John Knowles is set in an American (New England) private school during World War II with the boys eagerly awaiting being drafted at age 18. Narrating the story as he re-visits the school several years later, Gene must come to terms with the responsibility he has felt for his friend's death at the school. War and associated feelings dominate the novel. Symbolism adds much to the powerful emotion and moods of anger and frustration Gene has felt. 1959; 196 pages
- B. *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding is set on an uninhabited tropical island where a group of English schoolboys were stranded after an airplane crash meant to evacuate them because of nuclear war. All goes well at first, thanks to the leadership of Ralph and the support of pragmatic Piggy and visionary Simon. However, by exploiting the irrational fears of the boys, Jack assumes leadership. Irresponsible behavior results in the release of evil and the killing of Simon. Help arrives as a naval officer lands on the beach, and the reader assumes the boys will return to an adult world at war. 1954; 243 pages

English 20-2 ADLC – Print and Online Courses

- A. *Forbidden City* by William Bell involves a teenager, Alex, accompanying his father, a CBC news cameraman, on a trip to China for what he thought would be a vacation. He is in Tiananmen Square on June 4, 1989, the date the world watched the government of China suppress a protest led by students. Alex sees the brutality of oppressive government control, but he also witnesses the compassion and friendliness of the common people. The first-person point of view is engaging although the Chinese names are difficult to many readers. 1990; 198 pages
- B. *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck involves two agricultural labourers during the 1930s moving from job to job. George understands Lennie despite his limitations. Like most people, they have dreams, but fears and circumstances prevent fulfillment of their dreams. Steinbeck comments upon a society in which those who could have accepted others' differences are unchanged and those who are different remain unappreciated. Steinbeck uses the level of language common to uneducated drifters and labourers, but such language may be offensive to some readers because of coarseness and blasphemy. 1937; 118 pages

English 30-1 DLRB (with ADLC assignment booklets) – Print Course

The resources for English 30-1 offer a choice of alternatives from the approved list of novels provided by Alberta Education. Please note that students may NOT study *The Bean Trees*.

- A. *Wuthering Heights* by *Emily Bronte* is a saga set on the wild Yorkshire moors and narrated by John Lockwood. His willing informant is his housekeeper, Nelly Dean, who supplies through flashbacks and time shifts the troubled love story of Catherine and Heathcliff and their separate children. The novel is a love story, but it also explores the base cruelty within human nature. The novel is fascinating and disturbing, largely because of the intensity of emotion, the wildness of the setting, and the Gothic atmosphere created. 1847; 338 pages
- B. *The Stone Angel* by *Margaret Laurence* is an account of the last few days of Hagar Shipley, the proud and stubborn woman of 90 no longer capable of independence but bitterly resentful of assistance. She struggles to escape her son's home and any consideration of nursing home care. Her tired mind wanders into the past, recalling the men in her life -- her father, her husband, her sons. Despite eventually voicing to the son who is caring for her the approval he seeks, she dies proud and independent, well aware and admitting, that "Pride was my wilderness, and the demon that led me there was fear." 1964; 304 pages
- C. *Night* by *Elie Wiesel* is Wiesel's terrifying account of his experiences as a Jewish teenager in Nazi concentration camps in 1944 and 1945. Wiesel struggled with his religious beliefs after witnessing many horrors, including the death of his family, execution of a young child, and individuals abandoning family members in attempts to survive. The message in the novel is that such horror should never be allowed to happen again. Bantam 1986; 109 pages. Hill and Wang 2006; 115 pages
- D. *The Grapes of Wrath* by *John Steinbeck* traces the journey of the Joad family during the 1930s from drought-stricken Oklahoma to the "Promised Land" of California. Ma Joad is the uniting force through hardships of hunger, illness, discrimination, exploitation, and death. Steinbeck uses the Joads to represent the thousands who followed the same route encountering similar difficulties. He saw the plight of such displaced people, travelling the route while writing newspaper articles documenting the social displacement of ordinary people. Despite the losses and frustration, the novel celebrates the beauty and triumph of the human spirit through adversity. Symbolism and Biblical parallels are often the basis of study groups even today. 1939; 502 pages
- E. *Truth and Bright Water* by *Thomas King* is a best-seller. It tells of a summer in the life of Techumsah and Lum, young Native cousins coming of age in the Montana town of Truth and the Bright Water Reserve across the river in Alberta. A series of mysteries puzzle Techumsah and, as Truth and Bright Water prepare for the Indian Days festival, their secrets come together in a climax of tragedy, reconciliation, and love. 1999; 266 pages

- F. *Wild Geese* by Martha Ostenso is set in the pioneer district of northern Manitoba where pioneer farmers have reason to admire their accomplishments in wresting a living from the forested land. Current in exploring the struggle for independence and the assertion of one's own will in a male-dominated society, students are often surprised by the date of this novel. The development of several characters makes this a strong study in the response to difficult circumstances. The wild geese that begin and end the story frame spring and autumn and connect the plot and characters to the natural world. The description of fragile wood lilies growing next to a fire-blackened stump becomes strongly symbolic. 1925; 309 pages

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- B. *1984* by George Orwell is his nightmare vision in 1949 of the world we were becoming is timelier than ever. It is a startlingly original and haunting novel that creates an imaginary world that is completely convincing from the first sentence to the last four words. No one can deny this novel's power, its hold on the imagination of whole generations, or the power of its admonitions – a power that seems to grow, not lessen, with the passage of time. 1949; 326 pages

English 30-2 DLRB (with ADLC assignment booklets) – Print Course

The resources for English 30-2 offer a choice of alternatives from the approved list of novels provided by Alberta Education.

- A. *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury presents a futuristic state that attempts to control all thinking. Books are “bad” and are burned because they present controversial ideas. The punishment for reading and owning books is severe – possibly death. This novel is a social satire concerned with the control of information and ideas. The author equates freedom with the expansion of ideas through reading, writing, and conversation; he would certainly oppose any censorship by modern technology. 1953; 309 pages
- B. *Fallen Angels* by Walter Dean Myers is a powerful novel marked by blasphemy, prejudice, discrimination, sexism, despair, and violent reactions of the male characters set in the Viet Nam war. Harsh language realistically reflects the violence and killing that is constantly questioned in this war story that deals with ethnic differences, political biases, religious beliefs, interpersonal relationships, and racial hatreds. 1988; 309 pages

- C. *Medicine River* by *Thomas King* is a humorous account of the citizens and social structure of a small Blackfoot town in southern Alberta. Will returns to his hometown to sort the affairs of his mother who recently died, and in the process must confront various experiences and issues from his youth. In the process, he must confirm his values. Often funny and sometimes painful, events with Harlen Bigbear bring Will to understand his own identity and commitments. King's refreshing humour and optimism, despite some painful encounters, leave the reader with significant understanding of and compassion for the characters in Blackfoot culture. 1989; 261 pages
- D. *Night* by *Elie Wiesel* is Wiesel's terrifying account of his experiences as a Jewish teenager in Nazi concentration camps in 1944 and 1945. Wiesel struggled with his religious beliefs after witnessing many horrors, including the death of his family, execution of a young child, and individuals abandoning family members in attempts to survive. The message in the novel is that such horror should never be allowed to happen again. Bantam 1986; 109 pages. Hill and Wang 2006; 115 pages

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