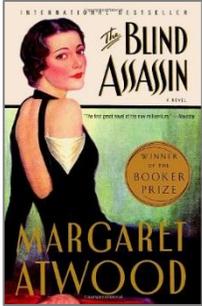


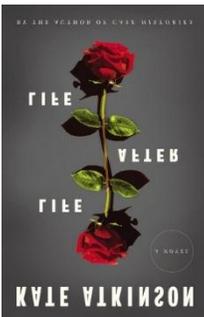
Kristen Caschera, London Public Library

The Blind Assassin by Margaret Atwood



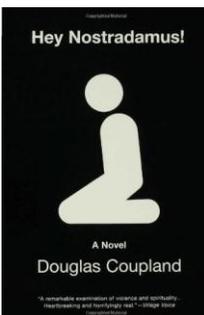
"Ten days after the war ended, my sister drove a car off the bridge." So begins **The Blind Assassin**, a family drama, a mystery, and a science fiction story all in one. Now 80, Iris Chase reveals the events leading up her sister's mysterious death. At the same time, two unnamed lovers meet in secret, and tell the tale of the blind assassin, a science fiction story worthy of a comic book. A novel within a novel, **The Blind Assassin** is an epic tale of one family's betrayals and one woman's secrets. Readers will also enjoy the family drama of **Fall on Your Knees** by Ann-Marie McDonald or **Gilead** by Marilynne Robinson.

Life after Life by Kate Atkinson



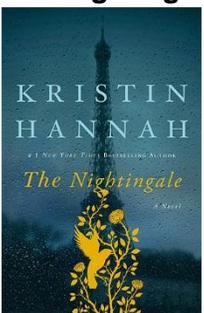
On a cold night in 1910, a baby is born – and dies shortly after. On a cold night in 1910, the same baby is born – and lives. Ursula Todd's strange life continues this way, living and dying over and over again until she gets it right. But why Ursula? Is it possible that the fate of the world lies in the hands of one single woman? Audrey Niffenegger's **The Time Traveller's Wife** features a similar type of time-shifting plot, and **My Real Children** by Jo Walton also examines how a single choice can change the outcome of our entire lives.

Hey Nostradamus! by Douglas Coupland



Hey Nostradamus! opens with a school shooting in Vancouver that devastates a community and forever changes the lives of the four protagonists. Told in four monologues, each protagonist has their own perspective on the event and its aftermath. From a victim of the shooting to the ultra-religious father of its hero, this story explores the notion of beliefs and how they can sustain us – or hold us back. **Cat's Cradle** by Kurt Vonnegut shares similar themes of satire and social commentary.

The Nightingale by Kristin Hannah



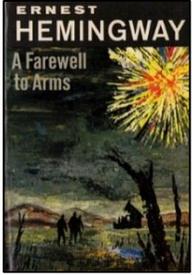
Sisters Viann and Isabelle are a study in opposites. Viann is happy with her quiet, comfortable life in the French countryside while Isabelle lives a wild, rebellious life in Paris. When World War II becomes a horrific reality, the two sisters must learn to live together, testing their relationship and teaching them the true meaning of strength and courage. Martha Hall Kelly's **Lilac Girls** is a similar story of three women's bravery in the face of war, and **The Daughters of Mars** by Thomas Keneally is another tale of heroic sisters in a war-torn country.

The Three by Sarah Lotz



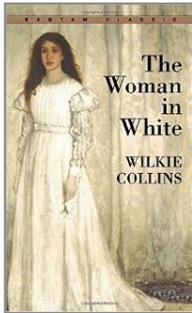
Four planes mysteriously crash all at once. Coincidence? It seems to be – except that in three of the four crashes, there was a child survivor. In the aftermath of the crashes, each child begins to behave differently...strangely. At the same time, a religious fanatic leverages the public's panic to make a name for himself as an evangelical leader. Check out Lotz's follow-up novel **Day Four** for more paranormal horror, or Gillian Anderson's **A Vision of Fire** for more stories involving children and the supernatural.

A Farewell to Arms by Ernest Hemingway



Frederic Henry, an American ambulance driver in World War I, and Catherine Barkley, an English nurse, meet and fall in love during the course of the war. This dramatic, character-driven story depicts the effect that the war has on their lives. Written in spare, poetic language, the novel is both an epic love story and an intensely moving war narrative. Michael Ondaatje's **The English Patient** and Margaret Mitchell's **Gone with the Wind** are also epic love stories set against the backdrop of war.

The Woman in White by Wilkie Collins



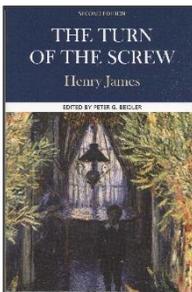
The novel begins with the unexpected discovery of a woman who has escaped from an insane asylum. The narrative then focuses on Laura Fairlie, a young woman who becomes the object of a devious criminal plot. The novel involves family secrets, faked identities, Gothic mansions, Victorian wills, and false imprisonment. The story is presented from the perspective of a series of characters, including the villain himself. Since readers must continually weigh and sift evidence from a variety of sources, they become deeply involved in this tale of mystery. Those who enjoy suspenseful stories and multiple narrators will also like Wilkie Collins's **The Moonstone** and Bram Stoker's **Dracula**.

Cranford by Elizabeth Gaskell



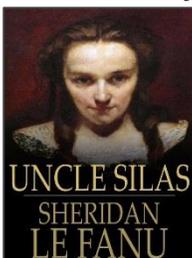
Set in the 1840s in an isolated English town called Cranford, this novel about genteel, middle-aged spinsters gently satirizes a vanishing way of life. The female-dominated society of Cranford is steeped in tradition, decorum, and old-fashioned virtues. The novel is by turns, witty, poignant, endearing, and charming. George Gissing's **The Odd Women** and Anthony Trollope's **Barchester Towers** also depict quaint societies characterized by old-world charm.

The Turn of the Screw by Henry James



After moving to an isolated country house, a governess notices two figures appearing at various times – the previous governess and the former valet of the house. Horrified to learn that both these individuals have been dead for some time, the governess starts to doubt everyone. When she starts to believe that the children are possessed by these ghostly figures, the reader is never sure if we can trust her judgment. **The Turn of the Screw** is a classic ghost story, suspense novel, and psychological thriller all in one. Dennis Lehane's **Shutter Island** and S. J. Watson's **Before I Go to Sleep** also keep readers in the dark for much of the novel.

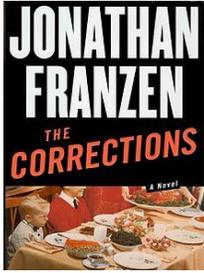
Uncle Silas by Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu



Seventeen-year old heiress, Maud Ruthyn, is sent to live with her uncle in his decaying manor house after the death of her single-parent father. Hearing rumours that her uncle once murdered a man, Maud is terrified. Le Fanu uses supernatural suggestion to create a claustrophobic, menacing atmosphere. Fans of psychological thrillers, Gothic settings, and Victorian mystery novels will find **Uncle Silas** a well-crafted and highly readable story. Arthur Conan Doyle's **The Hound of the Baskervilles** and Jenny Milchman's **Cover of Snow** also depict isolated settings and ominous atmospheres.

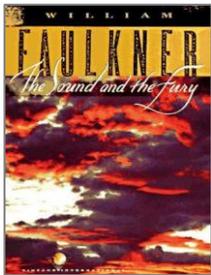
Jeff Dodge, Vaughan Public Libraries

The Corrections by Jonathan Franzen



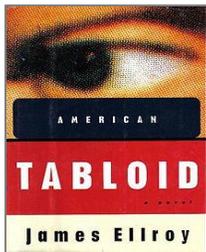
A vast comedic family saga tells the story of the Lambert family coming to grips with the elder patriarch Albert's diagnosis of Parkinson's. Franzen's exploration of family dynamics is precise and unflinching with streaks of hopefulness rounding out his vision. Funny and furious describes the steps the characters go through to correct past mistakes. Other novels of family growing pains are John Cheever's **The Wapshot** Chronicles and **The Wapshot Scandal**.

The Sound and the Fury by William Faulkner



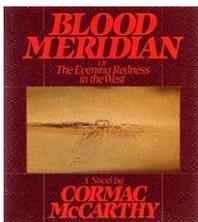
This novel of the crumbling old south is not an easy read. While it may demand the reader's attention, there is a rewarding payoff for the patience required. Like Woolf and Joyce, by using stream of consciousness, Faulkner explores his character's most inner thoughts, feelings and foibles - a key work of the 20th century, set in Mississippi, it's a high point for fans of southern fiction. Also on any list of top southern writers is Flannery O'Connor whose **Collected Short Stories** is chock full of classics.

American Tabloid by James Ellroy



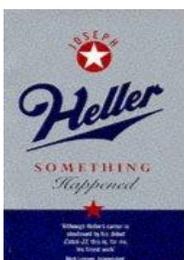
A rollicking fictionalized underground history of the US leading up to the assassination of JFK. A huge cast of characters, some real, some of Ellroy's creation, conspire, plot and scheme to inflict their own ideology on their country. It's bad men doing bad things in dark corners all to Ellroy's' hep and jazzy staccato rhythm. Sharing a pulpy noirish bent is a master of the genre: Jim Thompson - known for **The Killer Inside Me**, **The Getaway** and **The Grifters**.

Blood Meridian by Cormac McCarthy



The Texas frontier is the setting for Cormac McCarthy's dark and stormy 1986 western. Violence and bloodshed permeate the land as various unsavory characters make their way across Texas, leaving scorched earth in their wake. McCarthy doesn't back away from the detailing the horror and apocalyptic destruction brought on by American immigration into the west. It's Florida's frontier that's featured in Peter Matthiessen's **Shadow Country** - about the real life outlaw Edgar "Bloody" Watson

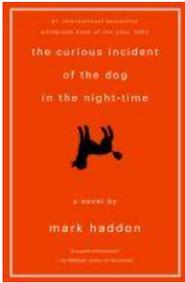
Something Happened by Joseph Heller



No question, Bob Slocum, of Joseph Heller's second novel is as unlikeable as they come. Pessimism, and insecurities riddle him as he painstakingly reviews his life, sure of only one thing, if only vaguely: something(s) happened over his life to make him into the misanthrope he sees in the mirror. Relentlessly bleak, it may not be everyone's cup of tea but if in-depth character studies and a well plumbed inner life is enjoyed, Richard Ford's Frank Bascombe novels might fit the bill, starting with **The Sportswriter**.

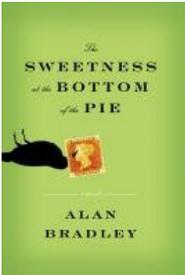
Andrea Dunn, Markham Public Library

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time by Mark Haddon



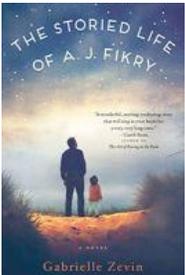
Fifteen year old, autistic Christopher Boone comes across the remains of his neighbour's dog, solves the crime and sets off on a journey of discovery. **Be Frank With Me** by Julia Claiborne Johnson is the story of 9 year old Frank and his world.

The Sweetness at the Bottom of the Pie by Alan Bradley



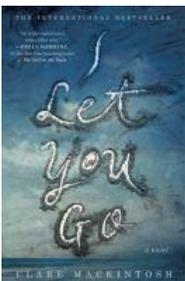
Precocious Flavia DeLuca finds a dead bird with a postal stamp on its beak at her family home. Flavia who loves science and adventure attempts to solve what happened to the bird. **My Grandmother Asked Me to Tell You She's Sorry** by Fredrick Backman features a young girl trying to solve a mystery left for her by her grandmother.

Storied Life of A.J. Fikry by Gabrielle Zevin



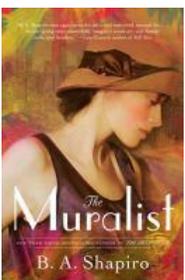
Perfect story for those who love to read about books and people who love to read. Bookseller A.J. Fikry and his efforts to save the store, raise a family and share the joy of reading with the community. **The Readers of Broken Wheel Recommend** by Katarina Bivald is about a visitor who saves a local bookstore and fosters a love of reading in the town.

I Let You Go by Clare Mackintosh



In the wake of a deadly hit and run, Jenna attempts to start over while the police work to find the driver in this thriller with many twists and turns that will keep the reader guessing to the end. **Little Black Lies** by S.J. Bolton is a story of how far a parent is willing to go to get revenge after a family friend kills your children.

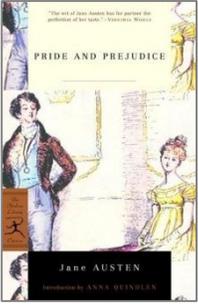
The Muralist by B. A. Shapiro



The 1940s New York abstract art movement is detailed as Alizee Benoit interacts with her colleagues, politicians and tries to bring her family from France. **The Improbability of Love** by Hannah Rothschild is also about art and the lengths people go to collect it, told partially through the perspective of the painting.

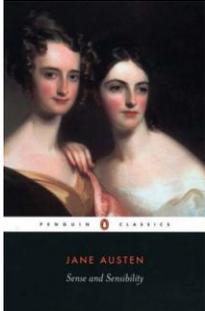
Jennifer Green, Oshawa Public Libraries

Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen



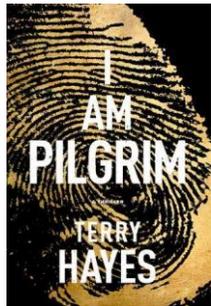
When two very eligible bachelors arrive in town, Mrs. Bennet is determined to marry off her daughters. Unfortunately, not everyone feels Mrs. Bennet's excitement, particularly her daughter Elizabeth, who finds Mr. Darcy to be anything but a love match. Excellent writing, strong female characters, and witty writing make this a great read for any period-literature fan. Try **Longbourn** by Jo Baker to see the servants' side of the story, or any of Georgette Heyer's period romances.

Sense and Sensibility by Jane Austen



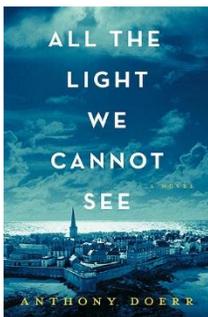
Another classic that focuses on two very different sisters, Elinor and Marianne Dashwood, the "sense" and "sensibility" of the story. Filled with humour, romance, and a strong understanding of society manners, this is a lovely, well-paced story. Elinor and Marianne have a fascinating and realistic relationship. **North and South** by Elizabeth Gaskell is another period story with rich characters.

The Pilgrim by Terry Hayes



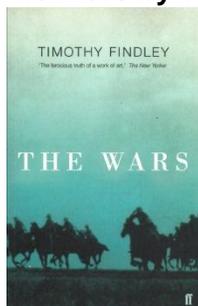
A tightly woven story about one of America's greatest CIA agents. After leaving the world of espionage, "The Pilgrim" is forced to return to find a man who's planning one of the worst terrorist attacks in the US since 9/11. The intricate, globe-trotting plot is reminiscent of Neal Stephenson's **Reamde**, and those who enjoy suspenseful spy thrillers might try Charles Cumming's **A Colder War**.

All the Light We Cannot See by Anthony Doerr



Forced to leave Paris during the Nazi occupation, Marie Laure and her father escape to Saint-Malo, where her path crosses with a young German boy. Doerr gives incredible life, warmth, and depth to each of his characters and locations. Kristin Hannah's **The Nightingale** is a similar story of the French resistance. **Every Man Dies Alone** by Hans Fallada is a story of real life and the German resistance in Berlin during the war.

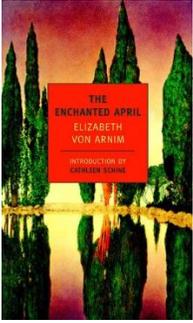
The Wars by Timothy Findley



The story of a young Canadian man fighting in World War One. A harrowing and emotional novel that vividly describes trench warfare and the lives and relationships of soldiers. **All Quiet on the Western Front** by Erich Maria Remarque gives a perspective German soldiers on the front lines. For a war story with a romantic subplot, try **A Farewell to Arms** by Ernest Hemingway.

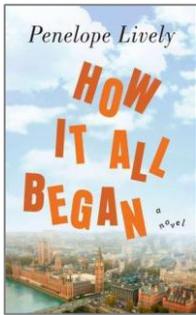
Melanie Kindrachuk, Stratford Public Library

Enchanted April by Elizabeth von Arnim



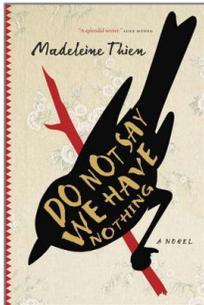
In this heart-warming story, four women in rainy England rent an Italian castle for an entire April. Their month holds rekindled love and new friendships. **Enchanted August** by Brenda Bowen is a modern retelling, while Emma Straub's **Modern Lovers**, set in current-day Brooklyn, features a renewal of relationships that takes place at home one long summer.

How It All Began by Penelope Lively



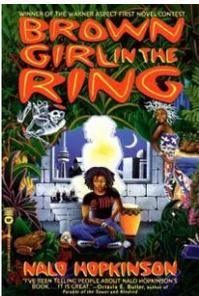
A fall, a broken hip -- and life changes for at least seven people. British writer Lively wittily explores chaos theory, highlighting the importance of literature, history, and chance – all common themes in her work. John Lanchester's much longer **Capital** also takes on a mix of London lives which are tangentially connected, while Kate Atkinson's **Life After Life** looks at the what-ifs of history from a slightly different perspective.

Do Not Say We Have Nothing by Madeleine Thien



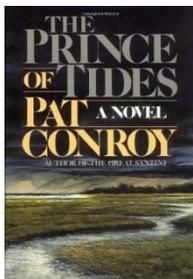
This sweeping saga covers 3 generations of a musical family in revolutionary China. The intertwining stories, complete with betrayal and disaster, are counterbalanced by the beauty of classical music. Strong characters and beautiful writing are a highlight. **Wild Swans** by Jung Chang is a memoir of 3 generations of women in the same era; **The Invisible Mountain** by Carolina de Robertis tackles 3 generations facing a different repressive government, in Uruguay.

Brown Girl in the Ring by Nalo Hopkinson



Set in a dystopian Toronto and infused by Afro-Caribbean folklore and magic, this award-winning novel features strong women, feminist themes, and Obeah spirits. **The Book of Phoenix** by Nnedi Okorafor also features a dystopian urban setting, but focuses on science more than spirit. Octavia Butler's **Parable of the Sower** foretells social & political chaos, said to start in 2016.

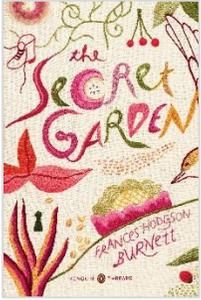
Prince of Tides by Pat Conroy



One of those rare books that is equally appealing through all four of Nancy Pearl's Doorways, this novel of a man revisiting his difficult childhood to help out his troubled twin sister is a solid suggestion for almost anyone. Similarly complex and friendly to the male reader are Chad Harbach's baseball novel **The Art of Fielding** or David James Duncan's **The Brothers K**.

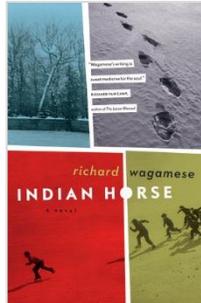
Diana Krawczyk, Mississauga Public Libraries

The Secret Garden by Frances Hodgson Burnett



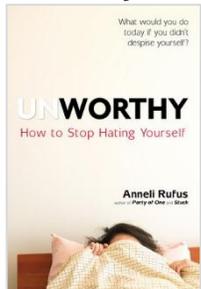
Considered a children's classic, this novel also evokes the gothic feel of Victorian literature with a touch of the impending end of the British Empire. Mary Lennox is orphaned in India and sent to the manor of her widowed uncle. Discovering many secrets of her family's past, Mary is able to heal old wounds through the tending of a garden. Burnett's novel touches much of the same ground as Charlotte Bronte's **Jane Eyre** and E.M. Forester's **A Passage to India** will give the reader a view of India in this period.

Indian Horse by Richard Wagamese



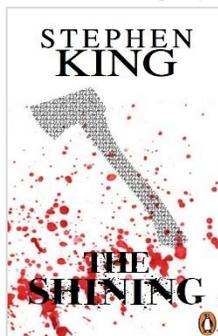
As Canada comes to grips with the Report from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, it is critical that we all know and acknowledge the tragic effects of the residential school system on Canada's Indigenous people. Wagamese is a deft and poetic writer who tells the heartbreaking story of Saul Indian Horse, a residential school survivor. You will love this book and you can follow it up with Wagamese's **Medicine Walk** or **Birdie** by Tracey Lindberg.

Unworthy: How to Stop Hating Yourself by Anneli Rufus



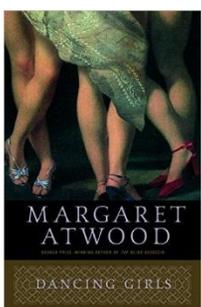
One day, when you least expected to hear it, someone told you a story about how unworthy you were and you believed it. Unlike traditional self-help books, Rufus delivers a tough but compassionate book which questions our self-hate and advocates for self-love. This is a very unique book but readers who enjoy this title would like Brené Brown's **The Gifts of Imperfection** or **The Untethered Soul** by Michael A. Singer.

The Shining by Stephen King



Arguably, Stephen King is the most read, if not the best, writer of the 20th century. This novel can be called his masterwork as it the most recognizable, there is a movie adaptation and the culture is filled with references to this book. Danny Torrence is the child at the centre of evil, isolated with his parents on a mountaintop at the Overlook Hotel. A master of suspense and terror, King uses every trick to keep you reading despite your fear to turn each page. Henry James' **The Turn of the Screw** and Edgar Allan Poe's **The Tell-Tale Heart** are past masters of this kind of suspense.

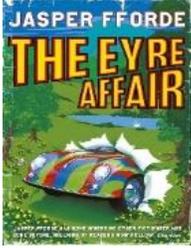
Dancing Girls by Margaret Atwood



Those who claim to dislike Atwood have probably spent time reading her later, larger works; however, Atwood is at her best in her early and taut short story collections. The feminist dialogue of the late 1970s fills this collection with stories about women that are still relevant today. My favourite story, "The Man from Mars," explores a young girl's relationship with an immigrant as she develops emotionally and sexually. Alice Munro's **Who Do You Think You Are?** explores the same territory as does Margaret Laurence's **The Diviners**.

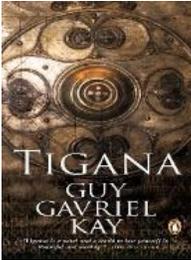
Megan Renkema, Caledon Public Libraries

Eyre Affair by Jasper Fforde



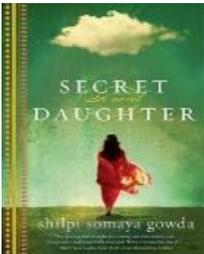
A crazy, mad-cap, genre-bending, time-jumping book, *The Eyre Affair* introduces Thursday Next, a literary detective who is tasked with rescuing literary characters who are being kidnapped out of their original manuscripts and are at risk of being erased forever from literature. Readers who enjoy the quirkiness, British humour and satire of the Eyre Affair may also appreciate Terry Pratchett's **Discworld** series. Those who like genre-defying literature might also enjoy **The Rook** by Daniel O'Malley.

Tigana by Guy Gavriel Kay



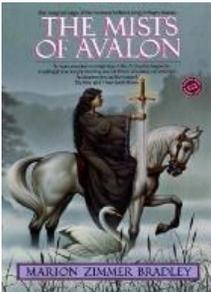
A country's name and history is magically wiped from people's memory and a group from Tigana, now known as Lower Corte, set about trying to right the wrongs done to their beloved country. As their plot finally comes to fruition, the lines between love and hate, revenge and redemption, become terribly blurred. Any of Kay's other novels would also be enjoyed. Also try the **Kingkiller Chronicles** by Patrick Rothfuss.

Secret Daughter by Shilpi Somaya Gowda



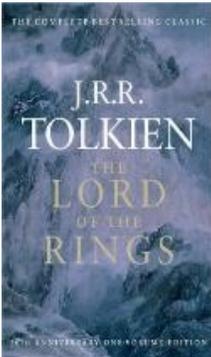
The lives of two couples are inadvertently intertwined when Kavita's daughter is adopted from an orphanage in Mumbai and raised in the USA. As Usha grows up, she learns about her Indian heritage and begins to follow the path towards finding her birth mother. If you enjoy complex, character-driven novels that address cultural identity, try **The Namesake** or **Interpreter of Maladies** by Jhumpa Lahiri. For Indian, female-centric novels, **Brick Lane** by Monica Ali is also a good choice. Umrigar Thrity is another author who might be of interest.

Mists of Avalon by Marion Zimmer Bradley



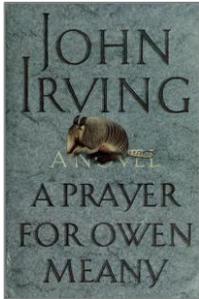
Mists of Avalon is a strong feminist re-telling, not just of the Arthurian legend, but of the clash of the ancient matriarchal pagan culture with the onslaught of patriarchal Christianity in the British Isles. Mary Stewart's **Merlin Trilogy** is an excellent tale that focuses on the life of Merlin. Diana Paxson writes feminist historical fantasy and has also teamed up with Marion Zimmer Bradley to write other **Avalon** novels.

Lord of the Rings by J.R.R. Tolkien



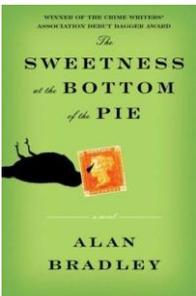
This book really needs no introduction, but it stands as THE classic fantasy novel of all time. For those who enjoy epic fantasy, also try Robert Jordan's **The Wheel of Time** series. For highly detailed and intricate plots, but with much less magic, George R.R. Martin's **Game of Thrones** is a good bet. Guy Gavriel Kay's **Fionavar Tapestry** draws on mythical folklore and features a complex plot and classic good versus evil battles with unlikely heroes.

A Prayer for Owen Meany by John Irving



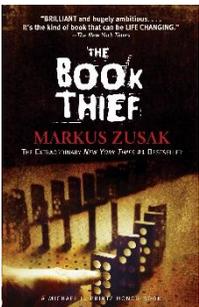
What isn't to love about an 11-year-old boy who thinks he is an instrument of God? John Irving perfectly catches the voice of this boy who thinks that killing his best friend's mother was no accident and that God has a master plan for him. **When God was a Rabbit** by Sarah Winman also portrays childhood innocence circa mid-20th century against darker themes.

The Sweetness at the Bottom of the Pie by Alan Bradley



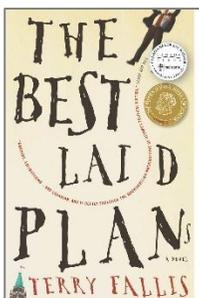
Another awesome 11-year-old narrator is Flavia de Luce who was first made famous in Alan Bradley's *The Sweetness at the Bottom of the Pie*. Flavia is a busybody who always seems to happen upon a body and thinks that she is the best girl to solve the crime. Readers who enjoy precocious adult-like tweens would also like **Anne of Green Gables**.

The Book Thief by Markus Zusak



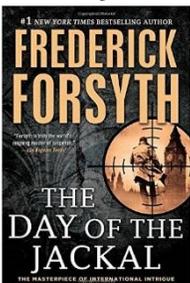
A very unusual narrator tells us the story in Markus Zusak's **The Book Thief**. Using the backdrop of World War II Germany, the narrator finds time to tell us the story of a young girl who steals books, learns to read with the help of her foster father and shares books with the Jewish man hidden in her foster parent's basement. **Suite Française** by Irene Némirovsky also portrays the effects of war on civilians.

The Best Laid Plans by Terry Fallis



What does a burnt out speech writer, a broken-hearted Engineering Professor, and a hovercraft have in common? The makings of a funny, award-winning book by Terry Fallis. **The Best Laid Plans** is a wonderful satire of Ottawa politics that has the unlikeliest of candidates campaigning and winning a seat in Canadian Parliament. Readers of satire would also enjoy **Lamb: the Gospel According to Biff, Christ's Childhood Pal** by Christopher Moore.

The Day of the Jackal by Frederick Forsyth



This fast-paced, suspenseful novel follows an unknown hired assassin and the lawmen trying to stop him from assassinating Charles de Gaulle. This game of cat and mouse will have you flying through the pages to get to the end and find out if there is an attempted assassination and whether Charles de Gaulle will survive. For readers of suspense, **The Intercept** by Dick Wolf would be a similar read.