

Year 9 Recommended Reads

King of Nothing by Nathanael Lessore

Funny
Contemporary

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

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

Short stories
Environment

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

The Blue Book of Nebo by Manon Steffan Ros

Post apocalyptic

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

This Book Kills by Ravena Guron

Thriller

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

The Balloon Thief by Aneesa Marufu

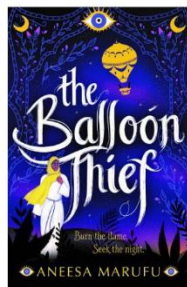
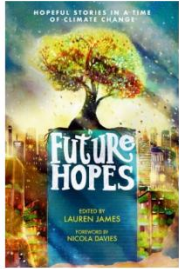
Fantasy

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

Giften by Leyla Suzan

Dystopia

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



Year 9 Recommended Reads



Let's Play Murder by Kesia Lupo

Thriller

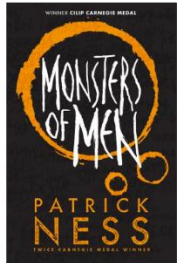
Set in 'The Game', a virtual reality mystery, Veronica joins players trapped in a creepy manor house with a murder to solve. As they get closer to the truth, they encounter glitches, strange NPCs and a mysterious figure. It all changes when real players start dying in real life and Veronica realises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



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

Thriller

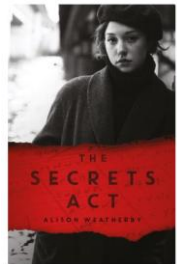
Skipping school for one last time, three high school friends – Ivy, Mateo, and Cal – spot another student from Carlton High and follow him. The next thing they know, he's dead! They are all hiding something – but what? This absorbing, fast-paced web of secrets and danger features a signature Karen M.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



Monsters of Men by Patrick Ness

Dystopia
Thriller

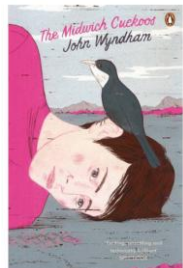
Part three of the Chaos Walking trilogy, Monsters of Men explores the effects of war. A fast-moving dystopian thriller set in a fantasy world war to end all wars. Todd and Viola have to fight, but what are they fighting for, and is it worth it? A modern classic and a great book for 13-year-olds.



The Secrets Act by Alison Weatherby

Historical fiction

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



The Midwich Cuckoos by John Wyndham

Science fiction

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

Year 9 Recommended Reads



Every Line of You by Naomi Gibson

Thriller

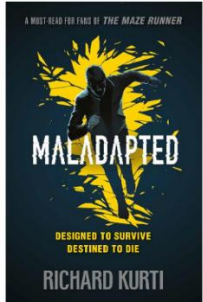
When Lydia builds an AI friend to fill a void in her life, nothing can prepare her for what happens when Henry turns from a computer into an overprotective defender. This modern cyber-thriller catapults teens into a world of tech, AI and fear of the unknown. With a breakneck plot, it thrusts the reader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



Lionheart Girl by Yaba Badoe

Modern fable
Fantasy

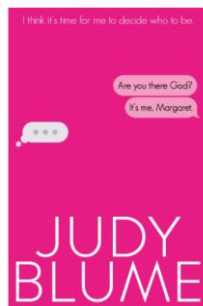
Mysticism, fear and West African witchcraft are blended into this heady and lyrical potion of a modern fable that explores friendship and loyalty. When Sheba discovers her magic abilities, she uses them to uncover dark family secrets that threaten to untie all that binds her life together. Memorable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



Maladapted by Richard Kurti

Dystopia

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



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

Friendship
Romance

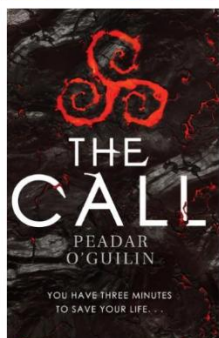
Margaret is convinced she isn't normal. Her friends are more grown-up than her, she's starting a new school and she's unsure whether to follow her mother's or her father's religion. So she talks to God, with surprising results.



Hatchet by Gary Paulsen

Adventure

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

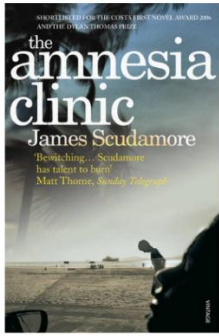


The Call by Peadar O'Guilin

Thriller

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

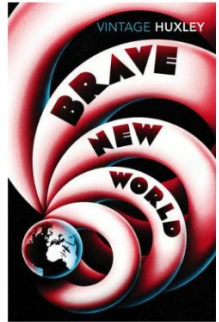
Year 9 Recommended Reads



The Amnesia Clinic by James Scudamore

Contemporary

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



Brave New World by Aldous Huxley

Classic

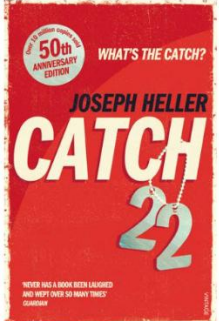
In the future, all society is overseen by the World Controllers. Everything is ordered and efficient. But Bernard has other ideas and wants to do more than ask questions. An ideal book for year nine book clubs.



Brighton Rock by Graham Greene

Classic
Crime

Pinkie is caught in the middle of a Brighton gang war. Living on the edge, he kills a man and believes he can carry on as if nothing happened. A gripping novel for year 9 pupils.



Catch-22 by Joseph Heller

Classic

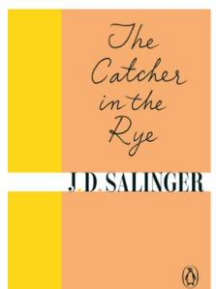
At the end of WW2, Yossarian thinks his life is in danger – not from the enemy, but from his own side. He tries to find any excuse to avoid an increasing number of dangerous missions.



Thief by Malorie Blackman

Thriller
Diversity

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



The Catcher in the Rye by J.D. Salinger

Classic

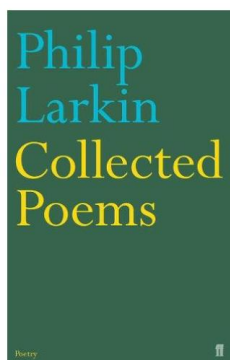
Holden Caulfield is a teen who has just been kicked out of his fourth school. He has to grow up quickly in an adult world and work out who he can trust, and who is a 'phony'. A more challenging book for year 9 pupils.

Year 9 Recommended Reads

Philip Larkin – Collected Poems

Poetry

Probably the most accessible verse collection by a modern poet. More likely than not to hook your teenager on poetry. A great poetry book for year 9 pupils.



The Count of Monte Cristo by Alexandre Dumas

Classic
Revenge

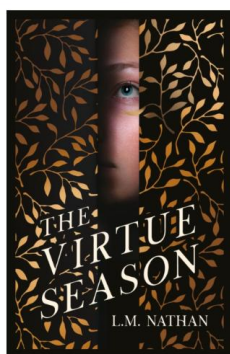
An epic page-turner of a novel, written in episodes. This is the classic fiction equivalent of an addictive box set – a nineteenth-century 'Breaking Bad'. Fuelled by revenge, Edmond Dantès seeks to get back everything he lost and stakes a claim to a lot more. Ideal for more advanced readers in Year 9.



The Virtue Season by L.M. Nathan

Dystopia

Friends to lovers, forced proximity and forbidden romance swirl together in this sharply written dystopian world where choice, freedom and women's rights are curtailed. 18-year-old Manon Pawlak is set for a genetic matching process called The Virtue Season. But her best friend Agatha, marked by a scar due to seizures, faces 'decommissioning'. The startling novel uniquely blends dystopian narratives with romance and social commentary.



Dracula by Bram Stoker

Horror
Classic

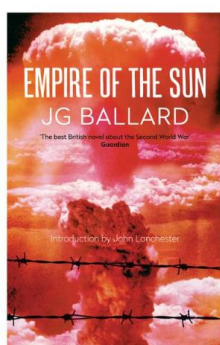
A classic vampire tale following Dracula's move from Transylvania to England, pursued by Abraham Van Helsing who is intent on exterminating him. Warning, this book may inspire your teen to wear black and visit Whitby. Ideal for discussion in Year 9.



Empire of the Sun by J.G. Ballard

Historical fiction

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

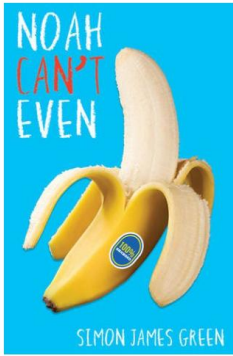


Year 9 Recommended Reads

Noah Can't Even by Simon James Green

LGBT

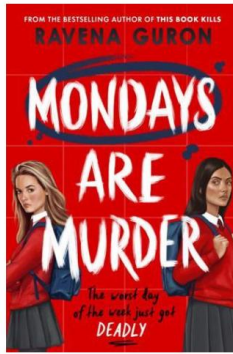
Noah desperately wants to be like everyone else. But with a mother who works as an unconvincing Beyonce lookalike and a father who isn't around, Noah is struggling with life. Laugh-out-loud moments of teenage angst with a twist. A valuable LGBT literature addition to the school library.



Mondays are Murder by Ravena Guron

Thriller

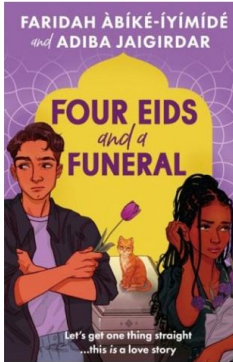
When 17-year-old Kay returns to her hometown after her friend's death, she discovers a letter foretelling violent events leading to her own murder on Monday. Faced with escalating threats, Kay must uncover the sender's identity before time runs out. Combining suspense, mystery, and epic twists, this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



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

Romance

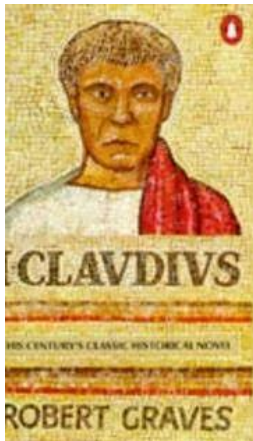
Former friends Tiwa and Said reunite to save their Islamic Centre from demolition and face personal challenges along the way. Tiwa appreciates the centre's importance to the community, but Said has a secret reason. Their story is rich with cultural depth and family conflict. Highlighting themes of friendship,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



I, Claudius by Robert Graves

Historical fiction
Classic

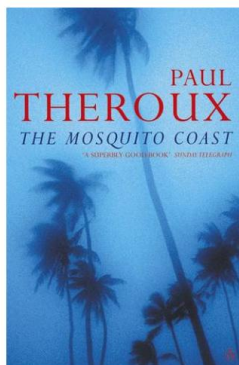
The scheming, brutal and dangerous world of Roman nobility is brought to life in this historical thriller. An intense and gripping novel.



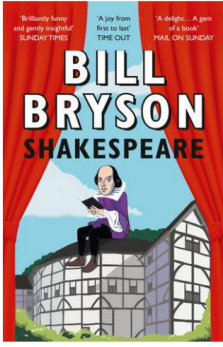
The Mosquito Coast by Paul Theroux

Contemporary

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



Year 9 Recommended Reads



Shakespeare: The World as a Stage by Bill Bryson

Funny
Biography

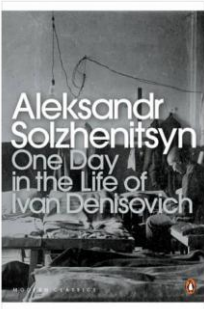
This book is ideal for adding humour to turgid GCSE Shakespeare exam schemes. It explores the myths, lies and reality of Shakespeare's plays and brings to life the sixteenth-century acting world.



The Old Man and the Sea by Ernest Hemingway

Classic
Modern fable

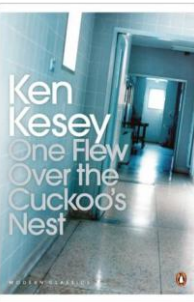
A classic and brilliantly written fable about an old fisherman, an ambitious boy and an epic battle to catch an enormous fish.



One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn

Contemporary

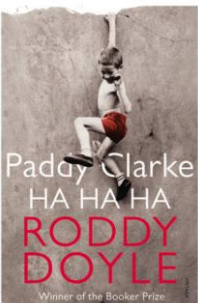
A horrifying and gripping account of life at a Soviet Gulag – isolated and stark. A tale of mental and physical survival. This would make an interesting choice for detention class reading. A more challenging book for year 9 students.



One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest by Ken Kesey

Mental health

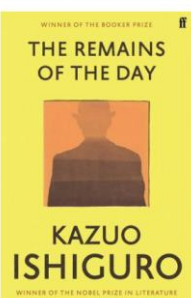
McMurphy thinks he has escaped prison by being moved to a mental institution. Slowly he realises he is even more confined than before. A startling exploration of sanity and madness; and freedom vs control. Warning, some adult themes and a challenging read for 13 & 14-year-olds.



Paddy Clarke Ha, Ha, Ha by Roddy Doyle

Contemporary

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



The Remains of the Day by Kazuo Ishiguro

Historical fiction
Romance

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

Year 9 Recommended Reads

Scoop by Evelyn Waugh

Comedy
Adventure

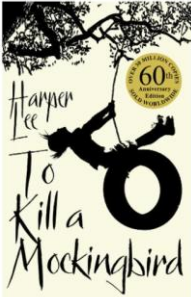
The ambitious owner of The Daily Beast thinks he's spotted the perfect hotshot journalist to cover a juicy African conflict. Things don't go entirely to plan. Very funny, yet true to life and a good text to spark discussion about fake news.



To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee

Classic

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



Burning Secret by Stefan Zweig

Contemporary

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

