



10 Classic American novels

Mark Twain's **The Adventures of Tom Sawyer** (1876) is a novel about young boy Tom Sawyer and his adventures living with his Aunt Polly on the banks of the Mississippi River. Twain is beloved for his wit, parody, social criticism and humanism.

Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald's **The Great Gatsby** (1925) is set in the Gilded Age near New York, where mysterious millionaire Jay Gatsby is obsessed with a former lover. The book explores themes like economic inequality, injustice, power, greed, and the idea of the American dream.

Zora Neale Hurston's **Their Eyes Were Watching God** (1937) tells the story of a middle aged Black woman exploring love and questioning gender roles in the aftermath of the abolition of slavery.

Jerome David Salinger's **The Catcher in the Rye** (1951) deals with complex issues of innocence, identity, belonging, loss, connection, sex, and depression. The novel's protagonist Holden Caulfield has become an icon for teenage rebellion.

Ralph Ellison's **The Invisible Man** (1952) engages the social and intellectual issues faced by African Americans in 1950s America, giving a preview to the intellectual roots of Black Nationalism.

Jack Kerouac's **On the Road** (1957) is a novel based on Kerouac's travels across the United States. The defining work of the postwar Beat and Counterculture generations, its protagonists living life against a backdrop of jazz, poetry, and personal experimentation.

Harper Lee's **To Kill a Mockingbird** (1960) covers a court trial against a wrongly-accused Black man in small town America during the Great Depression from the perspective of a child.

Alice Walker's **The Color Purple** (1982) tells the story of a young, poor Black girl in the American south trying to navigate the racism and violence endemic to her community.

Toni Morrison's **Beloved** (1987) tells the story of a family of formerly enslaved people living in a haunted house, and how their community engages with them.

Amy Tan's **The Joy Luck Club** (1989) focuses on four Chinese American immigrant families in San Francisco who tell stories of their earlier lives over games of mahjong.