Academic English 4: The Modern Novel.

**Rationale**: Instead of assigning a singular title, we felt it beneficial to allow the student an opportunity to select a text of their own (within a pool of works). The selection allows the student an opportunity to read something that is, arguably, of greater interest to them than a selection administered solely by the instructor.

**Pool**:

*Animal Farm*. George Orwell [Supplied]

*Brave New World*. Aldous Huxley

*Night*. Elie Wiesel [Supplied]

*Haroun and the Sea of Stories*. Salman Rushdie [Supplied]

*Grendel*. John Gardner [Supplied]

A *Clockwork Orange*. Anthony Burgess

*The Handmaid’s Tale.* Margaret Atwood

*Lord of the Flies*. William Golding [Limited Supply]

*Heart of Darkness*. Joseph Conrad

*1984*. George Orwell

**Expectations**: Each student is to read the selection independently, expecting a reading test based on content. Each test will consist of the same number of questions and will have the same value. After reading, students will work in selection-related groups in a post-reading discussion group and project design.

Each student is expected to procure their own copy of certain texts (unless supplied by school). Online purchase, library borrowing, or your own home bookshelf will prove necessary. Look for used, paperback texts online, as many colleges assign these same core titles and cost can be very reasonable.

**Advice**: Take time to read about your potential text. Make sure it is something that interests you. Try not to base your selection based upon the number of pages-- some of the shortest works can prove challenging. Instead, select something that will be worthwhile in terms of your interests in life. Each text is different… pick something you haven’t read and will benefit from as an intellect.

“Those who don’t read are no better off than those who can’t read.” { *Mark Twain}*

**Abstracts**:

***Animal Farm***: Animal Farm is [George Orwell](http://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/animal-farm/~/link.aspx?_id=3FCC2729B62546C29D52CEAEE4BBBBFA&_z=z)'s satire on equality, where all barnyard animals live free from their human masters' tyranny. Inspired to rebel by [Major](http://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/animal-farm/~/link.aspx?_id=2627C5A824074193BB768CE177281A8D&_z=z), an old boar, animals on Mr. Jones' Manor Farm embrace [Animalism](http://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/animal-farm/~/link.aspx?_id=E9B00DACD8FC4A9EAA305C46249846EC&_z=z) and stage a [revolution](http://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/animal-farm/~/link.aspx?_id=F2CCB3D1A2AA416B8BAE93343CA6489F&_z=z) to achieve an idealistic state of justice and progress. A power-hungry pig, Napoleon, becomes a totalitarian dictator who leads the Animal Farm into "[All Animals Are Equal / But Some Are More Equal Than Others](http://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/animal-farm/~/link.aspx?_id=170061C660484A63B1D1285BD396F8DA&_z=z)" oppression.

***Brave New World****:* *Brave New World* is a novel written in 1931 by [Aldous Huxley](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aldous_Huxley) and published in 1932. Set in London of AD 2540 (632 A.F.—"After [Ford](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_Ford#Model_T)"—in the book), the novel anticipates developments in [reproductive technology](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reproductive_technology), [sleep-learning](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sleep-learning), [psychological manipulation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psychological_manipulation), and [classical conditioning](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Classical_conditioning) that combine to profoundly change society.

***Night***: *Night* is a nonfictional work by [Elie Wiesel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elie_Wiesel) about his experience with his father in the [Nazi German](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nazi_Germany) concentration camps at [Auschwitz](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Auschwitz_concentration_camp) and [Buchenwald](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buchenwald_concentration_camp) in 1944–1945, at the height of the [Holocaust](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holocaust) and toward the end of the [Second World War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_World_War). Wiesel writes about the death of God and his own increasing disgust with humanity, reflected in the inversion of the father–child relationship as his father declines to a helpless state and Wiesel becomes his resentful teenage caregiver.

***Haroun and the Sea of Stories***: *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* is a 1990 children's book by [Salman Rushdie](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salman_Rushdie). It is a phantasmagorical story that begins in a city so old and ruinous that it has forgotten its name. *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* is an [allegory](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Allegory) for several problems existing in society today. It looks at these problems from the viewpoint of the young protagonist: Haroun.

***Grendel****: Grendel* is a 1971 novel by American author [John Gardner](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Gardner_(American_writer)). It is in part a retelling of the [Anglo-Saxon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old_English_language) [epic poem](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epic_poem) [*Beowulf*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beowulf) from the perspective of the antagonist: [Grendel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grendel). In the novel, Grendel is portrayed as an [antihero](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antihero). The novel deals with finding meaning in the world, the power of [literature](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Literature) and [myth](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mythology), and the nature of good and evil.

***A Clockwork Orange****: A Clockwork Orange* is a [dystopian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dystopian_novel) [novella](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Novella) by [Anthony Burgess](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anthony_Burgess) published in 1962. Set in a not-so-distant future English society that has a culture of extreme youth violence, the novel's teenage anti-hero, Alex, narrates his violent exploits and his experiences with state authorities intent on reforming him. When the state undertakes to reform Alex—to "redeem" him—the novel asks, "At what cost?".

***The Handmaid’s Tale****: The Handmaid's Tale* is a [dystopian novel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dystopian_novel), a work of [science fiction](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Science_fiction) or [speculative fiction](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Speculative_fiction), written by [Canadian author](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canadian_literature) [Margaret Atwood](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Margaret_Atwood) and first published in 1985. Set in the near future, in a [totalitarian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Totalitarianism) Christian [theocracy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theocracy) which has overthrown the [United States](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States) government, *The Handmaid's Tale* explores themes of women in subjugation and the various means by which they gain [agency](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agency_(philosophy)). The novel's title was inspired by [Geoffrey Chaucer](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geoffrey_Chaucer)'s [*The Canterbury Tales*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Canterbury_Tales), which is a series of connected stories.

***Lord of the Flies****: Lord of the Flies* is a 1954 [dystopian novel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Utopian_and_dystopian_fiction) by [Nobel Prize](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nobel_Prize_for_Literature)-winning English author [William Golding](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Golding) about a group of British boys stuck on an [uninhabited island](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Desert_island) who try to govern themselves with varying results. Its stances on the already controversial subjects of [human nature](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_nature) and individual welfare versus the [common good](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Common_good) earned it position 68 on the [American Library Association](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Library_Association)’s list of the 100 most frequently [challenged](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Challenge_(literature)) books of 1990–1999.

***Heart of Darkness****: Heart of Darkness* is a short novel by [Polish](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poles) novelist [Joseph Conrad](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Conrad), written as a [frame narrative](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frame_story), about [Charles Marlow](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Marlow)’s life as an [ivory](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ivory) transporter down the Congo River in [Central Africa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Central_Africa). In the course of his travel in central Africa, Marlow becomes obsessed with Mr. [Kurtz](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kurtz_(Heart_of_Darkness)). The story is a complex exploration of the attitudes people hold on what constitutes a barbarian versus a civilized society and the attitudes on [colonialism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colonialism) and [racism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Racism) that were part and parcel of European [imperialism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Imperialism).

***1984***: In [George Orwell](http://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/n/1984/~/link.aspx?_id=3BA9FF4FCAF84CB1B4D4411BD5AC86C1&_z=z)'s 1984, [Winston Smith](http://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/n/1984/~/link.aspx?_id=D2E1FFED78D24A1B9BE2494D294D2CE7&_z=z) wrestles with oppression in Oceania, a place where the Party scrutinizes human actions with ever-watchful [Big Brother](http://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/n/1984/~/link.aspx?_id=F92480B2C9CE44ADA7993C2351EC7DAD&_z=z). Defying a ban on individuality, Winston dares to express his thoughts in a diary and pursues a relationship with another. These criminal deeds bring Winston into the eye of the opposition, who then must reform the nonconformist. George Orwell's 1984introduced the watchwords for life without freedom: [Big](http://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/n/1984/~/link.aspx?_id=6389BAE7D5574CCEABECC72368CBBFC9&_z=z) Brother is Watching You.