

## Literature and Language Arts

OBCB Home (/yalsa/booklistsawards/booklists/outstandingbooks/2009/obcb09) | Arts & Humanities (/yalsa/booklistsawards/booklists/outstandingbooks/2009/arts) | History & Cultures (/yalsa/booklistsawards/booklists/outstandingbooks/2009/history) | Literature & Language Arts (/yalsa/booklistsawards/booklists/outstandingbooks/2009/literature) | Science & Technology (/yalsa/booklistsawards/booklists/outstandingbooks/2009/science) | Social Sciences (/yalsa/booklistsawards/booklists/outstandingbooks/2009/socialsci)

**Allison, Dorothy.** *Bastard Out of Carolina*. 1993. Penguin/Plume.

Bone confronts illegitimacy, poverty, the troubled marriage of her mother and stepfather, and the stigma of being considered “white trash” as she comes of age in South Carolina.

**Anderson, M.T.** *The Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing, Traitor to the Nation, Vol. 1: The Pox Party*. 2006. Candlewick.

*The Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing, Traitor to the Nation, Vol. II: The Kingdom on the Waves*. 2008. Candlewick.

Set during the American Revolution, Octavian is raised as a pampered African prince by a society of Enlightenment philosophers who view him as an experiment. Realizing that his freedom is an illusion, Octavian sets off on a journey to find freedom and a place in the world. These books will challenge everything you have ever learned about the Revolutionary War.

**Bond, Jenny and Chris Sheedy.** *Who the Hell is Pansy O'Hara?: The Fascinating Stories Behind 50 of the World's Best-Loved Books*. 2008. Penguin.

Did you ever wonder what an author was thinking when they wrote their book? Explore the quirky back-stories of some of the world's most famous 50 books.

**Cameron, Peter.** *Someday This Pain Will be Useful to You*. 2007. Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

James hates everyone except his grandmother. Take a look at life through this brilliant and mischievous New York teen's eyes as he tries to figure out life and his place in it.

**Cisneros, Sandra.** *Caramelo* . 2003. Knopf/Vintage.

LaLa learns the stories of her Awful Grandmother and weaves them into a colorful family history. The “caramelo,” a striped shawl begun by her Great-Grandmother, symbolizes their traditions.

**Dunn, Mark.** *Ella Minnow Pea: A Novel in Letters*. 2002. Knopf/Anchor.

The people of Nollop are good citizens, but as the use of more and more letters in the alphabet is outlawed, how will its residents communicate?

**Foer , Jonathan Safran.** *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*. 2006. Houghton Mifflin.

Oskar Schell, a gifted 9-year old, explores the mystery of his father's death during the 9/11 attack.

**Gaines, Ernest.** *A Lesson Before Dying*. 1997. Knopf/Vintage .

When Jefferson's attorney states, "I would just as soon put a hog in the electric chair as this," disillusioned teacher Grant Wiggins is sent into the penitentiary to help Jefferson gain a sense of dignity and self-esteem before his execution.

**Green, John.** *Looking for Alaska*. 2005. Penguin.

Join Miles Halter, who is intrigued by famous last words, as he heads off to boarding school in search of the "Great Perhaps." What he finds is a beautiful but troubled girl named Alaska.

**Haddon, Mark.** *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*. 2004. Knopf/Vintage .

Christopher has two mysteries to solve: who killed Wellington the dog and what happened to his mother. But Christopher, who has Asperger Syndrome, a form of autism, approaches these mysteries and the world itself in a unique and special way.

**Hosseini , Khaled.** *The Kite Runner*. 2004. Penguin/Riverhead.

Years after he flees Afghanistan, Amir, now an American citizen, returns to his native land and attempts to atone for the betrayal of his best friend before he fled Kabul and the Taliban.

**Ishiguro, Kazuo.** *Never Let Me Go*. 2005. Knopf.

Only special students are chosen to attend Hailsham, an exclusive boarding school tucked away in the English countryside. The chilling truth of their special nature slowly unfolds as we follow the stories of three former students.

**Jones, Lloyd.** *Mister Pip*. 2008. Dell Publishing/Dial Press.

Matilda's Pacific Island village has been torn apart by civil war. Against this harsh backdrop, Mr. Watts, a lonely British expatriate, maintains calm by reading Dicken's *Great Expectations* aloud to the village children, transforming their lives.

**Keillor , Garrison, ed.** *Good Poems*. 2003. Penguin.

An essential and accessible anthology of some of the best contemporary and classic poetry.

**Kidd, Sue Monk.** *Secret Life of Bees*. 2008. Penguin.

Searching for the truth about her mother's life and death, a grieving Lily finds the answers, love, and acceptance where she least expects it.

**Kyle, Aryn.** *The God of Animals*. 2007. Simon & Schuster/Scribner.

Twelve-year old Alice must face issues beyond her years. Her sister has run off, her mother won't get out of bed, and the family horse farm is failing. Can she keep the family from falling apart?

**Maguire, Gregory.** *Wicked: The Life and Times of the Wicked Witch of the West*. 2007. HarperCollins.

The Wizard of Oz retold from the point of view of Elphaba, the Wicked Witch of the West. You'll never think of Oz the same way again.

**McCarthy, Cormac.** *The Road*. 2008. Knopf/Vintage.

After an apocalyptic catastrophe, a father and his young son embark on a grim and perilous quest following the road to the sea.

**Murakami, Haruki.** *Kafka on the Shore*. 2006. Knopf/Vintage.

Reality and fantasy converge in this story of a Japanese runaway's quest to find his long-lost sister and mother.

**Myers, Walter Dean.** *Sunrise Over Fallujah*. 2008. Scholastic.

Robin believes in his country and volunteers to fight in Iraq; but when he arrives he realizes that fighting for freedom is not always black and white.

**Roth, Philip.** *The Plot Against America*. 2005. Knopf/Vintage.

This is a fascinating alternate history that takes a hard look at one of America's legendary heroes, Charles Lindbergh, and at how bigotry and fear can shape politics.

**Sebold, Alice.** *Lucky: A Memoir*. 2002. Little Brown/Back Bay.

"You save yourself or you remain unsaved." With these words, Sebold recounts the brutal rape that she was "lucky" to survive. Tragedy and hope combine as she makes her way through a survivor's maze of emotions.

**Stoppard, Tom.** *Rosencrantz & Guildenstern are Dead*. 1994. Grove Press

Two bit players from Shakespeare's Hamlet are thrust into a terrifying and surreal new situation.

**Thompson, Craig .** *Blankets*. 2003. Top Shelf Productions.

A young man questions his faith and experiences bittersweet first love in this autobiographical and groundbreaking graphic novel.

**Zusak, Marcus.** *The Book Thief*. 2006. Random House/Knopf.

Living in Nazi Germany, young Liesel and her family choose to lie and steal to protect a Jewish refugee hiding in their basement. Narrated by Death, this is not your typical World War II story.