



Tutoring Service of New York

SSAT/ISEE Student-Selected Reading

The SSAT and ISEE test your reading comprehension skills as well as the breadth and depth of your vocabulary. While it's useful to memorize new vocabulary, word roots, prefixes, and the like, it can get a little boring making flashcards all day. Worse, drilling yourself on vocabulary doesn't always help you retain new words. One of the best ways to improve your vocabulary and your reading comprehension at the same time is, well, reading!

Here, you'll find a list of novels, short story collections, and plays that will help you improve your reading comprehension, and introduce you to some new words. Before you pick a book, be sure to check out the section below about your Vocabulary Journal.

Vocabulary Journal

When encountering a new word in a book, most people just gloss over it and keep reading. Most of the time, we can infer the meaning from context. To get the best possible score on your exam, however, you want to do the opposite. Any time you see a new word, you should be sure to write it down, look up the definition, and write two sample sentences that use the word.

You should record these words, as you read, in your **vocabulary journal**. This can be a physical notebook, a note on your phone, a Word document-- whatever you feel most comfortable doing. The key thing is that you record, look up, and make example sentences with new vocabulary.

Upper Level Reading List

Below, you'll find a list of novels, short story collections, and plays appropriate for students currently in 8th, 9th, 10th, or 11th grade. Each book has been given a number that corresponds to its difficulty. Books given a 1 hover around an eighth grade reading level. Books given a 2 are around a ninth grade reading level. Books given a 3 are around a tenth grade reading level, and 4 an eleventh grade. Books that receive a 4 are for more ambitious readers looking to challenge themselves.

Fiction and Literature

Level 1 (8th Grade and Above)

Seize the Day by Saul Bellow
Of Mice and Men by John Steinbeck
Animal Farm by George Orwell
The House on Mango Street by Sandra Cisneros
Things Fall Apart by Chinua Achebe
My Antonia by Willa Cather
A Separate Peace by John Knowles
Great Expectations by Charles Dickens
All Quiet on the Western Front by Erich Maria Remarque
To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee
Little Women by Louisa May Alcott
The Perks of Being a Wallflower by Stephen Chbosky
Catch-22 by Joseph Heller
Welcome to the Monkeyhouse by Kurt Vonnegut
The Handmaid's Tale by Margaret Atwood
A Raisin in the Sun by Lorraine Hansberry
Tess of D'Urbervilles by Thomas Hardy
The Little Girls by Elizabeth Bowen
The Picture of Dorian Gray
Run by Ann Patchett
The Ocean at the End of the Lane by Neil Gaiman
The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time by Mark Hadden
I'll Give you the Sun by Jandy Nelson
The Aguero Sisters by Cristina Garcia
The Pearl by John Steinbeck
The Glass Menagerie by Tennessee Williams
A Death in the Family by James Agee
Death of a Salesman by Arthur Miller
Skippy Dies by Paul Murray
The Stranger by Albert Camus

Level 2 (9th Grade and Above)

On the Road by Jack Kerouac
Giovanni's Room by James Baldwin
The Odyssey by Homer
Oliver Twist by Charles Dickens
The Great Gatsby by F. Scott Fitzgerald
The Catcher in the Rye by J.D. Salinger
1984 by George Orwell
The Kite Runner by Khaled Hosseini
The Things They Carried by Tim O'Brien
The Count of Monte Cristo by Alexandre Dumas
Stoner by John Williams
The Crucible by Arthur Miller
Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen
The Natural by Bernard Malamud
Slaughterhouse Five by Kurt Vonnegut
Their Eyes Were Watching God by Zora Neale Hurston
Interpreter of Maladies by Jhumpa Lahiri
A Good Man is Hard to Find by Flannery O'Connor
Little Fires Everywhere by Celeste Ng
Frankenstein by Mary Shelley
The Secret History by Donna Tartt
A Doll's House by Henrik Ibsen
The Color Purple by Alice Walker
Gulliver's Travels by Jonathan Swift
A Midsummer Night's Dream by William Shakespeare
Romeo and Juliet by William Shakespeare
Never Let Me Go by Kazuo Ishiguro
Native Son by Richard Wright
Americanah by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie
Fictions (Ficciones) by Jorge Luis Borges

Level 3 (10th Grade and Above)

Grapes of Wrath by John Steinbeck
Madame Bovary by Gustave Flaubert
Invisible Man by Ralph Ellison
Go Tell it on the Mountain by James Baldwin
Ethan Frome by Edith Wharton
The Red Badge of Courage by Stephen Crane
The Ghost Writer by Phillip Roth
American Pastoral by Phillip Roth
Beloved by Toni Morrison
Sula by Toni Morrison
The Bluest Eye by Toni Morrison
Heart of Darkness by Joseph Conrad
Outline by Rachel Cusk
Dracula by Bram Stoker
Grendel by John Gardner
Arcadia by Tom Stoppard
Jane Eyre by Charlotte Bronte
Wuthering Heights by Emily Bronte
The Bell Jar by Sylvia Plath
The Art of Fielding by Chad Harbah
Persuasion by Jane Austen
Half a Yellow Sun by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie
White Teeth by Zadie Smith
The Age of Innocence by Edith Wharton
The Awakening by Kate Chopin
The Sun Also Rises by Ernest Hemingway
Oh Pioneers by Willa Cather
Enormous Changes at the Last Minute by Grace Paley
The Unbearable Lightness of Being by Milan Kundera
Leaves of Grass by Walt Whitman

Level 4 (11th Grade and Above)

White Noise by Don DeLillo
Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man by James Joyce
The Scarlet Letter by Nathaniel Hawthorne
Pere Goriot by Honore de Balzac
A Yankee in King Arthur's Court by Mark Twain
As I Lay Dying by William Faulkner
Long Day's Journey into Night by Eugene O'Neill
10:04 by Ben Lerner
Comemadre by Roque Larraquy
Anna Karenina by Leo Tolstoy
Crime and Punishment by Fyodor Dostoevsky
Mr. Sammler's Planet by Saul Bellow
The Hour of the Star by Clarice Lispector
Mrs. Dalloway by Virginia Woolf
To the Lighthouse by Virginia Woolf
Middlemarch by George Eliot
The God of Small Things by Arundhati Roy
100 Years of Solitude by Gabriel Garcia Marquez
Chronicle of a Death Foretold by Gabriel Garcia Marquez
Love in the Time of Cholera by Gabriel Garcia Marquez
Sleepless Nights by Elizabeth Hardwick
Fierce Attachments by Vivian Gornick
The Pagan Rabbi and Other Stories by Cynthia Ozick
Inferno by Dante Alighieri
Paradise Lost by John Milton
Don Quixote by Miguel de Cervantes
The Trial by Franz Kafka
Austerlitz by W.G. Sebald
The Loser by Thomas Bernhard
The Goldfinch by Donna Tartt