

## **ENGLISH 20-1 Novel Choices (choose one)**

### **OBASAN** by Joy Kowaga

Obasan depicts the evacuation, internment, and dispersal of British Columbia's Japanese Canadians during World War II. Naomi and her brother are separated from their mother and father and others of their extended family, and are raised, during the war years, by their aunt (Obasan) and uncle. The novel presents contrasts between hope and despair, anger and resignation, beauty and ugliness, and pleasure and pain which are presented through calm documentation. One of the strengths of the novel is its poetic and lyrical style, which should inspire personal response and provide a model for student writing.

### **THE ART OF RACING IN THE RAIN** by Garth Stein

Told from an aging dog's point of view, *The Art of Racing in the Rain* follows the lives of the Swift family: Denny, an aspiring race care driver; Eve, Denny's wife who experiences a sudden illness; and Zoe, their three-year-old daughter. Enzo believes that he will be incarnated as a human in his next life and thus spends his days learning about the human condition through his observations, television, and Formula One racing. As a narrator, Enzo is humorous, insightful, and full of wisdom. This novel is both hopeful and heartbreaking and explores the depths of both love and despair.

### **JUST MERCY** by Bryan Stevenson

This memoir focuses on the efforts of the author to free Walter McMillian, an African-American man who was sentenced to the death penalty for the murder of a white woman despite overwhelming evidence of his innocence. Stevenson details McMillian's case to highlight the biases and racial prejudices in the American justice system but also explores the founding of the Equal Justice Initiative and its call for prison sentencing reform. *Just Mercy* examines social justice, poverty, racism, and the need for mercy in our society.

### **PURPLE HIBISCUS** by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

Set in post-colonial Nigeria, *Purple Hibiscus* tells the complicated coming-of-age story of fifteen-year-old Kambili. On the surface, Kambili and her family appear to be one of the lucky few: affluent, devoted to one another, and deeply religious. As the story unfolds, though, the deeper truths of the family (such as violence and repression) are revealed. When Kambili and her brother are sent to their aunt's house for safety, they discover what life and love can look like when they are beyond their father's control.

### **TELL THE WOLVES I'M HOME** by Carol Rifka Brunt

June Elbus, the fourteen-year-old protagonist, is dealing with the death of her uncle (who was also her godfather and best friend) from AIDS at a time when little was known about the disease. While she struggles with losing the person who knew her best, she must also come to terms with all she didn't know about her Uncle Finn - such as his partner, Toby. June also tries to understand her relationship with her older sister, Greta, which has recently become fraught with tension. Against the backdrop of Finn's final work as a renowned painter, a portrait of the two sisters, June moves from grief and loss to friendship and compassion.

### **THE 57 BUS** by Dashka Slater

This non-fiction text uses a variety of forms (e.g., poetry, lists, letters, social media posts, and text-message conversations) to examine both sides of a tragic incident. Sasha (a white, agender teen) is asleep on the 57 bus in Oakland, California when Richard (an African-American teen) is egged on by his friends and sets fire to Sasha's skirt. The author uses various sources to highlight issues such as gender identity, racial and class divisions, and flaws in the justice system while also exploring the themes of forgiveness, restorative justice, and community.

### **Film Choices** (choose one)

- [\*Stranger than Fiction\* \(2006\)](#)
- [\*Million Dollar Baby\* \(2004\)](#)
- [\*It's Kind of a Funny Story\* \(2010\)](#)
- [\*Hoop Dreams\* \(1994\)](#)
- [\*Hidden Figures\* \(2016\)](#)