***A Lesson Before Dying***, is set in a small Cajun community in the late 1940s.  Jefferson, a young black man, is an unwitting party to a liquor store shoot out in which three men are killed; the only survivor, he is convicted of murder and sentenced to death.  Grant Wiggins, who left his hometown for the university, has returned to the plantation school to teach.  As he struggles with his decision whether to stay or escape to another state, his aunt and Jefferson's godmother persuade him to visit Jefferson in his cell and impart his learning and his pride to Jefferson before his death.  In the end, the two men forge a bond as they both come to understand the simple heroism of resisting—and defying—the expected. (<http://www.amazon.com/Lesson-Before-Dying-Oprahs-Book/dp/0375702709>)

**Fences** -  Troy Maxson, is a strong man, a hard man. He has had to be to survive.  Troy Maxson has gone through life in an America where to be proud and black is to face pressures that could crush a man, body and soul. But the1950s are yielding to the new spirit of liberation in the 1960s... a spirit that is changing the world Troy Maxson has learned to deal with the only way he can...a spirit that is making him a stranger, angry and afraid, in a world he never knew and to a wife and son he understands less and less...

**Kindred** - Dana, a modern black woman, is celebrating her twenty-sixth birthday with her new husband when she is snatched abruptly from her home in California and transported to the antebellum South. Rufus, the white son of a plantation owner, is drowning, and Dana has been summoned to save him. Dana is drawn back repeatedly through time to the slave quarters, and each time the stay grows longer, more arduous, and more dangerous until it is uncertain whether or not Dana's life will end, long before it has a chance to begin.

**Fallen Angels** - A coming-of-age tale for young adults set in the trenches of the Vietnam War in the late 1960s, this is the story of Perry, a Harlem teenager who volunteers for the service when his dream of attending college falls through. Sent to the front lines, Perry and his platoon come face-to-face with the Vietcong and the real horror of warfare. But violence and death aren't the only hardships. As Perry struggles to find virtue in himself and his comrades, he questions why black troops are given the most dangerous assignments, and why the U.S. is even there at all.

**The Joy Luck Club** - Four mothers, four daughters, four families whose histories shift with the four winds depending on who's "saying" the stories. In 1949 four Chinese women, recent immigrants to San Francisco, begin meeting to eat dim sum, play mahjong, and talk. United in shared unspeakable loss and hope, they call themselves the Joy Luck Club. Rather than sink into tragedy, they choose to gather to raise their spirits and money. "To despair was to wish back for something already lost. Or to prolong what was already unbearable." Forty years later the stories and history continue.

With wit and sensitivity, Amy Tan examines the sometimes painful, often tender, and always deep connection between mothers and daughters. As each woman reveals her secrets, trying to unravel the truth about her life, the strings become more tangled, more entwined. Mothers boast or despair over daughters, and daughters roll their eyes even as they feel the inextricable tightening of their matriarchal ties. Tan is an astute storyteller, enticing readers to immerse themselves into these lives of complexity and mystery.

**Indian Creek Chronicles** - Winner of the Pacific Northwest Booksellers Association Book Award,***Indian Creek Chronicles*** is Pete Fromm’s account of seven winter months spent alone in a tent in Idaho guarding salmon eggs and coming face to face with the blunt realities of life as a contemporary mountain man. A gripping story of adventure and a modern-day Walden, this contemporary classic established Fromm as one of the West’s premier voices.

**Snow Falling on Cedars** - San Piedro Island, north of Puget Sound, is a place so isolated that no one who lives there can afford to make enemies.  But in 1954 a local fisherman is found suspiciously drowned, and a Japanese American named Kabuo Miyamoto is charged with his murder.  In the course of the ensuing trial, it becomes clear that what is at stake is more than a man's guilt. For on San Pedro, memory grows as thickly as cedar trees and the fields of ripe strawberries--memories of a charmed love affair between a white boy and the Japanese girl who grew up to become Kabuo's wife; memories of land desired, paid for, and lost. Above all, San Piedro is haunted by the memory of what happened to its Japanese residents during World War II, when an entire community was sent into exile while its neighbors watched.  Gripping, tragic, and densely atmospheric, **Snow Falling on Cedars** is a masterpiece of suspense-- one that leaves us shaken and changed.

**The Things They Carried (Tim O'Brien)-** Depicting the men of Alpha Company—Jimmy Cross, Henry Dobbins, Rat Kiley, Mitchell Sanders, Norman Bowker, Kiowa, and the character Tim O’Brien, who survived his tour in Vietnam to become a father and writer at the age of forty-three—the stories in *The Things They Carried* opened our eyes to the nature of war in a way we will never forget. It is taught everywhere, from high school classrooms to graduate seminars in creative writing, and in the decades since its publication it has never failed to challenge our perceptions of fact and fiction, war and peace, and courage, longing, and fear.