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UNIT

1

Youth and Growth





Lead-in

The transition from a child into a young adult is often referred to as the “coming of age,” or growing up. This stage in life is one of the most important and popular themes in literature. The coming-of-age narrative is also known as “Bildungsroman,” or “novel of formation,” which can be traced back to late 18th-century Germany. The German word “bildung” means “education” and the German word “roman” means “novel.” A classic “Bildungsroman” follows one or more characters during their journey of growing up into adulthood. It usually features a protagonist’s psychological and moral growth from youth into adulthood. It typically presents a young protagonist—either male or female—who undergoes a troubled search for an adult identity through a process of trials, experiences, and revelations. These characters may experience everything from a loss of innocence to an awakening or self-awareness before finally reaching maturity.

What differentiates the Bildungsroman from other types is the element of formation, which stands as the main thematic element in the literary genre of the Bildungsroman. In other words, the element of formation makes the Bildungsroman a type of fiction that deals with the image of a man in the process of becoming. As you read in this unit, you may observe that adolescents usually seek peer support as they struggle for independence and freedom to discover themselves and their capabilities (such as Huckleberry Finn). Sometimes, the struggles take place in an extremely problematic way in “representative individuals” (such as Holden Caulfield). These individuals give life to a narrative plot whose typical event is a clash with the conventions of society.

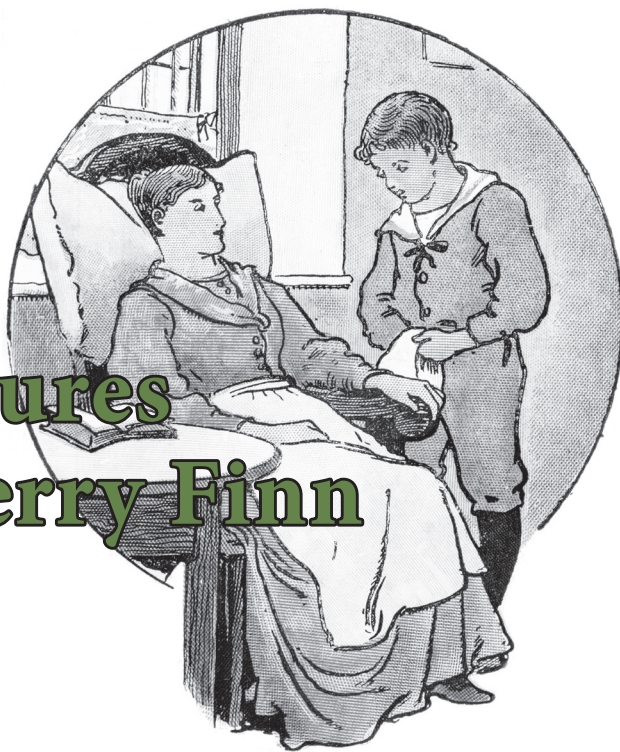
Warming-up

1. Think of a novel or film in which the main adolescent character changes in the course of the story. As a group, list the traits that characterize the protagonist at the beginning of the story and how they have changed by the end of the novel or film.
2. In your opinion, how does losing innocence tie into the process of coming of age? Can you think of some situations or experiences that might accelerate this loss of innocence?

 **Mark Twain**

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn

(excerpt from Chapter 1)



Introduction

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn is set in the 1830s or 1840s, before the start of the American Civil War in 1861, and forty to fifty years prior to the time in which Mark Twain wrote it. The town of St. Petersburg, Missouri, home of Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer, is a fictional town modeled after Twain's boyhood home of Hannibal, located in northeastern Missouri, across the Mississippi River from Illinois. Jackson's Island, where Huck and Jim meet and begin their adventure, was an actual island, now gone, close to the Illinois shore.

Generally, in a coming-of-age story, young adults' search for identity can lead to isolation, confusion, and rebellion, so the theme usually emphasizes psychological growth or maturity. *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* follows this genre. The narrator of the story, Huck Finn, is a free-spirited boy who is one of American literature's best-known characters. He has lived an unusual life, on his own, with his abusive father, and with Widow Douglas, who wants to "civilize" his wild ways. Huck is poorly educated, but he is inventive and practical. Throughout the story, Huck shows that he has common sense, ingenuity, and a great deal of sympathy for others. Because Huck is relatively free of the conventions of society, he often defines himself as "bad" or "wicked." It is this freedom from the conventional world, however, that allows him to think for himself and to help Jim, even though the society of his time says it is wrong.

- 1 You don't know about me without you have read a book by the name of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*; but that ain't no matter. That book was made by Mr. Mark Twain, and he told the truth, mainly. There was things which he stretched, but mainly he told the truth. That is nothing. I never seen anybody but lied one time or another, without it was Aunt Polly, or the widow, or maybe Mary. Aunt Polly—Tom's Aunt Polly, she is—and Mary, and the Widow Douglas is all told about in that book, which is mostly a true book, with some stretchers, as I said before.
- 2 Now the way that the book winds up is this: Tom and me found the money that the robbers hid in the cave, and it made us rich. We got six thousand dollars apiece—all gold. It was an awful sight of money when it was piled up. Well, Judge Thatcher he took it and put it out at interest, and it fetched us a dollar a day apiece, all the year round—more than a body could tell what to do with. The Widow Douglas, she took me for her son, and allowed she would sivilize me; but it was rough living in the house all the time, considering how dismal regular and decent the widow was in all her ways; and so when I couldn't stand it no longer I lit out. I got into my old rags and my sugar-hogshead again, and was free and satisfied. But Tom Sawyer he hunted me up and said he was going to start a band of robbers, and I might join if I would go back to the widow and be respectable. So I went back.
- 3 The widow she cried over me, and called me a poor lost lamb, and she called me a lot of other names, too, but she never meant no harm by it. She put me in them new clothes again, and I couldn't do nothing but sweat and sweat, and feel all cramped up. Well, then, the old thing commenced again. The widow rung a bell for supper, and you had to come to time. When you got to the table you couldn't go right to eating, but you had to wait for the widow to tuck down her head and grumble a little over the victuals, though there warn't really anything the matter with them—that is, nothing only everything was cooked by itself. In a barrel of odds and ends it is different; things get mixed up, and the juice kind of swaps around, and the things go better.
- 4 After supper she got out her book and learned me about Moses and the Bulrushers, and I was in a sweat to find out all about him; but by-and-by she let it out that Moses had been dead a considerable long time; so then I didn't care no more about him, because I don't take no stock in dead people.

- 5 Pretty soon I wanted to smoke, and asked the widow to let me. But she wouldn't. She said it was a mean practice and wasn't clean, and I must try to not do it any more. That is just the way with some people. They get down on a thing when they don't know nothing about it. Here she was a-bothering about Moses, which was no kin to her, and no use to anybody, being gone, you see, yet finding a power of fault with me for doing a thing that had some good in it. And she took snuff, too; of course that was all right, because she done it herself.
- 6 Her sister, Miss Watson, a tolerable slim old maid, with goggles on, had just come to live with her, and took a set at me now with a spelling book. She worked me middling hard for about an hour, and then the widow made her ease up. I couldn't stood it much longer. Then for an hour it was deadly dull, and I was fidgety. Miss Watson would say: "Don't put your feet up there, Huckleberry;" and "Don't scrunch up like that, Huckleberry—set up straight;" and pretty soon she would say: "Don't gap and stretch like that, Huckleberry—why don't you try to behave?" Then she told me all about the bad place, and I said I wished I was there. She got mad then, but I didn't mean no harm. All I wanted was to go somewheres; all I wanted was a change, I warn't particular. She said it was wicked to say what I said; said she wouldn't say it for the whole world; she was going to live so as to go to the good place. Well, I couldn't see no advantage in going where she was going, so I made up my mind I wouldn't try for it. But I never said so, because it would only make trouble, and wouldn't do no good.
- 7 Now she had got a start, and she went on and told me all about the good place. She said all a body would have to do there was to go around all day long with a harp and sing, forever and ever. So I didn't think much of it. But I never said so. I asked her if she reckoned Tom Sawyer would go there, and she said not by a considerable sight. I was glad about that, because I wanted him and me to be together.
- 8 Miss Watson she kept pecking at me, and it got tiresome and lonesome. By-and-by they fetched the niggers in and had prayers, and then everybody was off to bed. I went up to my room with a piece of candle, and put it on the table. Then I set down in a chair by the window and tried to think of something cheerful, but it warn't no use. I felt so lonesome I most wished I was dead. The stars were shining, and the leaves rustled in the

woods ever so mournful; and I heard an owl, away off, who-whooping about somebody that was dead, and a whippowill and a dog crying about somebody that was going to die; and the wind was trying to whisper something to me, and I couldn't make out what it was, and so it made the cold shivers run over me. Then away out in the woods I heard that kind of a sound that a ghost makes when it wants to tell about something that's on its mind and can't make itself understood, and so can't rest easy in its grave, and has to go about that way every night grieving. I got so down-hearted and scared, I did wish I had some company...

- 9 I set down again, a shaking all over, and got out my pipe for a smoke; for the house was all as still as death now, and so the widow wouldn't know. Well, after a long time I heard the clock away off in the town go boom—boom—boom—twelve licks; and all still again—stillier than ever. Pretty soon I heard a twig snap down in the dark amongst the trees—something was a stirring. I set still and listened. Directly I could just barely hear a “me-yow! me-yow!” down there. That was good! Says I: “me-yow! me-yow!” as soft as I could, and then I put out the light and scrambled out of the window on to the shed. Then I slipped down to the ground and crawled in among the trees, and, sure enough, there was Tom Sawyer waiting for me.

Notes

1. **Mark Twain:** Born Samuel Langhorne Clemens in Florida, Missouri, Mark Twain (1835–1910) was a humorist, novelist, reporter, lecturer, travel writer, and licensed riverboat pilot who became one of the most important writers in American literature. *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, published in 1884 at the peak of Twain's career, is considered a masterpiece of American literature. This book is humorous, but it has a serious message. Although young readers can enjoy the humor and suspense in Huck's adventures, the book can also be appreciated on a much deeper level. Through the years, people have been moved by the work's psychological depth, moral message, skilled characterization, and honest insights into human nature.
2. **civilize me:** To create authentic language and regional identities among the many different characters in this novel, Mark Twain creates dialects. For readers to hear each dialect's uniqueness, he phonetically spells many words, such as “civilize,” which stands for “civilize.”
3. **sugar-hogshead:** A large barrel once used by ships to hold gallons of sugar. Huck used to sleep in it.

4. **Moses and the Bulrushers:** Mark Twain uses a number of biblical references as well as references to the church in the novel. This one refers to the narrative of Moses from the Old Testament. It is said that the infant Moses was discovered in a basket made of reeds and adopted by the daughter of the Egyptian pharaoh.
5. **snuff:** A preparation of powdered tobacco. At that time, it was not known that using snuff was a dangerous and addictive behavior.
6. **the bad place...the good place:** As with the biblical reference above, in the West, adults often used stories and places in the Bible to teach, and sometimes frighten, children into good behavior. The bad place is purgatory, or Hell; the good place is Heaven.
7. **nigger:** Originally a dialect variant of Negro; now an unacceptable and hostile usage because of its use in a context of racial hatred.

Reading Strategies



Making Inferences

Making inferences is an important critical reading skill. When you make inferences, or infer, you draw conclusions based on evidence from the text or knowledge that you have. Texts contain not only many explicit details such as dates, names, or descriptions, but also implicit information like how the author feels about a topic or whether they agree with someone else. This information is not explicitly stated; you need to use clues from the text and your knowledge to form your own conclusions as a reader.

Taking the following quote as an example, one can make inferences about Widow Douglas's attitude toward snuff:

Pretty soon I wanted to smoke, and asked the widow to let me. But she wouldn't. She said it was a mean practice and wasn't clean, and I must try to not do it any more. That is just the way with some people. They get down on a thing when they don't know nothing about it. Here she was a-bothering about Moses, which was no kin to her, and no use to anybody, being gone, you see, yet finding a power of fault with me for doing a thing that had some good in it. And she took snuff, too; of course that was all right, because she done it herself. (para. 5)

Even though the answer is not stated in the text, you can infer that the widow's attitude is quite hypocritical based on the details provided: When "I wanted to smoke," the widow said it was "a mean practice"; yet, the widow "done it herself."

Make inferences and look for hints within the text. Choose the best answer to each of the following questions.

1. As it is used twice in the first paragraph, the word “without” is best understood to mean _____.
 - A. outside
 - B. unless
 - C. until
 - D. lacking
2. Tom Sawyer’s offer at the end of paragraph 2 is ironic because _____.
 - A. he considers himself a leader
 - B. he wants Huck to do something Huck does not want to do
 - C. robbers are not usually considered to be respectable
 - D. Tom does not want to live with the widow himself
3. Which of Huck’s statements most clearly suggests that he is understanding and tolerant of others?
 - A. “...but she never meant no harm by it.”
 - B. “...you had to wait for the widow to tuck down her head and grumble a little...”
 - C. “...she was a-bothering about Moses, which was no kin to her...”
 - D. “...I said I wished I was there.”
4. What is paragraph 3 mainly about?
 - A. The widow is angry yet relieved when Huck returns home.
 - B. Soon after Huck’s return, he begins to feel cramped and restricted again.
 - C. Huck does not appreciate the way food is served at the widow’s house.
 - D. Huck does not understand that the widow is praying before the meal.
5. Huck does not take stock in dead people because he _____.
 - A. never knew if stories about them were true or not
 - B. is not interested in stories about the lives of other people
 - C. is somewhat frightened by stories about dead people
 - D. thinks stories about dead people serve no practical purpose



Comprehension Check

1 Fill in the missing information by referring to the text for clues.

- 1. Huck introduces himself as a(n) _____ from Mark Twain’s earlier novel, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*.
- 2. After Huck and Tom Sawyer both become rich, Widow Douglas adopts him and tries to “_____” him.
- 3. Widow Douglas imposes on Huck a life of manners, such as not eating his dinner immediately after it is served, but waiting until she “_____,” or prays over it.
- 4. Miss Watson, the sister of Widow Douglas, teaches Huck how to spell, criticizes his posture, and tells him about _____.
- 5. When Miss Watson says _____ is going to Hell, Huck is glad because that means he and his friend can be together.

2 Fill in the blanks to identify traits of Huck, Widow Douglas, and Miss Watson, and then describe how each character impresses you.

Character	Traits	Analysis
Huck	free-spirited; poorly educated; inventive; practical	Huck has lived an unusual life. He is _____ to accept Widow Douglas’s attempt to civilize his wild ways. Because Huck is relatively free of the conventions of society, he often defines himself as “_____” or “wicked.”
Widow Douglas	good; kind; hypocritical	She takes Huck into her _____ and attempts to civilize him. Although Huck appreciates her loving nature, she lives a quiet and _____ life of prayer and schedules that Huck cannot tolerate.
Miss Watson	nasty; repressive; narrow-minded	She lives with Huck and Widow Douglas. Her _____ and cold treatment makes Huck feel _____ and bad about himself.

- 3** Huck's upbringing is at issue in this chapter. As you read, think about what components of Huck's self that others hope to influence and how he reacts to the attempts.

- 4** Examine Huck's speech patterns in the text. Discuss how Huck's dialect differs from standard English, and analyze the function of humor and wit in Huck's narrative.



Extension Activities

- 1** Group discussion: What are some characteristics of a civilized person and society? How do these characteristics shape people's lives and values? What might lead a person (like Huck) to seek freedom outside of structured society? To what extent can a person live independently from societal expectations and responsibilities?
- 2** Mark Twain's concept of "growth" and "education," which he incorporated explicitly in his writings, was formed along with his adventurous and eventful life. Discuss which of Twain's life events and character traits might also be reflected in Huck.

Part B

 **Jerome David Salinger**

The Catcher (excerpt from Chapter 16) in the Rye



Introduction

The Catcher in the Rye is set around the 1950s and is narrated by a young man named Holden Caulfield. The events he narrates take place in the few days between the end of the fall school term and Christmas. Holden is a 16-year-old junior who has just been expelled for academic failure from a school called Pencey Prep. Although he is intelligent and sensitive, Holden narrates his story in a cynical and jaded voice. He finds the hypocrisy and ugliness of the world around him almost unbearable, and through his cynicism he tries to protect himself from the pain and disappointment of the adult world. As the novel opens, Holden stands poised on the cliff separating childhood from adulthood. His inability to successfully negotiate the chasm leaves him on the verge of emotional collapse.

According to most analyses, *The Catcher in the Rye* is a Bildungsroman, a novel about a young character's growth into maturity. Yet, in a way, Holden Caulfield is an unusual protagonist for a Bildungsroman because his central goal is to resist the process of maturity itself. Instead of acknowledging that adulthood scares and confuses him, Holden invents a fantasy that adulthood is a world of superficiality and hypocrisy ("phoniness") while childhood is a world of innocence, curiosity, and honesty. *The Catcher in the Rye*, with its universal motifs of teenage angst, suspicion of authority, and rebellion against social convention, continues to provoke profound reflection among modern-day readers.

- 1 After I had my breakfast, it was only around noon, and I wasn't meeting old Sally till two o'clock so I started taking this long walk. I couldn't stop thinking about those two nuns. I kept thinking about that beat-up old straw basket they went around collecting money with when they weren't teaching school. I kept trying to picture my mother or somebody, or my aunt, or Sally Hayes's crazy mother, standing outside some department store and collecting dough for poor people in a beat-up old straw basket. It was hard to picture. Not so much my mother, but those other two. My aunt's pretty charitable—she does a lot of Red Cross work and all—but she's very well-dressed and all, and when she does anything charitable she's always very well-dressed and has lipstick on and all that crap. I couldn't picture her doing anything for charity if she had to wear black clothes and no lipstick while she was doing it. And old Sally Hayes's mother. Jesus Christ. The only way she could go around with a basket collecting dough would be if everybody kissed her ass for her when they made a contribution. If they just dropped their dough in her basket, then walked away without saying anything to her, ignoring her and all, she'd quit in about an hour. She'd get bored. She'd hand in her basket and then go some place swanky for lunch. That's what I liked about those nuns. You could tell, for one thing, that they never went anywhere swanky for lunch. It made me so damn sad when I thought about it, their never going anywhere swanky for lunch or anything. I knew it wasn't too important, but it made me sad anyway.
- 2 I started walking over toward Broadway, just for the hell of it, because I hadn't been over there in years. Besides, I wanted to find a record store that was open on Sunday. There was this record I wanted to get for Phoebe, called "Little Shirley Beans." It was a very hard record to get. It was about a little kid that wouldn't go out of the house because two of her front teeth were out and she was ashamed to. I heard it at Pencey. A boy that lived on the next floor had it, and I tried to buy it off him because I knew it would knock old Phoebe out, but he wouldn't sell it. It was a very old, terrific record that this colored girl singer, Estelle Fletcher, made about twenty years ago. She sings it very Dixieland and whorehouse, and it doesn't sound at all mushy. If a white girl was singing it, she'd make it sound cute as hell, but old Estelle Fletcher knew what the

hell she was doing, and it was one of the best records I ever heard. I figured I'd buy it in some store that was open on Sunday and then I'd take it up to the park with me. It was Sunday and Phoebe goes roller skating in the park on Sundays quite frequently. I knew where she hung out mostly.

3 It wasn't as cold as it was the day before, but the sun still wasn't out, and it wasn't too nice for walking. But there was one nice thing. This family that you could tell just came out of some church were walking right in front of me—a father, a mother, and a little kid about six years old. They looked sort of poor. The father had on one of those pearl-gray hats that poor guys wear a lot when they want to look sharp. He and his wife were just walking along, talking, not paying any attention to their kid. The kid was swell. He was walking in the street, instead of on the sidewalk, but right next to the curb. He was making out like he was walking a very straight line, the way kids do, and the whole time he kept singing and humming. I got up closer so I could hear what he was singing. He was singing that song, “If a body catch a body coming through the rye.” He had a pretty little voice, too. He was just singing for the hell of it, you could tell. The cars zoomed by, brakes screeched all over the place, his parents paid no attention to him, and he kept on walking next to the curb and singing “If a body catch a body coming through the rye.” It made me feel better. It made me feel not so depressed any more.

4 Broadway was mobbed and messy. It was Sunday, and only about twelve o'clock, but it was mobbed anyway. Everybody was on their way to the movies—the Paramount or the Astor or the Strand or the Capitol or one of those crazy places. Everybody was all dressed up, because it was Sunday, and that made it worse. But the worst part was that you could tell they all wanted to go to the movies. I couldn't stand looking at them. I can understand somebody going to the movies because there's nothing else to do, but when somebody really wants to go, and even walks fast, so as to get there quicker, then it depresses hell out of me. Especially if I see millions of people standing in one of those long, terrible lines, all the way down the block, waiting with this terrific

patience for seats and all. Boy, I couldn't get off that goddam Broadway fast enough. I was lucky. The first record store I went into had a copy of "Little Shirley Beans." They charged me five bucks for it, because it was so hard to get, but I didn't care. Boy, it made me so happy all of a sudden. I could hardly wait to get to the park to see if old Phoebe was around so that I could give it to her.

Notes

1. **Jerome David Salinger:** Born on January 1, 1919, Jerome David Salinger was an American writer best known for his controversial but widely-read novel, *The Catcher in the Rye*. He was a popular writer considered by many readers as well as critics to be one of the most influential writers of the latter part of the 20th century.
2. **Red Cross:** An international organization that helps people who are suffering because of a war or natural disaster. A red cross on a white ground was adopted by the Geneva Convention of 1864 as the emblem to identify noncombat installations, vehicles, and personnel ministering to the sick and wounded in war. This emblem is now used not only in war but also in disaster relief and other humanitarian services.
3. **for the hell of it:** (informal, somewhat impolite) for the fun of doing something, without having a particular reason
4. **Dixieland:** A type of traditional American jazz music that was popular in the 1920s, usually played by a small band and characterized by ensemble and solo improvisation.

Comprehension Check

1 Fill in the missing information by referring to the text for clues.

1. Throughout the novel, _____ seems to be excluded from and victimized by the world around him.
2. Holden keeps thinking about the collection basket as he heads off to meet _____ for their date.
3. On his long walk, Holden thinks of two nuns who collect money for the poor people with a beat-up old straw basket, and assumes that people like _____ will never do such a thing so sincerely.
4. _____ is a black singer who makes the “Little Shirley Beans” sound raunchy, not cute.
5. Holden heads down _____ to buy the record “Little Shirley Beans” for Phoebe.

2 Choose the best answer to each of the following questions.

1. Why does Holden buy Phoebe the record “Little Shirley Beans”?
 - A. Phoebe just lost her two front teeth like Shirley Beans.
 - B. It is Phoebe’s favorite song.
 - C. He likes the authentic way that Estelle sings the song.
 - D. It is Phoebe’s birthday.
2. How does the little boy singing “If a body catch a body coming through the rye” deliver the song?
 - A. He is showing off and trying to get attention.
 - B. He is making fun of the song.
 - C. He is crying while he is singing the song.
 - D. He is singing the song just for the joy of singing it.
3. Which of the following best describes how Holden feels about most people in *The Catcher in the Rye*?
 - A. They are inherently good.
 - B. They are phonies.
 - C. They are trying to trick him out of his money.
 - D. They are all trying to hurt him.
4. Which of the following describes the character of Holden Caulfield in *The Catcher in the Rye*?
 - A. He is a non-smoker.
 - B. He is a non-conformist.
 - C. He is poor.
 - D. He is a good student.
5. Which of the following helps define the genre of *The Catcher in the Rye* as a coming-of-age novel?
 - A. Holden’s angsty worldview.
 - B. Holden’s level of maturity at the beginning of the novel.
 - C. An implied question of whether or not Holden has matured by the end of the novel.
 - D. All of the answers are correct.

- 3 How does Holden give meaning and significance to childhood? Explain with textual evidence.
- 4 What do Holden's observations on the road reveal about his representation of the world? How do they demonstrate the process of his individual development or identity formation?

Extension Activities

- 1 Explain the benefits of *The Catcher in the Rye* being told from Holden's point of view. Compare Holden's modern narrative with Huck's 19th-century narrative, and see if you notice any difference or transformation.
- 2 Reflecting on your own experiences of coming of age, can you identify moments or feelings of loss of innocence? How did these moments shape your self-understanding and relationship with the larger world?

Supplementary Reading

- Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*
- Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*
- Charles Dickens, *David Copperfield*
- Louisa May Alcott, *Little Women*
- George Eliot, *The Mill on the Floss*
- W. Somerset Maugham, *Of Human Bondage*
- Qian Zhongshu, *Fortress Besieged* (钱锺书, 《围城》)
- Ba Jin, *The Family* (巴金, 《家》)
- Lu Yao, *Ordinary World* (路遥, 《平凡的世界》)