

Abbreviations:

* = text written before 1930
20 = 20th century (etc.)

N = novel

D = drama

B = biography

S = short stories

E = essays

A = autobiography

NF = non-fiction

UK = United Kingdom

US = United States

CD = Canada

IR = Ireland

AF = Africa

AU = Australia

IN = India

NZ = New Zealand

WI = West Indies

Suggested subjects for your thematic search:

love, war, women, society, individual, oppression, Victorian, working class, aristocracy, hypocrisy, history, past, homosexuality, feminism, slavery, racism, money, nature, minorities, children, adolescence, identity, fantasy, magic, journey, sea, city, country, social criticism, psychology, friendship, handicap, outsider, childhood, colonialism, education, multicultural, privilege, victim, suicide, sexual abuse, drugs, Jewish, father, fate, chance, writer, artist, frustration, utopia, dystopia, crime, corruption, mafia, unemployment, integration, religion, women, madness, obsession, black, war, ethics

Achebe, Chinua: Things Fall Apart, N 20

colonialism, multicultural, religion, black, oppression, AF

Story about life in African society and the changes when the white people arrive.

Angelou, Maya : I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings, A 20

racism, rape, women, US

“I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings” is a 1969 autobiographical novel about the early years of author Maya Angelou's life. The autobiography explores the isolation and loneliness faced by Angelou, and the attributes of her character that helped her cope with the prejudices of society. Quite graphic in nature, the text deals with issues including childhood, rape, racism, and sexism, which has generated controversy.

Austen, Jane : Sense and Sensibility, N* 19

love, aristocracy, social criticism, romance, UK

Elinor and Marianne Dashwood are sisters with opposite temperaments. Elinor is 19, the elder daughter, and represents the "sense" of the title. Marianne is three years younger and represents "sensibility".

Elinor and Marianne are the daughters of Mr. Dashwood by his second wife. They also have a younger sister, Margaret, and an older half-brother named John. When their father dies, the family estate passes to John and the Dashwood women are left impoverished. Fortunately, a distant relative offers to rent the women a cottage on his property. The novel follows the Dashwood sisters to their new home, where they experience both romance and heartbreak. The contrast between the sisters' characters is eventually resolved as they each find love and lasting happiness.

Boyle, T. C.: Tortilla Curtain, N 20

California, rich and poor, immigration, exploitation, social criticism, US

The title is a clear allusion to two things: Steinbeck's “Tortilla Flat” and the so called “iron curtain” of the Cold War. The novel shows the parallel lives of a wealthy, typically Californian family who more and more have to wall themselves in against the influx of poor Mexicans who try to find a new existence and one of those poor immigrant families. The border line between Mexico and the USA becomes more and more a physical and especially mental barrier between the two cultures, not an iron but a Tortilla curtain.

Bradbury, Ray: Fahrenheit 451, N 20

science fiction, social criticism, American Dream, TV, social control, books, terror, US

Fahrenheit 451 is the temperature at which paper starts burning. The world Bradbury depicts is a world without books – they are systematically burnt by the government firefighters. Their job is reversed compared to the job

of our fire brigades: The new houses cannot burn any more, but as soon as they find books in a home it is burnt down by them. One of those firemen once hides some books he actually should incinerate, he starts reading, turns against the government with its policy of making the people dumb by means of absolutely stupid TV series, he becomes an official enemy of the state and is being persecuted. He must escape into the wilderness, and from there he witnesses the apocalyptic destruction of this illiterate, TV-ridden culture.

Brontë, Charlotte: Jane Eyre, N* 19

love, mystery, loyalty, poverty, teaching, lunacy, UK

Jane Eyre grows up an orphan and has to experience a dull childhood. She gets an education as a teacher, later on she finds work at Thornfield Castle, and her employer, Mr. Rochester, falls in love with her, wants to marry her – but he is already married to an insane woman. The castle burns down, the mad wife dies, Mr. Rochester gets blind, but he and Jane find together at last.

Brown, Christie: My Left Foot, B 20

Handicap, cripple, Irish, family, education, psychology, IR

Christie Brown was born in 1932. He was one of 23 children born to a Dublin bricklayer. A victim of cerebral palsy, he could neither control his speech nor his movement. He lived the desperately helpless life of a vegetable till he and his never-tiring, loving and supportive mother found out that he could move his left foot and develop it into a helpful tool. He learnt to paint and write and eventually published an autobiography and several novels as well as a collection of poetry. He died in 1981. In *My Left Foot* he tells the story of his childhood joys and sufferings as well as his struggle to learn reading, writing, painting and finally typing with the one toe of his left foot connecting him with the people and the world around him.

Burgess, Anthony: A Clockwork Orange, N 20

crime, youth, violence, punishment, social criticism, free will, UK

This text is highly shocking because of its scenes of naked violence. The background is a city in the near future which, at night, is controlled by street gangs whose only goal is fun, violence, power. In the first part of the novel we witness how one of these gangs terrorise innocent citizens, in the second part we learn how the state hits back – and the way the state establishes law and order again is not less violent than the previous crimes of the boys.

Coetzee, J.M.: Disgrace, N 20

identity, racism, South Africa, AF

A professor at a South African university is fired because he seduced a student, so he withdraws to his daughter's farm in the country, where he realises that he is not able to protect her.

Fitzgerald, F. Scott: The Great Gatsby, N 20

love, American Dream, money, success, failure, crime, death, US

This novel is called one of the great love stories of our time, and that's true. But it also shows the way of a poor boy without any background to the top of Long Island high life, a man who obviously has made the ominous career from a dishwasher to a millionaire. And the reason why he made all those efforts is the love for a woman who he will never possess. He can realize what people usually call the American Dream, but he dies a loser.

Golding, William: Lord of the Flies, N 20

puberty, adolescence, boyhood, group dynamics, adventure, power, friendship, death, UK

Rousseau said: "All that comes out of the hands of God is good. Man is only corrupted through society." If we left the children alone they would quite naturally develop into good human beings. Golding makes this experiment in his novel: A group of boys survives a plane crash on a paradisiac island somewhere in the Pacific, no adult survives the crash, the boys are by themselves – and Golding shows what happens.

Greene, Graham: Dr Fischer of Geneva or the Bomb Party, N 20

power, greed, love

Dr Fischer despises the human race. When the notorious toothpaste millionaire decides to hold the last of his famous parties Greene opens up a powerful version of the limitless greed of the rich. Black comedy and painful satire combined in a totally compelling novel.

Greene, Graham: The Quiet American, N 20

war, American involvement, politics, US

A British foreign correspondent in the Vietnam of the 1950s meets a young American who is trying to influence the political development in the country.

Hawthorne, Nathaniel: The Scarlet Letter, N*19

Puritanism, social outcasts, sexism, love, US

A young, unmarried woman gives birth to a baby in a strongly puritan neighbourhood. She is branded on her breast as a whore and adulteress. Later in her life the father of her illegitimate daughter acknowledges his child and the mother is rehabilitated.

Heller, Joseph: Catch 22, N 20

second world war, madness, bombers, flying, fear, air force, US

This novel has become a modern classic and best seller. It is a story of some members of the US Air Force who are stationed on an island near Elba, and most of them are nuts somehow. The main character is Yossarian who tries to avoid flying missions against the Germans because he is simply fed up feeling constantly afraid for his life. He tries to talk about this to an army psychiatrist, but talking to psychiatrists can lead you into grave problems... very dazzling, but very funny a book.

Hemingway, Ernest: The Old Man and the Sea, N 20

fishing, fighting, heroism, sharks, power, old man, US

In Hemingway's universe there is no God who spreads his helping and protective hands over mankind or over the individual. We are alone in our struggle for existence, and it is a struggle of all against all in order not to go down. Santiago is an old Cuban fisherman who still has to go off shore every day for a living. One day he hooks a giant sword fish, the fish of his life, and now a struggle of creature against creature takes place, not in terms of hate and enmity, but as a necessity of life. Santiago loves and admires this beautiful fish, and he in a way apologizes for having to kill him – fish and man become brothers, locked in their struggle for existence. After three days Santiago wins over the fish – but now the sharks turn up. When he lands again, completely worn out, there is nothing but the skeleton of the fish left. Life has defeated Santiago but – and this is Hemingway's message of man's real heroism: A real man can be defeated, but not destroyed.

Herr, Michael: Dispatches, NF 20

Vietnam, war, madness, soldiers, society, US

Dispatches is a non-fiction book by Michael Herr that describes the author's experiences in Vietnam as a war correspondent for Esquire magazine. First published in 1977, Dispatches was one of the first pieces of American literature that allowed Americans to understand the experiences of soldiers in the Vietnam War. At a time when many veterans would say little about their experiences during the war, Dispatches allowed for an experience and understanding of the war like no other source to date. Several of the soldiers mentioned in the book were used as the basis for characters in the movies Apocalypse Now and Full Metal Jacket.

Hornby, Nick: About a Boy, N 20

singles, boyhood, adolescence, friendship, love, sex, IR

Marcus is 12 years old and lives with his single mother, an ex-hippie who tries to educate him against the mainstream. Marcus suffers at school because he is different from the rest of the class, but he happens to get to know Will, 36, rich, single and without the least notion of trying to be responsible for anyone else but himself. But between the pre-mature Marcus and Will who still lives the life of a teenager, a deep friendship develops which helps both of them to grow up. A deeply moving and an absolutely funny book.

Huxley, Aldous: Brave New World, N 20

science fiction, technology, happiness, love, religion, social control, social criticism, American Dream, US

Technology has made such rapid progress that people are not born and raised in families any longer but in hatcheries. There different types are being produced, Alpha-plus people for intellectual jobs, Gamma folks for craftsmen, Delta and Epsilon idiots for the dirty work. There are still some “uncivilized” people living in a reservation in New Mexico, but they have no chance to survive in the brave new world of full-control technology.

Ishiguro, Kazuo: The Remains of the Day, N 20

society, past, love, aristocracy, education, UK

It is the summer of 1956. Stevens, the elderly butler of Darlington Hall, is driving across south-west England to meet Miss Kenton, the former housekeeper at Darlington Hall. But the journey becomes more than a leisure trip through the English countryside, as Stevens starts to reflect on his own life and experiences, and examine the role of both his employer and the housekeeper in his life.

Kesey, Ken: One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest, N 20

psychiatry, social criticism, handicap, outsider, madness, US

Tyrannical Nurse Ratched rules her ward in an Oregon State mental hospital with a strict and unbending routine, unopposed by her patients, who remain cowed by mind-numbing medication and the threat of electric shock therapy. But her regime is disrupted by the arrival of McMurphy – the swaggering, fun-loving trickster with a devilish grin on behalf of his fellow inmates. His struggle is seen through the eyes of Chief Bromden, a seemingly mute half-Indian patient who understands McMurphy's heroic attempt to do battle with the powers that keep them imprisoned. A devastatingly honest portrayal of the boundaries between sanity and madness.

Kleinbaum, N. H.: Dead Poets Society, N 20

Adolescence, education, school, suicide, US

Todd Anderson and his friends at Welton Academy can hardly believe how different life is since their new English teacher, the flamboyant John Keating, has challenged them to ‘make your lives extraordinary!’ Inspired by Keating, the boys resurrect the Dead Poets Society – a secret club where, free from the constraints and expectations of school and parents, they let their passions run wild. As Keating turns the boys on to the great words of Byron, Shelley and Keats, Whitman, they discover not only the beauty of a language, but the importance of making each moment count. But the Dead Poets pledges soon realise that their new found freedom can have tragic consequences. Can the club and the individuality it inspires survive the pressure from the authorities determined to destroy their dreams?

Kosinski, Jerzy: Being There, N 20

society, media, satire, social criticism, money, outsider, US

It is the story of Chauncey Gardiner – Chance – an enigmatic but distinguished man who emerges from nowhere to become an heir to the throne of a Wall Street tycoon, a presidential policy advisor, and a media icon. Truly “a man without qualities” Chance's straightforward responses to popular concerns are heralded as visionary. “Being There” is a brilliantly satiric look at the unreality of American media culture that is, if anything, more trenchant now than ever.

Lee, Harper: To Kill a Mockingbird, N 20

small-town, childhood, racism, injustice, family, father-figure, Deep South, US

Atticus Finch is a white lawyer in a small Alabama town, he lost his wife, so he educates his son and his daughter alone with the help of Calpurnia, a negro housekeeper. Beside brilliant insights into the psyche of a child, a full view of the mentality of a small town and the inherent racism we get a moving portrait of an outsider and a father.

Lessing, Doris: The Fifth Child, N 20

family, outsider, genetics, UK

Harriet and David Lovatt realize their dream of a home, four children and a happy family life. But when Harriet becomes pregnant for the fifth time she instinctively knows that this child will be different. And this child really seems to come from a world long gone.

Mason, Bobby Ann: In Country N 20

Vietnam, war, adolescence, identity, society US

This is about a teenage girl's questions about the war in Vietnam, where her father died and her uncle served. A harshly realistic look at the Vietnam War as well as the story of a young woman maturing.

McCourt, Frank: Angela's Ashes, A 20

Ireland, poverty, slums, catholicism, family, prostitution, patriotism, alcoholism, IR

Frank grows up in a very poor Irish family that has to live in one of Limerick's worst slums. We are given a full view of poverty, of a patriotic father who drinks his money away with his friends, of a mother who prostitutes herself for food, and of a Catholic church which rules everything but does not really help the poor. Frank eventually escapes to the USA.

McEwan, Ian: Enduring Love, N 20

obsession, love, faith, UK

On a windy spring day in the Chilterns, the calm, organized life of science writer Joe Rose is shattered when he witnesses a tragic accident: a hot-air balloon with a boy trapped in its basket is being tossed by the wind, and in the attempt to save the child, a man is killed. A stranger named Jed Parry joins Rose in helping to bring the balloon to safety. But unknown to Rose, something passes between Parry and himself on that day--something that gives birth to an obsession in Parry so powerful that it will test the limits of Rose's beloved rationalism, threaten the love of his wife, Clarissa, and drive him to the brink of murder and madness. Brilliant and compassionate, this is a novel of love, faith, and suspense, and of how life can change in an instant.

Miller, Arthur: All my Sons, D 20

second world war, industry, planes, family, business, money, crime, guilt, suicide, US

A self-made industrialist, Joe Keller, sells defective cylinder heads to the air force during the Second World War in order not to blow his business, and 21 young pilots died because of those defects. But he managed to send one of his employees to prison for it. When the play opens we see the Keller family together on a Sunday morning briefly after the end of the war. Chris has come back from the front in Europe, but his brother Larry, a pilot who fought against the Japanese in the Pacific, is still reported missing in action. In the course of the play we learn that Larry committed suicide because he knew that the reason for the death of his comrades was his father. When Joe Keller realizes what he has done he kills himself as well.

Miller, Arthur: Death of a Salesman, D 20

Post-war USA, affluent society, American Dream, family (relationships), dealing with expectations, US

Death of a Salesman has been recognized as a milestone of the American theater. In the person of Willy Loman, the aging, failing salesman who makes his living riding on a smile and a shoeshine, Arthur Miller redefined the tragic hero as a man whose dreams are at once insupportably vast and dangerously insubstantial. He has given us a figure whose name has become a symbol for a kind of majestic grandiosity—and a play that compresses epic extremes of humor and anguish, promise and loss, between the four walls of an American living room.

Miller, Arthur: The Crucible, D 20

Puritanism, religion, terror, thought control, McCarthyism, cold war, US

In this drama Miller criticises the communist hunt during the McCarthy era in the middle of the Cold War. But he does not show the America of his day, but he moves back in the US history to the early puritan settlers in Salem, in the Boston area. They constantly feel beleaguered by the devil – the old fashioned form of the communists –, and the way they try to detect the devil among them and to win over him follows exactly the same mass – psychological mechanisms like McCarthy's communist hunt in the fifties. A highly impressive drama!

Moore, Brian: Lies of Silence, N 20

The Troubles, (Northern) Ireland, (moral) dilemmas, Catholics/Protestants, IR

Set in the 80s during the "Troubles" in Northern Ireland. When Michael Dillon is ordered by the IRA to park his car in the carpark of a Belfast hotel, he is faced with a moral choice which leaves him absolutely nowhere to turn. He knows that he is planting a bomb that would kill and maim dozens of people. But he also knows that if he doesn't, his wife will be killed.

Orwell, George: 1984, N 20

science fiction, Big Brother, totalitarianism, terror, social control, love, UK

Orwell wrote this book in 1948, reversed the last two figures and produced a vision of a future form of society which is simply horrible – because it sounds so real! Under the impression of the two terrible dictatorships of Hitler and Stalin Orwell creates a super-totalitarian system which gains absolute and full control over everything: history is systematically manipulated, every citizen is constantly observed, love relations between man and woman are a crime against the state because the state – and the Party with its boss Big Brother – want to have the monopoly even in human feelings. Nevertheless, two people start a love affair, are caught, tortured and finally lose their fight.

Palahniuk, Chuck: Fight Club, N 20

violence, frustration, obsession, individual, consumerism, US

The plot is based around an unnamed protagonist who struggles with his growing discomfort with consumerism and changes in the state of masculinity in American culture. In an attempt to overcome this, he creates an underground boxing club as a radical form of psychotherapy. The novel has become a target of criticism, mainly for its explicit depictions of violence.

Prejean, Sister Helen: Dead Man Walking, NF 20

death penalty, social criticism, political power, crime, victim, revenge, US

The film with Sean Penn and Susan Sarandon became very famous and successful, but compared to the book – which is NO novel but an account of true facts – the movie falls pretty flat as one being produced by typical Hollywood. In this non-fiction text we find lots of statistics, normally not very interesting to read, we, moreover, find many sociological facts and political as well as economical backgrounds to the whole question of the capital penalty – and it is exactly all this documentary material which makes this text much more moving than the film with its rather sentimental story. Whoever still favours the idea of the death penalty ought to read this book. He will certainly change his mind!

Priestley, J. B.: An Inspector Calls, D 20

capitalism, socialism, industry, crime, love, moral, social criticism, UK

Two industrialist upper class families in England want their children to get married in order to get the upper hand in the capitalist market in the England just before the First World War. The engagement party is under way when an inspector turns up in order to ask all of the guests some personal questions about a young woman who had killed herself in despair. After some time, all of them have to admit a part of their guilt in the death of this young woman. When the inspector has left, they find out that this policeman was not a real inspector and that no young woman is lying dead at the local hospital – the party goes on, until there is a phone call, this time from the real local police, saying that a real inspector will turn up soon in order to ask them some questions about a girl who had committed suicide.

Rhue, Morton: The Wave, N 20

college, education, fascism, social control, group dynamics, US

A history teacher in a US town makes a social experiment with one of his classes: He wants to demonstrate that – under certain conditions – fascist structures can be achieved everywhere, even in a normal American class of teenagers. And it works!

Salinger, Jerome D.: The Catcher in the Rye, N 20

adolescence, college, social criticism, education, US

A boy of about fourteen has to leave his school due to insufficient marks. His parents want him to be good, to be successful like his elder brother, who has become a well-paid screenplay author in Hollywood. But this young boy is thoroughly fed up with this kind of US-ambition and he starts dreaming about his dead younger brother and of becoming a fully isolated outsider somewhere in the Oregon forests. A bitter view of the US society through the eyes of a boy who is wide awake.

Shaffer, Peter: Amadeus, D 20

Mozart, Salieri, music, murder, sin, lunacy, love, death, UK

This play has become the basis for Milos Foreman's acclaimed film "Amadeus", which is basically the story of Mozart's death as told by his enemy, the Vienna Court Composer Salieri. Salieri offers his life to God if God grants him fame as a composer and musician. So Salieri's life is a life of hard, serious and devoted work. Then Mozart turns up, plays music which cannot be anything else than God's own voice, but Mozart is – as a person – a playful child, fully irresponsible, sex-driven and absolutely careless. Nevertheless, he makes infinitely better music than the earnest Salieri: Mozart is "Amadeus", the "One Loved by God." Salieri feels terribly betrayed by God and decides to take revenge on Him by murdering His beloved child Mozart.

Shaw, G. B.: Pygmalion, D* 20

love, linguistics, social classes, English language, UK

A professor of linguistics picks up a girl from the gutter and he bets to be able to teach her a perfect upper class English and so to make a "duchess" out of her. Eliza has got a quick ear, she learns the best possible English, and at a ball everybody takes her for some noble person of a higher social position. Shaw makes fun of language as a mark of British social life, but there is more to the play: He shows how a girl from the slums can be given human dignity, real human noblesse which transcends the purely mechanical learning of a perfect English.

Steinbeck, John: Of Mice and Men, N 20

depression, California, friendship, vision, death, ranch-life, US

During the years of the economic crisis millions of migrant workers had to keep on roaming the USA for work. It is the story of two migrant workers, one, George, a clever young man, the other, Lennie, strong as a bull, the hell of a worker, but with the mind of a young child. Both of them have a dream of their own, little, private

paradise, but Lennie is too strong, too good natured and too dumb. And there are too many really mean people standing in the way to their little paradise. A very short, but a very touching text.

Steinbeck, John: Tortilla Flat, S 20

California, outsiders, friendship, US

This book is not exactly a novel but a collection of short stories dealing with Californian outsiders, with the “scum” of the booming economy of the state which embodies the golden aspects of the American Dream most.

Stevenson, Robert Louis: Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, N* 19

science, good, evil, crime, drugs, UK

Dr Jekyll is a famous London doctor with a good reputation as a soft hearted helper for his patients. He is a frantic hobby scientist, and he discovers a drug which can separate the good from the evil in any human being. In a self – experiment he tries this drug – and he wins a new, never felt freedom: the freedom of being purely evil, of living after his urges only. At the beginning he is still able to control the drug, but after some time the drug starts controlling him.

Swift, Jonathan: Gulliver’s Travels, N*18

satire, social criticism, UK

The best known travels are those to Lilliput and to Brobdingnag, where Gulliver is either a giant or a dwarf. In both cases Swift changes the point of view in order to show his readers his contemporary England either from a point of view from above or from below. And in both cases this uncommon angle of view allows the author to criticise the society and time he lived in.

Wilde, Oscar: The Importance of Being Earnest, D* 19

social comedy, marriage, love, values of high society, witticisms, UK

This social comedy is highly comical. It shows all aspects of “good” manners of members of the better society of London, together with all their social lies, idiocies, tricks and plans. And names are of a peculiar importance: One of the young London ladies can only marry a man named Earnest – and at the end she will marry such a man, but only after lots of funny and confusing twists and turns.

Williams, Tennessee: The Glass Menagerie, D 20

Deep South, family, poverty, mother and daughter, dream-visions, failure, American Dream, US

Amanda Wingfield is the mother of the shy, fragile Laura, a girl of 24. The mother used to be a beautiful girl lots of young men in St. Louis wanted to marry, but her plan had always been to become a rich plantation owner’s wife, the southern variant of the American Dream. These plans failed, and now she desperately tries to realize her plans with her shy daughter, who nothing but busies herself with a collection of little glass animals, fragile images of herself. They invite a young man, prepare a grand evening, but all their hopes of finding a nice husband for Laura are shattered at the end. They have to step back into their forlorn worlds of past dreams and fragile glass figures.

Williams, Tennessee: A Streetcar Named Desire, D 20

Deep South, American Dream, failure, disillusion, lunacy, US

Blanche du Bois is an eccentric woman who lives in a world of wishful dreaming about the glorious career of a real southern lady. She pays a visit to her sister Stella, who is married to a vital, brutal husband, Stan Kowalski. Stan never believes a word of what Blanche tells them about a huge plantation she once owned. And Stan more and more finds out that she has been driven from a school where she had been teaching because she had had affairs with 17-year-old students. With all his brutality Kowalski tears the mask off Blanche’s face – he tries, at least, but she has already stepped back so far into her dreamworld that he cannot hurt her any longer. At the end she triumphantly walks into an asylum for mentally disordered persons.

Zusak, Markus: The Book Thief, N 21

Nazi-Germany, WWII, power of books/writing/language, adolescence, AU

After her brother's death, Liesel arrives in a distraught state at the home of her new foster parents, Hans and Rosa Hubermann. During her time there, she is exposed to the horror of the Nazi regime and struggles to find a way to preserve the innocence of her childhood in the midst of her destructive surroundings. As the political situation in Germany deteriorates, her foster parents hide a Jewish man named Max, putting the family in danger. Hans teaches Liesel to read in secret. Recognizing the power of writing and sharing the written word, Liesel begins to not only steal books the Nazi party is looking to destroy, but also write her own stories and share the power of language with Max. As Liesel copes with the trauma of her past and the violent horrors of the war-torn world around her, she embarks on a journey of self-discovery, the formation of a new family, and mostly, her life as a book thief.

Zusak, Markus: I Am the Messenger, N 21

Australia, meaning of life, adolescence, AU

Ed Kennedy is an underage cabdriver without much of a future. He's pathetic at playing cards, hopelessly in love with his best friend, Audrey, and utterly devoted to his coffee-drinking dog, the Doorman. His life is one of peaceful routine and incompetence until he inadvertently stops a bank robbery. That's when the first ace arrives in the mail. That's when Ed becomes the messenger. Chosen to care, he makes his way through town helping and hurting (when necessary) until only one question remains: Who's behind Ed's mission?