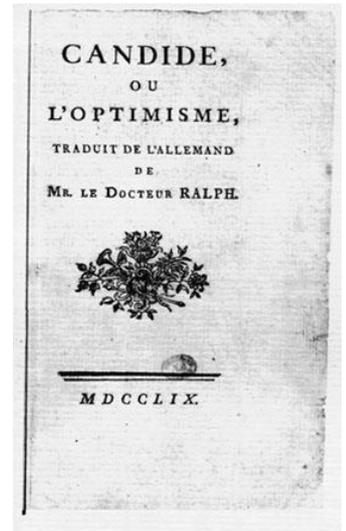


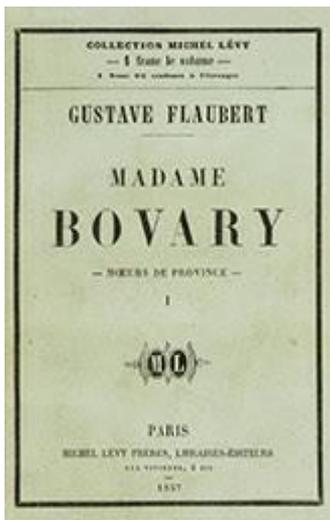
Y13 French – Reading List

1. **Candide – Voltaire (1759)**

Candide is a satire that remains as fresh and pertinent today as when it was written in the 18th century. It was a report on the current state of the world, deliberately set among the headlines of the day. To the novel's first readers, then, it would have felt, in its punch and immediacy, like a politico-philosophical strip-cartoon. It was written between July and December 1758 and published simultaneously in Geneva, Paris and Amsterdam in January 1759. That year no fewer than three English translations appeared, such was the importance of Voltaire, regarded even by the British as Europe's most famous public intellectual. It is not – does not try to be – a realistic novel on the level of plot: the narrative proceeds by means of incredible coincidences and enormous reversals of fortune; characters are left for dead, and then improbably revived a few pages later when the argument requires their recall. The naive Candide and his philosopher-master Pangloss get instructively caught up in an incredible series of adventures and catastrophes, finally reaching a conclusion about how life should be lived. It is utterly brilliant and also Mrs Griffiths' favourite book.



2. **Madame Bovary - Flaubert (1856)**

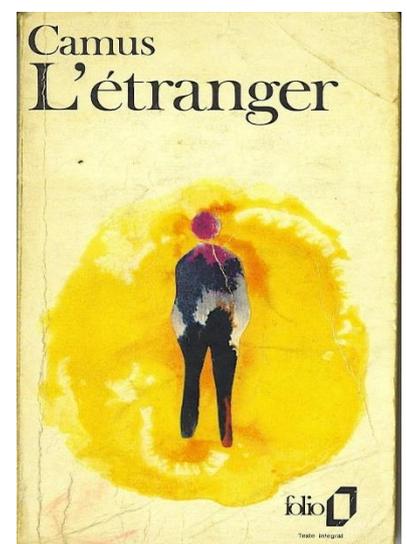


A seminal work of literary realism, this novel is considered Flaubert's masterpiece, and one of the most influential literary works in history. The eponymous character lives beyond her means in order to escape the banalities and emptiness of provincial life, in which she is trapped. Flaubert was famously disgusted by everything around him. "I feel waves of hatred for the stupidity of my age," he wrote to a friend, but he particularly despised the bourgeoisie, characterized by intellectual and spiritual superficiality, raw ambition, shallow culture, a love of material things, greed, and above all a mindless parroting of sentiments and beliefs. He created a leading lady whom he challenges us to despise - she's selfish, materialistic, shallow, superficial, just interested in social status and a bad mother. But of course, there is more to Emma than that. A study of human nature that is as relevant today as it was in 1856.

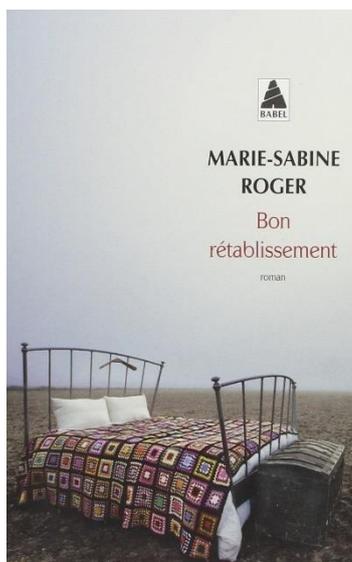
3. **L'étranger – Camus (1942)**

« Aujourd'hui, maman est morte. Ou peut-être hier, je ne sais pas. J'ai reçu un télégramme de l'asile : « Mère décédée. Enterrement demain. Sentiments distingués. » Cela ne veut rien dire. C'était peut-être hier. »

Right from the opening words of this novel, we know we are dealing with no ordinary narrator. Meursault is an outsider, a stranger in his own society, who does not think or act like anyone else. This will cause society to judge and condemn him. This book is easy to read – the language and structure are clear and simple – but the ideas it explores are far more challenging and can profoundly affect the reader. This book asks us to question the meaning of human existence and, through it, Camus explores his philosophy of the absurd. Essential reading.



4. Bon rétablissement – Marie-Sabine Roger (2012)



And now for something completely different.

Saved from drowning in Paris's River Seine, a sixty-something misanthrope finds himself stuck in a hospital bed for six weeks while he recovers, but if he was hoping for a peaceful convalescence he's out of luck. As he looks back on his life, the good and the bad, he makes some unexpected new acquaintances, and just when he thought life had no more surprises in store for him, he finds out he was wrong.... As an unlikely cast of characters come to visit at his bedside, he finds it harder and harder to maintain his splendid, miserable isolation. This is a beautiful, uplifting novel, which makes us see the good in others.

By the same author – “Il ne fait jamais noir en ville” which is equally full of beautiful short stories.

5. Un homme, ça ne pleure pas – Faïza Guène (2014)

Written 10 years after Kiffe kiffe demain, this book looks at issues affecting young men in traditional north African families.

Remember Hamoudi and Nabil? The humour we know so well is there, as is the author's ability to make us care about her characters and think about serious issues.

The book tells us about the adventures of an Algerian family in the suburbs of Nice and is narrated by the son Mourad. Mourad would like to forge his destiny. His worst nightmare is to become old, overweight and grey haired. In order to escape this destiny, he would have to abandon a heavy family heritage. However, is it really through distancing a part of ourself from our ideas that we become our true self?

An interesting, if somewhat dark story of the trials of everyday integration in France.



6. Grand frère – Mahir Guven (2017)



MAHIR GUVEN
GRAND FRÈRE



Mahir Guven's masterpiece of a first novel (Prix Goncourt du Premier roman 2018), is a meticulously plotted, funny and tragic story of an Uber driver in a Paris *banlieue* whose younger brother, a talented theatre nurse at a city hospital, has disappeared, and is feared to have gone to Syria to treat injured civilians. With its touching descriptions of an immigrant father's relationship to his sons, it was praised in France for its insight into the lives of modern chauffeurs “taking direction from a phone”. But it is the huge scope of the French slang that Guven uses to weave a story that flits between life on a French housing estate to war in Syria, that sets him apart. Born in France to Turkish and Kurdish parents, he said he was sick of clichéd depictions of young men in the Paris suburbs and set out to tell the truth.

Read this – you won't be able to put it down.