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Great Expectations
by Charles Dickens

A classic coming-of-age novel, adventure, mystery and romance, with a cast of characters ranging from the comically pompous to the terrifyingly sinister. From the blacksmith's cottage on the Kent marshes to the Inns of Court in lawyers' London, the novel teems with realistic period detail – but its themes of exploitation, ambition and injustice are just as relevant today as they were in 1861. Dickens is the master of the satisfying twist, and the way that he opens an ironic gap between the wide-eyed narrator, Pip, and the reader's own interpretation of what is really happening has been imitated but never bettered.



James Methven
Head of English
Uppingham School

The Housing Lark
by Sam Selvon

Right now, I recommend this to take pupils out of their bubble and gain a fresh perspective. Set in London in the 1960s, it is funny, poignant and challenging. Selvon focuses on a group of Caribbean immigrant males who chase jobs, money, rum and women. Their "lark" is a community pot of money to get themselves on the housing ladder and out of the clutches of "Englischer" landlords at a time when signs with "No Irish, no blacks, no dogs" were posted in windows. The novel rounds off with a hilariously and intentionally mangled version of English history on a trip to Hampton Court.

