**Ms. R’s Picks for Some of the Top Film Adaptations**

**1. GREAT EXPECTATIONS** by CHARLES DICKENS

Published: 1860-1861

Film adaptation: 1946

Director: DAVID LEAN

No film version of Dickens has ever matched Lean’s superlative realization of Great Expectations. From the jumpy graveyard scene to the weirdness of Satis House, and with actors such as John Mills and Alec Guinness giving their all, there is no level at which this utterly brilliant film doesn’t deliver.

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**2. WUTHERING HEIGHTS** by EMILY BRONTË

Published: 1847

Film adaptation: 1939

Director: WILLIAM WYLER

Bronte’s gothic tale of moors madness gets the William Wyler treatment in this classic movie version starring Merle Oberon as Cathy and Laurence Olivier as Heathcliff. None of the subsequent adaptations has matched the dark power of the brilliant Wyler’s. Not even the one with Cliff Richard.

**3. TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD** by HARPER LEE

Published: 1960

Film adaptation: 1962

Director: ROBERT MULLIGAN

The film of Harper Lee’s Pulitzer Prize-winning novel about racist Alabama deservedly won three Oscars, including Best Actor for Gregory Peck as the lawyer Atticus Finch. Including a fictionalised version of Lee’s friend Truman Capote, this compelling and important work has lost none of its power since its release.

**4. DOCTOR ZHIVAGO** by BORIS PASTERNAK

Published: 1957

Film adaptation: 1965

Director: DAVID LEAN

Lean’s snowy cinematic masterpiece starring Omar Sharif, Julie Christie and Alec Guinness brings to life the Nobel Prize-winner’s story of revolutionary Russia with tremendous style. Although beaten to 1965’s Best Picture Oscar by The Sound of Music, this memorable realization honors all the emotional and political complexity of Boris Pasternak’s original novel.

**5. THE LEOPARD** by GIUSEPPE TOMASI DI LAMPEDUSA

Published: 1958

Film adaptation: 1963

Director: LUCHINO VISCONTI

Most famous for its almost hour-long ballroom scene and glorious period detail, Visconti’s epic filming of Lampedusa’s novel examines the honor codes of a changing Italy with the help of a handsome cast including Burt Lancaster and Claudia Cardinale. Spectacular, long (originally running for 205 minutes) .

**6. THE SILENCE OF THE LAMBS** by THOMAS HARRIS

Published: 1988

Film adaptation: 1991

Director: JONATHAN DEMME

Harris’s psychological thriller is made horribly gruesome yet archly witty in Demme’s 1991 blockbuster. Jodie Foster’s clever but vulnerable Clarice Starling is the perfect counterpoint to Anthony Hopkins’s terrifyingly competent murderer, and together they redefine the traditional cop/killer dynamic.

**7. DANGEROUS LIAISONS** (Les Liaisons Dangereuses) by PIERRE CHODERLOS DE LACLOS

Published: 1782

Film adaptation: 1988

Director: STEPHEN FREARS

Strictly speaking, Frears’s 1988 bodice-ripper is the film of the play of the book, but its tense elegance captures perfectly the spirit of Laclos’s 18th-century novel of sex and manipulation. The dying ancient regime is represented by lethally sexy performances by Glenn Close and John Malkovich, making this 118 minutes of pure wicked pleasure.

**8. THE BIG SLEEP** by RAYMOND CHANDLER

Published: 1939

Film adaptation: 1946

Director: HOWARD HAWKS

The convoluted plot of Chandler’s detective story had screenwriter William Faulkner turning to the original author for help. Even though audiences still find it hard to negotiate its maze-like narrative, the real point of the exercise is to showcase Lauren Bacall and Humphrey Bogart at their simmering, sexy best.

**9. THE 39 STEPS** (The Thirty Nine Steps)by JOHN BUCHAN

Published: 1915

Film adaptation: 1935

Director: ALFRED HITCHCOCK

Adapting Buchan’s 1915 adventure story for the screen was one of Hitchcock’s earliest triumphs. Although considerably “sexed up” for modern audiences, with a brace of comely heroines replacing the original’s swarthy men, it is still a classic piece of pre-war action cinema, which retains all the tension of the novel.

**10. THE PRIME OF MISS JEAN BRODIE** by MURIEL SPARK

Published: 1961

Film adaptation: 1969

Director: RONALD NEAME

Maggie Smith gives one of her finest performances as the ambitious teacher with a coterie of adoring “gels”. Although diverging from Spark’s popular 1961 novel in places, fans of the book tend to love the film as well thanks to Neame’s taut direction and a fine supporting cast.

**11. MOBY-DICK** by HERMAN MELVILLE

Published: 1851

Film adaptation: 1956

Director: JOHN HUSTON

Melville’s majestic novel of man versus beast is admirably served by Huston’s adaptation. From Orson Welles’s priestly cameo to Gregory Peck’s brilliantly unhinged Ahab, a fine cast is matched by an eerily bleached cinematography. Even a rather ropy model whale cannot diminish the power of this great film.

**12. BRIGHTON ROCK** by GRAHAM GREENE

Published: 1938

Film adaptation: 1947

Directors: John and Roy Boulting

Brutally gritty, Terence Rattigan’s adaptation, done in partnership with the novel’s author, Graham Greene, shocked critics with its hard-boiled realism. A young Richard Attenborough excels as the odious Pinkie in a crime drama that is worlds away from the slick American noir film that moviegoers were accustomed to in 1947.

**13. DRACULA** by BRAM STOKER

Published: 1897

Film adaptation: 1931

Director: TOD BROWNING

Bela Lugosi is Dracula, since he seethed his way to stardom in Browning’s 1931 film. Necessarily cutting out some of Stoker’s extraneous material, this genre-defining horror classic turned out far scarier than the book. And any hopes Lugosi had of going on to play romantic leads were cruelly dashed.

**14. THE DAY OF THE JACKAL** by FREDERICK FORSYTH

Published: 1971

Film adaptation: 1973

Director: FRED ZINNEMANN

Forsyth’s intelligent political thriller revolves around the planned assassination of Charles de Gaulle. Zinnemann’s classic film adaptation has a rakish Edward Fox playing the eponymous hired killer, with the ever-appealing film set that is Paris as a backdrop. **15. ALL QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT** by ERICH MARIA REMARQUE

Published: 1929

Film adaptation: 1930

Director: LEWIS MILESTONE

This haunting First World War film starred Lew Ayres, who would go on to be a conscientious objector. Lewis Milestone made pioneering use of the crane to capture sweeping shots of the horrors of battle, mirroring the epic yet graphic scope of Remarque’s original novel with devastating effect.

**16. EMPIRE OF THE SUN** by J.G BALLARD

Published: 1984

Film adaptation: 1987

Director: STEVEN SPIELBERG

With a Tom Stoppard screenplay adapted from Ballard’s autobiographical novel, few films of the Eighties have the star quality of Spielberg’s Empire of the Sun. A stirring portrayal by Christian Bale of a privileged expat boy in China, makes this a film as beguiling as the old Shanghai of the protagonist’s youth.

**17. TRAINSPOTTING** by IRVINE WELSH

Published: 1993

Film adaptation: 1996

Director: DANNY BOYLE

Somewhat easier to follow than Welsh’s novel, this sick but slick collaboration from the team who made Shallow Grave features a strung-out Ewan McGregor capering around Edinburgh with his hopeless mates, committing ever more debased acts to a pumping soundtrack. It revivified British cinema just as Welsh’s writing breathed new life into fiction.

**18. APOCALYPSE NOW** (Heart of Darkness) by JOSEPH CONRAD

Published: 1902

Film adaptation: 1979

Director: FRANCIS FORD COPPOLA

The most extraordinary of Vietnam films, and by far the craziest version of a Conrad novel ever conceived, Coppola’s Oscar-winning modernization of Heart of Darkness is without compare. Its hallucinatory feel and dystopian view of American soldiering was achieved only after a shoot so beset with disaster that Coppola compared it to Vietnam itself.

**19. NO COUNTRY FOR OLD MEN** by CORMAC McCARTHY

Published: 2005

Film adaptation: 2007

Directors: JOEL AND ETHAN COEN

The first literary adaptation by cult writer-directors Joel and Ethan Coen, this chilling film follows McCarthy’s bleak novel almost to the letter. But the Coens — with the help of actors Javier Bardem, Tommy Lee Jones, Josh Brolin, et al — condense the book into an incredibly tense cinematic experience which nevertheless sparkles with a mordant sense of humor.

**20. THE REMAINS OF THE DAY** by KAZUO ISHIGURO

Published: 1989

Film adaptation: 1993

Director: JAMES IVORY

The well-hidden heart of a stiff Thirties country-house butler is at the center of Kazuo Ishiguro’s quintessentially English novel, and giving it the Merchant Ivory treatment makes it even more pukka. Yet, as a story of buried passions and a nation on the verge of modernisation, it has universal appeal.

**21. THE SHINING** by STEPHEN KING

Published: 1977

Film adaptation: 1980

Director: STANLEY KUBRICK

Kubrick’s reimagining of King’s creepy horror novel has been terrifying audiences for nearly three decades. The much-copied trope of the spooky, psychic child combines with Jack Nicholson’s talent for playing explosive maniacs, to whip audiences into a frenzy of shallow-breathed anxiety. Hotel corridors have never been so scary.

**22. THE HARRY POTTER SERIES** by J.K ROWLING

Published: 1997-2007

Film adaptations: 2001-2011

Directors: CHRIS COLUMBUS, ALFONSO CUAR”N, MIKE NEWELL, DAVID YATES

It is hard to remember a world before Harry Potter. Now the American, Mexican and British directors Columbus, Cuarón, Newell and Yates have nearly completed the cycle of Rowling-inspired films, bringing untold riches to everyone involved and feeding magic-hungry filmgoers all the owls, spells and funny hats they can take.

**23. THE HEIRESS** (Washington Square) by HENRY JAMES

Published: 1880

Film adaptation: 1949

Director: WILLIAM WYLER

Wyler’s adaptation takes Washington Square to new heights. Stunning sets and an Oscar-winning performance by Olivia de Havilland as Catherine Sloper makes this drawing-room drama anything but fusty. Ralph Richardson is triumphant as the domineering father, and the powerful closing scene is a strikingly modern statement of female strength.

**24. SCHINDLER’S LIST** (Schindler’s Ark) by THOMAS KENEALLY

Published: 1982

Film adaptation: 1993

Director: STEVEN SPIELBERG

Spielberg’s version of Keneally’s novel Schindler’s Ark was immediately lauded as one of the greatest films about the Holocaust. Even if it were not based on a true story, Schindler’s saving of more than a thousand Jews would be awesome. This seven Oscar-winning creation may never been beaten.

**25. THE LORD OF THE RINGS SERIES** by J.R.R TOLKIEN

Published: 1954-1955

Film adaptation: 2001-2003

Director: PETER JACKSON

Tolkien’s books have been irresistible to generations of teenage boys, but until Jackson’s triumphant trilogy of films, all attempts to bring Middle Earth and its hairy denizens off the printed page had fallen flat. While owing much to advances in CGI, it is Jackson’s skill as a visual storyteller that gives the films their pulling power.