EREADERS AND EBOOKS FOR DEPARTMENTS

I gather you are looking at novels to study as class sets? You need to treat ebooks in a very similar way to print, in that you will need to purchase a copy per student (or, depending on the supplier, a licence to cover a certain number of books/simultaneous uses). The only exception to this is when a book is out of copyright (ie: the classics available from Project Gutenberg).

What you use as a reading device really depends on what you want to do with them. For example, iPad/iPhone/iPod can all be used to read on, utilising various apps (iBooks is the Apple designated app, but you can also freely download the Kindle app, or other generic apps such as Stanza, to read with). Students can also read on their laptops or tablets. You can purchase dedicated e-readers (ie: Kindle, Sony, Kobo etc), but then you have to figure out how to manage them (it's important to note the restrictions on how many copies of books purchased can be put on devices – these rules vary over devices, and are different in an educational setting to a personal one).

If you decide to purchase dedicated devices, I recommend having them on the library system to loan. In this sort of circumstance though, when you're looking at needing 20-30 per class, it will get very expensive very quickly if you try to resource the whole school! The best compromise would be working out how to purchase the books for the students to use on their own devices, if possible.