

# AMERICA 250

The 250 most influential books in United States history,  
selected by expert librarians and notable New Yorkers.

## **1. 42 Today: Jackie Robinson and His Legacy**

by **Michael G. Long**

The book provides a well-researched account of Robinson's life, designed to inform readers about his legacy beyond sport—from the profound poverty of Robinson's youth, the racism he faced in the military, and the intense, often vicious, opposition he encountered upon entering professional sports, and his role as a pioneering hero who helped desegregate American society. -RB

## **2. 49 Days**

by **Agnes Lee**

A thoughtful and emotionally penetrating graphic novel that explores one Korean American family's journey through love, loss, grief, tradition, and remembrance. -GN

## **3. A Contract with God: and Other Tenement Stories**

by **Will Eisner**

Originally published in 1978 and loosely based on his own experiences, these four standalone tales written and drawn by the prolific American cartoonist Will Eisner, portray the struggle and strife of poor Jewish immigrants living in early 20th century New York City tenement housing. -GN

## **4. A Flag for Juneteenth**

by **Kim Taylor**

Meant for children in their first five years, this picture book teaches the origins of the holiday Juneteenth. From its stunning visuals to its engaging storytelling, this book has something for the whole family. Using story quilted illustrations, Taylor gives an homage to the quilting craft and its long history in American communities of all races, but especially its use in African American communities as both a form of self-expression and resistance. -MM

## **5. A People's History of the Supreme Court**

by **Peter Irons**

It is a ground-up examination of how marginalized communities challenged systemic inequality, exploring the social impact of these decisions on civil rights and liberties in daily life. The book highlights the stories of individuals behind famous cases, to center the activists, survivors, and ordinary citizens who initiated landmark litigation. moving beyond just legal principles to show how decisions on slavery, segregation, abortion, and civil rights affected real people. -RB

## **6. A People's History of The United States**

**by Howard Zinn**

Rather than offering a conventional approach to American history, such as presidential administrations and their accomplishments, Zinn begins his study with the country's Indigenous heritage and profiles the overlooked contributions of women and ethnic minorities while, at the same time, shining a light on the government's historical mistreatment of these groups. -ML

## **7. The Elements of Style**

**by William Strunk**

A pioneering guide to writing clearly, concisely and effectively, *The Elements of Style* was originally written in 1919 by Cornell University professor William Strunk Jr. for his English courses. Edited and revised multiple times over a century, most notably by esteemed author E.B. White, it remains a timelessly important manual for writing in the English language. -GN

## **8. A Seed In The Sun**

**by Aida Salazar**

Salazar's middle grade verse novel is set during 1965 and the historic United Farm Workers strike (known as the Delano Grape Strike) that heralded change for farm workers across the country as seen through the eyes of Lula Viramontes and her family. As Salazar details in her author's note, this is an ongoing battle and one that has seen painfully little progress since then further underscoring the continued importance of labor organization. -EC

## **9. A Taste of Sugar**

**by Marisel Vera**

This epic, well-researched novel sheds light on lesser-known historical events as we witness the coming of age of Valentina Sanchez and her arduous journey from the small Puerto Rican town of Ponce to Hawaii. Even as the reader's eyes are opened, their heart aches at what is lost and marvels at Valentina's indomitable spirit. -MV

## **10. A Tree Grows in Brooklyn**

**by Betty Smith**

Brooklyn Borough President Antonio Reynoso on *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*: "Though *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* was published nearly a hundred years ago, it's a story that many immigrant New Yorkers can resonate with today. Just like Francie, my family immigrated to Williamsburg and had to endure many challenges to build the beautiful life we now have. And while it's unfortunate that immigrant communities have to face so many struggles, those very struggles have become a part of our DNA and have given myself and so many others the confidence and resilience to power forward in our lives."

## **11. Ain't Burned All The Bright**

**by Jason Reynolds**

A picture book for teens? A picture book for teens! Broken into three sections (each one a breath) and written about the COVID-19 pandemic. "The strangest year of our lives", and that is certainly true. It's hard to find a novel that really encapsulates 2020 in all its darkness and isolation, and yet in just three sentences, Reynolds and Griffin do it, all while urging us to look up and change the story. -MM

## **12. Ain't I A woman: Black Women and Feminism**

**by Bell Hooks**

Widely regarded as a groundbreaking, mandatory read, this book was instrumental in shifting the feminist movement toward a more inclusive, comprehensive, and radical vision. Hooks' work is considered a pioneering study on how race, gender, and class simultaneously marginalize Black women. It substantially transformed by highlighting how racism and sexism created a unique, dual oppression for Black women. It challenged mainstream, white-centered feminism for excluding Black experiences and pushed for an intersectional approach, analyzing the lasting impacts of slavery, devaluation, and patriarchy on Black womanhood. -RB

**13. All Boys Aren't Blue**  
by **George M. Johnson**

Chronicling Johnson's life growing up as a queer, Black kid in Virginia and New Jersey through a series of essays, this vital memoir has provided a much-needed voice and representation for queer, Black teens in the U.S. -SV

**14. All My Rage**  
by **Sabaa Tahir**

Modern teens, Sal and Noor, dream of better futures that feel impossible in their present. Alternating with flashbacks from Sal's mother, this novel contrasts the immigrant experience for Misbah as a young bride leaving Pakistan for the first time with the dreams and pressures Sal and Noor feel as first generation Americans. Tahir ably demonstrates that where there is love there is always hope as both friendship and community work their transformative power. -EC

**15. All the President's Men**  
by **Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward**

Published just two months before Nixon's resignation from the presidency as a result of the publication of this and other reportage on the Watergate scandal, this book literally shaped the modern political landscape. Bernstein and Woodward's hard-hitting investigative journalism-turned-book shook the world when it came out and continues to inspire reporters hoping to make a difference today. -JH

**16. Amazing Fantastic Incredible: a Marvelous Memoir**  
by **Stan Lee**

This graphic memoir of Stan Lee represents the immense impact Marvel comics' stories and characters have made on the American cultural landscape. Stan's career, depicted in comic book form, helped to create some of the US' collective mythology. Both positive and negative effects of Marvel on the comic books industry are discussed in this book - including contributions by Jack Kirby, Seth McFarlane, Steve Ditko (among other artists). -GK

**17. American Born Chinese**  
by **Gene Luen Yang**

Julian Shapiro on American Born Chinese: "As a kid, it can be quite a challenge to understand being anyone but yourself. I remember reading American Born Chinese when I was 12, initially being sucked in by a slew of themes that felt incredibly relatable to me: the feeling of being othered, confusion about who you are, and the discomfort of growing up. However, once I got into it, the book was able to bring race into the conversation in a way that, at the time, was very new to me. It helped me see past myself. I think this book perfectly balances these very real subjects with whimsy, depth, and humor, making it such a treasured book to so many young readers."

**18. American Grammar: Race, Education, and the Building of a Nation**  
by **Jarvis R Givens**

The book is considered crucial for understanding the historical, deeply ingrained structural roots of educational inequality in the U.S. reinterprets U.S. history by demonstrating that public education was built upon a foundation of slavery, indigenous land theft, and anti-Blackness. It argues that school systems were designed to normalize white supremacy, challenging the myth of education as a neutral "great equalizer". It shows that white, Black, and Native educational experiences were never separate, but intimately connected through systems of power. -RB

**19. American Pastoral**  
by **Phillip Roth**

The piece remains a profoundly relevant, tragic look at 20th-century America, showcasing the destruction of personal happiness by wider social and political dysfunction. It is a crucial, a thorough examination of the American Dream's collapse during the 1960s. "It chronicles the destruction of Seymour "Swede" Levov, a paragon of postwar success, whose life is shattered when his daughter becomes a domestic terrorist, symbolizing the violent, chaotic intrusion of political turmoil into an idyllic, pastoral existence." -RB

**20. American Psycho****by Bret Easton Ellis**

A depraved murderer disguised as a businessman. Who would have thought? Graphic and controversial, Easton Ellis crafts a novel about a culture obsessed with aesthetics, image, and consumption told through the lens of Patrick Bateman. A narcissist with a platinum card. Whether you love it or hate it, American Psycho certainly fits comfortably in the world we live in today. -MM

**21. An Indigenous Peoples' History of The United States****by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz**

Dunbar brings a sociological and anthropological perspective to explain the basis and execution of settler colonialism in the United States relations with Indigenous tribes. This book contextualizes the US government's campaign to eradicate Indigenous peoples across the country in the name of so-called westward expansion. Read in conversation with Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee for a comprehensive history across decades. -EC

**22. And the Band Played On: Politics, People, and the AIDS Epidemic****by Randy Shilts**

A deeply personal piece of investigative journalism that shaped our understanding of how the AIDS epidemic came to be the health crisis that we know it as today. Shilts laid bare how indifference from a callous government, bureaucratic red tape, science community infighting, and a culture of homophobia allowed for AIDS to spiral unchecked, leading to the death of 100,777 individuals between 1981 and 1990. His journalism humanized those affected instead of allowing them to become merely another statistic. Randy Shilts would die from an AIDS-related illness in 1994, but the impact of his work plays on. -GN

**23. Angela Davis: An Autobiography****by Angela Y Davis**

Angela Davies was an integral member of the Black Panther party. Whether you believe she is a criminal who deserves to be punished for her crimes or a hero who fought the corrupt establishment of the United States government, she is an important figure in the history of the United States. A philosopher and anti-racist scholar, this memoir is a recollection of the events leading up to her exile in her own words. -MM

**24. Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret****by Judy Blume**

This classic novel about puberty, friendship, and (maybe) finding faith has been a hit with multiple generations of adolescents. How ironic that a book that tells a story about periods and crushes so well is so frequently banned and challenged? -GK

**25. Atlas Shrugged****by Ayn Rand**

Who is John Galt, and why do so many people still care? In this mammoth novel, Rand, the originator of Objectivist philosophy, wrestles with the eternal conflict between individual and communal good and comes down squarely on the side of the brilliant individual and against all kinds of bureaucracy or government regulation. Though it's nearly three quarters of a century old, many politicians and capitalists continue to cite this book as a guiding light. -MMcG

**26. Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin****by Benjamin Franklin**

Originally written as an extended letter to his son William, Benjamin Franklin recounts some of his accomplishments as a printer, inventor, scientist and statesman. Franklin emphasizes the importance of striving to live a moral life and "giving back" through a dedication to public service. -ML

**27. Believing: Our Thirty-Year Journey to End Gender Violence****by Anita Hill**

In Believing, Anita Hill combines her personal narrative with political theory, history, and law to shine a light on this problem. By bringing her story into public eye when she testified against Clarence Thomas, Anita Hill began a cultural reckoning with the endemic gender-based sexual violence that still plagues our society today. -JH

**28. Between the World and Me****by Ta-Nehisi Coates**

Edwin Maxwell, BPL's Chief Librarian, on *Between the World and Me*: "Toni Morrison called it "required re-reading," and she was right. Coates's letter to his son is one of the most moving, honest explanations of what it means to be Black in America. To me and many others, Coates is this generation's James Baldwin."

**29. Black Boy****by Richard Wright**

Richard Wright grew up poor in the segregated South. Denied entry to a public library because of his race, Wright, with the cooperation of a white co-worker, was able to gain access to materials from the library. It was through his love of reading that Wright developed his skills to become a successful writer. -ML

**30. Blood Meridian, or, the Evening Redness in the West****by Cormac McCarthy**

While western novels are as American as apple pie and baseball, none are so profound and violent as *Blood Meridian*. Cormac McCarthy is one of the US' greatest writers touching here on war, hell, manifest destiny, and America's hubris. -GK

**31. Braiding Sweetgrass****by Robin Wall Kimmerer**

This contemporary non-fiction book, written by a Potawatomi botanist, explores the use of indigenous traditional alternatives to science. In this series of essays, themes of indigenous cultural resilience are interwoven, including the importance of keeping these indigenous ecological methodologies alive, and how one can combine science and traditional ways of knowing. -SV

**32. Breath, Eyes, Memory****by Edwidge Danticat**

Sophie Caco leaves Haiti at the age of 12 and is reunited with her mother in Brooklyn. Sophie learns to juggle both the challenges of living in a new country while confronting the trauma of her mother's earlier life in Haiti. She eventually returns to Haiti and finds healing through her surviving family members. -ML

**33. Brokeback Mountain****by Annie Proulx**

Rarely do adaptations live up to the source material, but that is not the case here. The movie for *Brokeback Mountain* may in fact be better known than the short story it originated from. Yet it cannot be denied that the ultimate way to consume an Annie Proulx story is in its original form. A powerhouse of literary fiction, Proulx has won numerous awards as both an author and journalist. -MM

**34. Brown Girl, Brownstones****by Paule Marshall**

This coming-of-age novel tells the story of Barbadian immigrants in Brooklyn following WWII. Our protagonist Selina Boyce is caught between the aspirations of her mother, who dreams of assimilation and success in the United States, and her father, who dreams of returning to their island. In this way, Marshall captures a particular immigrant experience. -JH

**35. Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee****by Dee Brown**

A seminal text on nineteenth century American history, Brown grounds this book in primary sources and firsthand accounts to document the systematic destruction of American Indian tribes and their cultures throughout the west emphasizing the true--often little told--cost of westward expansion. -EC

**36. Carrie**  
by **Stephen King**

It's hard to imagine what modern horror would look like without King's influence. *Carrie*, his debut novel, launched a career that has spanned the last 50 years and arguably put horror writing back into the mainstream. *Carrie*, with its blood-soaked scenes and sharp writing, deftly captures the horror of young womanhood and teenage years. -JH

**37. Catcher in the Rye**  
by **JD Salinger**

In this novel, sixteen-year-old Holden Caulfield, in an unvarnished narrative, tells the story of his expulsion from school, physical altercations and an encounter with a prostitute, all the while grieving the death of his brother Allie. Amid his trauma, which includes interacting with a "psychoanalyst guy," Holden experiences a sudden burst of happiness while in the company of his sister Phoebe, which leads him to contemplate returning to school. -ML

**38. Ceremony**  
by **Leslie Marmon Silko**

Deftly weaving poetry with prose in this novel, Native American author Leslie Marmon Silko covers themes including military war trauma, human relationships with nature, the importance of storytelling in Native American culture, conflicts between Native American and western worldviews, and the need to adapt tradition and culture to changing times. This book simultaneously celebrates Native American identity and brings to the forefront difficult topics related to colonial legacy. -AW

**39. Charlotte's Web**  
by **E.B. White**

The classic tale of a girl and her beloved pig shows us how all have an important story to tell; and that anyone can be family to another regardless of species. Death comes for all of us, but we can make a difference no matter how much or little time we have. -GK

**40. Just Kids**  
by **Patti Smith**

Britt Lower on *Just Kids*: "Just Kids captures the quickening that comes with finding your voice as an artist and a citizen of NYC. It's at once a time capsule and timeless. You can taste the coffee and feel the pavement beneath your feet as she renders a city alive with culture makers. For me, this book was formative and permission-giving. It catalyzed me to explore every form of creativity that called to me. And to always keep a steady journal."

**41. Citizen**  
by **Claudia Rankine**

*Citizen* combines a beautiful array of poetry, lyric essays, and visual media to depict the state of racial relations in the U.S. Covering both Rankine and her friend's own lived experiences and greater conflicts in America, such as the shooting of Trayvon Martin and stop and frisk policies. This book is still incredibly relevant today and a necessary read for capturing the double consciousness of Black people in America. -SV

**42. Coming of Age in Samoa**  
by **Margaret Mead**

Margaret Mead lived with her subjects for extended periods of time as she studied them, getting to know their lives and cultures on a more intimate level. While the distinction between "nature vs. nurture" is considered fundamental to our understanding of differences between cultures today, this was not always the case. Mead was instrumental in popularizing this belief, which she first wrote about in *Coming of Age in Samoa*. -JH

**43. Common Sense**  
by **Thomas Payne**

Originally published anonymously as a pamphlet in January 1776, Thomas Paine's "Common Sense" advocated for American independence from Great Britain at a time when such a sentiment was treasonous. It became an almost instant "best seller" and galvanized the populace into supporting a complete break with the British monarchy. -ML

**44. Complete Writings****by Phillis Wheatley**

Phillis Wheatley is considered the first African American writer with a published book of poetry. Her poems used both Christian and solar worship imagery. While she did not focus on her identity as an enslaved person in her poetry, she did promote abolitionist ideals. -JH

**45. Compound Fracture****by Andrew Joseph White**

This young adult thriller captures the lived realities of working-class Appalachians and the important role that Appalachia has played in the history of workers' rights and community organizing, especially with the coal mining industry. Starring an autistic, transgender teen boy, this is a novel that provides a sense of resilience and hope for fighting against systematic oppression in often overlooked or forgotten rural areas. -SV

**46. Cotton Comes to Harlem****by Chester Himes**

NYPD detectives "Coffin" Ed Johnson and "Grave Digger" Jones are tasked with investigating a major crime in Harlem. This novel is recognized for its incorporation of elements of hard-boiled crime writing as well as a forerunner of, in some respects, the genre now known as urban fiction. -ML

**47. Custer Fied for Your Sins : An Indian Manifesto****by Vine Deloria**

Vine Deloria Jr.'s unreserved humor and wit shone through in this remarkable and thought-provoking work of his experiences as an Indigenous man in the mid-20th century. Through 11 essays, Deloria discusses topics such as sovereignty, self-determination for Indigenous Peoples, and the rejections of stereotypes, that would help to shape the landscape of Indigenous Peoples' activism as well as inspire thoughtful discussion and legislative changes across the United States. -GN

**48. Dear America: Notes of An Undocumented Citizen****by Jose Antonio Vargas**

Dear America is a pivotal memoir that humanizes the immigration debate by detailing the psychological, emotional, and practical struggles of living in the U.S. without legal status. It challenges the "illegal" narrative, highlights the "broken" system, and explores themes of belonging, identity, and the necessity of secrecy, reframing the conversation to focus on human rights rather than criminality. It provides a crucial, firsthand account during times of policy shifts. -RB

**49. Death in The Jungle: Murder, Betrayal, and The Lost Dream of Jonestown****by Candice Fleming**

A shocking and uninhibited nonfiction portrayal of how People's Temple cult leader Jim Jones used racial exploitation and deliberate alienation of marginalized communities during a time of U.S. political unrest to reach his end goal. That goal was to become a God, thusly controlling and destroying the lives of those who became trapped in his unforgiving orbital pull. -GN

**50. Detransition, Baby****by Torrey Peters**

A profound and empathetic look at relationships, gender, and transness today, *Detransition, Baby* asks readers to wonder what parenthood looks like when not following the path of the traditional nuclear family. Peters is a bold new voice in U.S. literature, her writing is not only necessary now, but is also forming the voice of American authors of the future. -MM

**51. Devotions: Selected Poetry****by Mary Oliver**

Mary Oliver's poetry captures the quiet, everyday moments, especially those found in nature. She imagined that what we should do with our "one wild and precious life" is to stop and notice the small things and the beauty in the natural world surrounding us. I imagine that slowing down and reading her poetry is also a good use of our time. -JH

**52. Dhalgren****by Samuel R Delany**

Bewildering, circular, and sometimes compared to James Joyce, Samuel R. Delany's *Dhalgren* is a seminal work in modern American science fiction. It made Delany, who calls New York his home, one of the most famous Black queer authors of science fiction. -GK

**53. Diary of A Wimpy Kid: Greg Heffley's Journal****by Jeff Kinney**

One of the most notorious modern children's books, *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* is a phenomenon that has overtaken libraries throughout the U.S. for multiple generations. Told in an epistolary style and filled with stick figure illustrations, Kinney's series provides an accessible, humorous, and relatable coming-of-age tale perfect for reluctant readers. -SV

**54. Disability Visibility: First-Person Stories from The Twenty-First Century****by Alice Wong**

The experience of a disabled American is as varied as stars in the sky. This collection of essays—which started as a StoryCorps project—highlights thoughts, issues, and feelings of just a few of the millions living with a disability in the U.S. Each and every one is important and necessary. -GK

**55. Dolores Huerta: Get to Know The Voice of Migrant Workers****by Robert Trujillo**

Dolores Huerta, the oft-overlooked farm worker activist, is given her due in this accessible biography. The life of the original voice of the now prolific "Si se puede" (or, as some might better recognize it, "Yes we can") is contextualized in the history of the civil rights movement. -D-MG

**56. Dreamers****by Yuyi Morales**

In this lushly illustrated picture book, a leading Mexican American children's author and illustrator draws on her own journey to the US and how she and her young son found comfort and community from both the friendly staff and the transporting stories in the children's section of the public library. -MMcG

**57. Dungeons and Dragons Player's Handbook****by Multiple authors [most recent edition]**

The original edition of *Dungeons and Dragons* (or D&D) was released in the 1970s and in the decades since its inception, the game has continuously evolved, paving the way for an entire genre of tabletop roleplaying games and making an indelible impact on the fantasy genre at large. The current version—published for its 50th anniversary—is a testament to its staying power in American pop culture. -AW

**58. Enough!: 20 Protesters Who Changed America****by Emily Easton**

The right to protest is protected by the First Amendment, and an integral part of our rights as Americans. It also has a long history of being an important tool that can lead to important change. This picture book is a perfect way to introduce young readers to both the history and impact that protest has. -JH

**59. Esperanza Rising****by Pam Muñoz Ryan**

Escaping Mexico to join a migrant farm labor camp in 1930 forces thirteen-year-old Esperanza to confront her privilege and drastically changed circumstances in Depression Era California. Faced with poverty and unrest in the camp, Esperanza needs to rise above her challenging circumstances to embrace the new life she never wanted in this now classic middle grade novel about the immigrant experience. -EC

**60. Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close****by Jonathan Safran Foer**

In some ways, it's surprising that a book about the September 11, 2001 attacks (published only four years later) holds up so well. In other ways, the raw emotion of Americans in those early days couldn't be captured in any other way than through this weird, philosophical pastiche of a novel. It is a snapshot in time, written with humanity and earnestness. -JH

**61. Fahrenheit 451****Ray Bradbury**

A novel about book bans and book burning that has also been banned, Ray Bradbury's Fahrenheit 451 is another classic and foundational voice in science fiction. His work shows the damage humanity can do to itself yet stays optimistic. Conceived in the public library, assigned in schools since its publication, and still holding true today, Fahrenheit 451 continues to teach us lessons we should all be learning. -MM

**62. Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal****by Eric Schlosser**

This award-winning journalist's extensive look at cheap food and its exorbitant costs to people's bodies, to the food system in general, and to employees—from franchise owners to servers to meatpackers—was a timely exposé of deep problems that continue to exist. It called on all Americans to ask for more from their government and businesses and to think carefully about their food choices. -MMcG

**63. Fight Like Hell: The Untold History of American Labor****by Kim Kelly**

With chapters framed around different types of workers including union trailblazers, garment workers, mill workers, miners, harvesters, cleaners, movers, metalworkers, and more. Following the labor movement from its humble beginnings through the reform era, factory disasters, migrant worker strikes, and into lesser-known areas including a discussion of section 504 ("a Civil Rights Act for the Disabled") and the plight of sex workers and California's incarcerated fire fighters. Kelly always brings the struggle back to the present contextualizing the history with the work that is still left to be done and the ongoing fight for equality in the labor movement. -EC

**64. For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When The Rainbow Is Enuf****by Ntozake Shange**

Ntozake Shange's landmark "choreopoem" remains a crucial, raw, and multiaceted exploration of Black female life in America. Blending dance, poetry, and music, the piece centers on themes of trauma, resilience, and sisterhood. It offers a rare, authentic look at seven unnamed women—known only by their colors—as they navigate racism, sexism, and violence, creating a powerful, necessary space for self-affirmation. -RB

**65. For Whom the Bell Tolls****by Ernest Hemingway**

American volunteer military participants in the Spanish Civil War are an often-forgotten group of veterans who experienced hell at the hands of Francisco Franco reactionary regime. Hemingway's explosive description of one soldier's experience in the war sparked not only massive commercial success, but also prolific banning across America, even being deemed "unmailable" by the USPS in 1940 for profanity, illustrative depiction of violence, and sexual content. -GN

**66. Frog and Toad Together****by Arnold Lobel**

So many kids learned to read through the stories of Frog and Toad: two friends who go on adventures and buoy each other along through highs and lows. Bridging the gap between being read to and doing the reading yourself is no easy feat, but Frog and Toad have made it exciting for generations. -MM

**67. From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler**  
by **E.L. Konigsburg**

Here is a book about the power of museums and libraries. So often children are told to mind their own business, don't be so curious, or other such nonsense. Konigsburg has written a book that does not just show how good these qualities are, but how they should be encouraged. Adventure and mystery can be had when you only choose to look hard enough. And any answer can be found if you do your research! -MM

**68. Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic**  
by **Alison Bechdel**

This detailed, graphic memoir covers the life of the renowned lesbian cartoonist Alison Bechdel, whose works have been deeply influential for queer media. Fun Home captures well the lived experiences of the queer community in the U.S. and is packed with literary allusions and detailed drawings all based on real poses by Bechdel. It has received significant critical acclaim, and its musical adaptation won the Tony Award for Best Musical in 2015. -SV

**69. Gender Queer**  
by **Maia Kobabe**

Gender Queer is a graphic novel memoir about searching for identity and community while navigating adolescence as a queer person in America. It's didactic, sweet, and it has been one of the most challenged books in the country over the past few years, incidentally becoming one of the faces of our current political climate in regard to book banning and trans rights in America. -AW

**70. Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity**  
by **Judith Butler**

Judith Butler is one of the foremost writers on gender identity. Their work in Gender Trouble draws from many philosophers from different backgrounds to present the idea that gender is a social construct and a performance. By arguing that we should make a distinction between sex and gender, Butler put forth a theory in 1990 that is still considered revolutionary today. -JH

**71. George Gershwin: An Intimate Portrait**  
by **Walter Rimler**

Born in an apartment in East New York, Brooklyn, George Gershwin revolutionized American classical composition with his previously unfounded incorporation of jazz into orchestral pieces such as Rhapsody in Blue and his operatic work Porgy and Bess. Rimler's biography allows its readers a glimpse into the difficult and melancholic life of one of America's most notable 20th century composers. -GN

**72. Ghosts of Gold Mountain: The Epic Story of the Chinese Who Built the Transcontinental Railroad**  
by **Gordon H Chang**

Immigrants have and continue to be unquestionably important to the foundation upon which the United States stands, despite their roles historically being minimized and erased due to systemic racism that runs deep at the roots. Chang's work provides an in-depth recollection of the harrowing and precarious conditions predominantly Chinese immigrants went through to build the entirety of the Transcontinental Railroad, and why it is important that we continue to remember them and their contributions to the United States. -GN

**73. Gilead**  
by **Marilynne Robinson**

Constance Wu on Gilead: "Gilead's narrator is Reverend John Ames, an elderly man of faith. Like most American Christians, Ames' faith is generational; a house full of struggle and contradiction, grace and endurance. So is this book. Styled as a letter from a father to his son, Ames reflects on home, where the faith is quiet and the miracles are ordinary. Marilynne Robinson's gorgeous prose continues the legacy of the Great American Novel."

**74. Gods and Generals**  
by **Jeff Shaara**

Shaara's trilogy on the American Civil War begins shortly before the Battle of Gettysburg. Blending well-researched history with compelling characters, Shaara adds a layer of humanity to this pivotal moment in American history. -JH

**75. Gone with the Wind**  
**by Margaret Mitchell**

Gone with the Wind by Margaret Mitchell was, and remains, one of the largest commercial successes of its time, leading to a film adaptation and the unprecedented first Oscar win for an African American by actress Hattie McDaniel. However, questions and criticisms of the novel's negative stereotyping of enslaved African Americans in the 19th century American South, the romanticization of plantation life, and downplaying of the Ku Klux Klan remain indelibly tied to its legacy. -GN

**76. Hamilton: The Revolution: Being the Complete Libretto of the Broadway Musical, With a True Account of Its Creation, and Concise Remarks on Hip-Hop, the Power of Stories, and the New America**  
**by Lin-Manuel Miranda**

All the lyrics to the smash hit musical about a certain founding father are contained in this book. Being that 99% of the musical is sung, you can read this and get a very good idea of how a bastard, orphan, son of a whore and a Scotsman, dropped in the middle of a forgotten spot in the Caribbean by Providence, impoverished in squalor grow up to be a hero and a scholar. -GK

**77. Haven: The Dramatic Story of 1,000 World War II Refugees and How They Came to America**  
**by Ruth Gruber**

Ruth Gruber's is among the lesser-known stories of heroism during World War II. Born and raised in Brooklyn and trained as a photojournalist, Gruber was recruited by the U. S. government to rescue 1,000 refugees fleeing Nazi persecution in Europe. She was made a "simulated General" and personally escorted the refugees back to the United States and oversaw their resettlement as "guests" of President Franklin Roosevelt. -ML

**78. Hear My Voice: The Testimonies of Children Detained at the Southern Border of the United States**  
**by Warren Binford**

This picture book, illustrated by different Latine artists, introduces a difficult topic to children. The use of actual testimonies by children detained at the southern border amplifies a difficult but incredibly important story for all of us to witness. -JH

**79. Here Comes the Sun: A Last Chance For the Climate and a Fresh Chance For Civilization**  
**by Bill McKibben**

McKibben has been writing about the realities of global warming since 1989. His writing, paired with his extensive environmental activism, has brought much needed attention to the coming crisis. In his most recent work, he makes the case that there is still hope to change our future, and to do so we need to look at the sun. -JH

**80. Hidden Figures: The American Dream and the Untold Story of the Black Women Mathematicians Who Helped Win the Space Race**  
**by Margot Lee Shetterly**

This is the true story of three Black women who worked at NASA as human computers and worked on critical projects such as the Apollo mission, during a time when women were segregated from men in the workplace, between the 1930s and 1960s. -SV

**81. Hiroshima**  
**by John Hersey**

Hiroshima is a landmark piece of journalism that transformed the American view of the atomic bomb from a mere military victory to a profound human tragedy. By focusing on the personal stories of six survivors, the work exposed the long-term, devastating impact of nuclear warfare, challenged official narratives, and became a cornerstone for the anti-nuclear movement. -RB

**82. Holes****by Louis Sachar**

This middle grade novel is a super fun read that still manages to say so much about generational trauma, classism, and the history of institutionalized racism in America and how it affects our legal system today—with a particular focus on juvenile detention. Such an amazing book! -AW

**83. Hollow Fires****by Samira Ahmed**

Fourteen-year-old Jawad Ali is arrested and labeled a terrorist when his teacher mistakes the cosplay jetpack he is building for a bomb. Bullied, harassed, and abducted, he is never seen again. Guided by Jawad's ghostly presence, teen journalist Safiya Mirza tries to bring Jawad's voice back to his story and bring his killer to justice in this story about the dangers of privilege and racism when they are left unchecked and the true power in speaking up. -EC

**84. Hope in the Dark****by Rebecca Solnit**

Rebecca Solnit argues that activists need to remember that the effect of their work isn't always immediately apparent, but that doesn't mean that it wasn't impactful. She makes the case that hope is a necessary part of the work that needs to be done. Solnit's work, first published in 2004 and updated in 2016, remains relevant in 2026. -JH

**85. How Does It Feel to Be a Problem?: Being Young and Arab in America****by Moustafa Bayoumi**

The title of this book is taken from a question raised by W.E.B. Du Bois in reference to misperceptions about African Americans. For his book, in post-9/11 Brooklyn, Moustafa Bayoumi interviews seven Arab-American Muslims and shares their experiences with misconceptions directed against them based on their cultural heritage and religion. -ML

**86. How the García Girls Lost Their Accents****by Julia Alvarez**

Julia Alvarez's debut work uses vignettes from diverse narrators that move backwards in time to paint a detailed and nuanced picture of a family's forced flight from their homeland and painful efforts to assimilate, as well as depicting a way of life in the Dominican Republic before and at the start of a dictator's harsh rule. -MMcG

**87. How the Other Half Lives****by Jacob Riis**

Jacob Riis remains one of the most outstanding muckrakers of his generation, solidified through this work. A brutal exposé of the danger and squalor that immigrants and those in poverty, often synonymous, experienced through their daily lives in New York City tenement housing. His work was fundamental in the creation of Progressive Era (1890s-1920s) reforms such as The Tenement House Act of 1901, and humanizing individuals who were systemically disenfranchised by an apathetic and uncaring government. -GN

**88. How to Win Friends and Influence People****by Dale Carnegie**

Published in 1936 and based on Carnegie's popular in-person course, this is one of the most successful self-help books in U.S. history. Its tips and tricks have provided guidance to multitudes: from countless middle managers to Donna Reed, and, most notoriously, Charles Manson. In plain-spoken terms, the author explains the benefits to be gained by listening to others rather than talking about yourself. -MMcG

**89. Huda F Are You****by Huda Fahmy**

Egyptian-American Huda has to figure out who she is when her family moves to Dearborn, Michigan. Navigating a new town and school, Huda is flummoxed to no longer be able to define herself as the lone hijabi girl in her grade leading to a search for new friends and interests while still dealing with being visibly and proudly Muslim in a country that isn't always supportive of it in this series starter. -EC

**90. I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter****by Erika L. Sánchez**

Julia is left with more questions than answers after her older sister Olga dies suddenly in an accident. While her parents grieve their perfect—and favored—firstborn, Julia ends up with more questions than answers as she learns more about Olga's less than perfect life and the ways she defied the high expectations of their immigrant parents. An emblematic story about a first generation American trying to do her best while being true to herself. -EC

**91. I Is for Immigrants****by Selina Alko**

Author-illustrator Selina Alko offers an alphabetic list of the many gifts immigrants have brought to the United States, New York, and other communities all over the world. With bright, playful illustrations, Alko shows the reader that our N: neighbors provide us with the O: opportunity to take part in delicious P: potlucks with pierogis, pastrami, pupusas, pizza and (plenty) more. If you're unfamiliar with any of these, the good news is that Brooklyn has many great options for all. -DM-G

**92. I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings****by Maya Angelou**

Renowned poet and writer Maya Angelou shares intimate details of her early life, including surviving rape, racist attacks and teenage motherhood. This is the first in a series of memoirs in which Angelou demonstrates her ability to overcome obstacles and follow her dreams. -ML

**93. I Survived the Attacks of September 11, 2001****by Lauren Tarshis**

The I Survived series is a great set of books for both kids who are fans of history and kids who struggle to get into nonfiction. This is the best of both worlds. Often discussing traumatic events, this series is also a great way for kids to process the difficult emotions that come with surviving something life changing. As an NYC library, what better book to include than the one that hits closest to home. -MM

**94. Inside Out & Back Again****by Thanhai Lai**

Hà has grown up in Saigon surrounded by family and friends, and above all, grounded in its traditions and her family's heritage. The Vietnam War changes all that, forcing Hà and her family to flee and start a new life in Alabama. Written in verse to emulate Hà's cognitive shift to learn English, this middle grade novel offers a new view of the immigrant experience for Hà and her family over the course of one turbulent year. -EC

**95. Interview With the Vampire****by Anne Rice**

Already 50 years old, the first installment of the Vampire Chronicles seems immortal in its own right. Using lush, sensuous language and settings, especially New Orleans, Rice expanded the concept of vampires from merely creatures of horror to beautiful undead beings who both inspire and fall prey to romantic obsessions. -MMcG

**96. Invisible Man****by Ralph Ellison**

The only work published while Ellison was alive, this 1947 novel stands the test of time as one of the most poignant and well written discussions of the social, political, and intellectual struggles faced by African Americans faced in the early 20th century. -GN

**97. It Was All a Dream: Biggie and the World That Made Him****by Justin Tinsley**

The Notorious B.I.G. is one of the greatest rappers of all time. In this look at his life and legend, Tinsley tells the story of his life, his rise to fame, and his continued influence on rap today. Moreover, he looks more widely at the cultural and political context in which Biggie came to fame to offer a wide-angle picture of both his life and rap history. -JH

**98. It's Kind of a Funny Story****by Ned Vizzini**

An important book in the history of young adult literature, based on the author's own life experiences, this story tackles the hard topic of a teen facing major mental health issues and his time in a mental hospital after almost committing suicide. -SV

**99. Jurassic Park****by Michael Crichton**

Capitalism, science, and dinos run amok! Jurassic Park is a novel with a wild premise but a grounded and realistic message: ethics and safety should never take a backseat to scientific progress or profit. - GK

**100. Just Mercy****by Bryan Stevenson**

This prize-winning memoir, and its accompanying film and young adult version, helped educate millions about unjust practices that are all too common in the American judicial system. By concentrating on his work to overturn the conviction of an innocent yet powerless man and on his own journey from Delaware to Harvard Law School to the rural south, Stevenson enlightens, enrages, and inspires readers. -MMcG

**101. Kitchen Confidential****by Anthony Bourdain**

In Kitchen Confidential, Bourdain reveals what happens behind the scenes in the restaurant world (for better and for worse). A fascinating look at this essential industry, the book is also a great introduction to Bourdain's work and his innate curiosity as a global citizen. Whether you turn to him for travel wanderlust or his wry insights into the culinary underbelly, he is a modern American icon. -JH

**102. Las Biuty Queens****by Ivan Monalisa Ojeda**

In this collection of stories, Monalisa Ojeda tells the stories of New York City's streets through the eyes of queer, immigrant, trans immigrants. While the stories are specific, the themes are universal: grit, found family, love, and humor. -JH

**103. Last Exit to Brooklyn****by Hubert Selby**

The stories of Last Exit to Brooklyn look at prostitution, drug use, and other frequently ignored subject matter. The book forgoes convention in its style, too—among other examples, Selby embraced slang and ignored grammar. Unsurprisingly, this book has been subject to bans and challenges. -DM-G

**104. Last Night at the Telegraph Club****by Malinda Lo**

An important coming-of-age work of queer historical fiction, this young adult novel follows a Chinese-American teenager as she explores her sexuality and tries to reconcile what is expected versus her own individuality. This intersectional work tackles themes such as identity, perception, and familial/cultural expectations against a backdrop of homophobia, racism, and McCarthyism in 1950s San Francisco. This book has faced several challenges and bans in recent years. -AW

**105. Leaves of Grass****by Walt Whitman**

A testament to the human spirit, the magnificence of nature, and the inherent goodness of man, Walt Whitman's Leaves of Grass collection of poems left a definitive mark on the literary field of American poetry for his striking and inspired writing style. His grand descriptions of democracy, equality, and freedom helped form a national identity for the United States and its people. -GN

**106. Letter From Birmingham Jail**  
**by Martin Luther King**

A cry from the heart of one of this country's most important moral leaders. Written during his 1963 incarceration as a direct response to a newspaper piece from white clergymen counseling Civil Rights activists to cease their demonstrations, King's deep knowledge and scholarship bolster his arguments that "people of good will" who do little are as detrimental to racial justice as white supremacists. -MMcG

**107. Lies My Teacher Told Me**  
**by James Loewen**

The conclusions that Loewen drew about the failures of the American education system in 1995 are still very much a problem in 2026. Loewen argues that rather than teaching both the failures and successes of history, American schools are quick to mythologize and avoid controversy, skewing students' understanding of our own history. Anyone who was educated in this country should read this and consider how their education was compromised by these lies. -JH

**108. The Scarlet Letter**  
**by Nathaniel Hawthorne**

Puritanism played a huge role in the founding of America, and the ideology that they believed in continues to shape American culture today. Full of symbolism, Hawthorne's masterpiece is still widely taught in schools, where students can reckon with this past and consider the effects of shame, guilt, and sin on both the person and the wider community. -JH

**109. Little House In The Big Woods**  
**by Laura Ingalls Wilder**

While it doesn't depict the hardships and serious topics that her later books contain, Little House in the Big Woods is an important first step in the series. If you read the Little House books as a child, reread them as an adult—you'll notice details about Laura's life that you didn't before. -GK

**110. Little Women**  
**by Louisa May Alcott**

Meg, Jo, Beth, and Amy March grow, learn and love alongside Marmee in their New England home while their father serves in the Civil War. A touchstone for generations of readers, this novel explores what it means to be a family as well as what it is to hope and dream. Inspired by Alcott's own early life, this book is and was a cultural phenomenon, especially in American society.

**111. Lizzie Demands A seat!: Elizabeth Jennings Fights for Streetcar Rights**  
**by Beth Anderson**

Elizabeth "Lizzie" Jennings was a respected schoolteacher and church organist who was denied access to a New York City streetcar in 1854 because she was African American. She sued the streetcar company, was represented by future president Chester Arthur and won her case in court. A century before Rosa Parks challenged segregation on public transportation in the South, Lizzie Jennings is now celebrated as a pioneer of civil rights. -ML

**112. Love Is Loud: How Diane Nash Led the Civil Rights Movement**  
**by Sandra Neil Wallace**

Through peaceful protest and nonviolent resistance, Diane Nash helmed the Nashville Student Movement in the 1960s using sit-ins, marches, Freedom Rides and other strategies to fight segregation in the American South. Working alongside like-minded activists including John Lewis and, later, Martin Luther King Jr, Nash's efforts work toward integration, reminding people that "Love is fierce./ Love is strong./ Love is loud!" -EC

**113. March. Book One**  
**by John Lewis**

In this first-hand account by John Lewis, he reflects on his childhood in rural Alabama and remembers the first days of the Civil Rights movement in the 1960s. Adapted and illustrated by Andrew Ayin and Nate Powell respectively, this story is approachable for kids and adults alike. March offers important insights into the nonviolent revolution that Lewis played an integral role in leading. -JH

**114. Marsha: The Joy and Defiance of Marsha P. Johnson****by Tourmaline**

This groundbreaking biography lovingly and thoroughly tells the story of the legendary LGBTQIA+ activist Marsha P. Johnson, a Black transgender woman who is most known for her involvement during the Stonewall uprising. Tourmaline offers one of the most comprehensive and definitive dives into Johnson's life and her lasting impact on the LGBTQIA+ community as an activist, artist and muse. -SV

**115. Martyr!****by Kaveh Akbar**

Martyr! tells the story of queer Iranian-American Cyrus, who is grappling with the idea of mortality, the limits of language, addiction, faith, family legacy, identity, and the nature of redemption. If that all sounds heavy, somehow Martyr! isn't. Instead, Akbar's prose and poetry alike brim with humor and liveliness. -JH

**116. Mastering The Art of French Cooking****by Julia Child**

Julia Child's influence on American housewives in the 1960s is undeniable. She gained fame for the realism in her TV show, which aired her cooking blunders and her good-natured troubleshooting. Her down-to-earth cooking style continues to resonate today, just as Mastering the Art of French Cooking's reliable recipes continue to be a valuable resource for the home cook. -JH

**117. Monster****by Walter Dean Myers**

Walter Dean Myers, a giant of young adult literature, gave readers a look into the criminal justice system with this genre-defying work. Through a combination of diary entries and a film script, Monster follows 16-year-old Steve Harmon, who is on trial for his part in a robbery that resulted in the death of a community member. This Harlem-set tale offers New Yorkers sharp observations of the justice system through the cinematic lens of a teenager on trial. -DM-G

**118. Monumental Graffiti: Tracing Public Art and Resistance in the City****by Rafael Schacter**

A deep dive into the near ubiquitous, often maligned art form of graffiti, this study considers the anthropological intersections of public space and self-expression. -SH

**119. Moonshot****by Brian Floca**

Author and illustrator Floca takes a micro and macro view of the historic Apollo 11 moon landing in 1969. Grounded by Floca's intricate illustrations, this book highlights the preparations, the triumphant moment, and situates the moon landing's place in both history and popular culture as a singular human achievement and defining moment of the 20th century. -EC

**120. Murders in The Rue Morgue****by Edgar Allen Poe**

Once described as the first modern detective story and holding traits we now recognize as staples in the genre, the importance of this short story to the worldwide literary landscape cannot be emphasized enough. Poe is a titan of early literature in the United States and while many of his works could have been included on this list, Murders at the Rue Morgue is our pick for its intrigue, twists and enduring legacy. -MM

**121. My Antonia****by Willa Carter**

Antonia Shimerda is an immigrant from Bohemia who, along with her impoverished family, must adapt to life on the Nebraska prairie. Told by her childhood neighbor, Jim Burden, the story showcases Antonia's resilience in the face of numerous challenges and setbacks. -ML

**122. My Powerful Hair**  
by Carole Lindstrom

For the Indigenous girl at the center of this gorgeous picture book, her long hair is a way to connect to her culture, to Earth, and a way to honor her elders. Her mother always had short hair, being told that her hair was too wild. Her grandmother wasn't allowed to have long hair as part of the violent forced assimilation efforts of the American Indian residential schools. A celebration of cultural identity, *My Powerful Hair* explores these connections with nuance and care. -EC

**123. Narrative of Sojourner Truth**  
by Sojourner Truth

After gaining her freedom in New York, Isabella Baumfree took the name Sojourner Truth and embarked on a life dedicated to the abolition of slavery and the rights of women. Although she never learned to read or write, Sojourner Truth became a powerful speaker. Her most famous speech is the one she presented at the Women's Rights Convention. -ML

**124. Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave**  
by Frederick Douglass

Dominique Jean-Louise, Chief Historian at the Center for Brooklyn History, on *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*: "Douglass uses his extraordinary gift for language to recount the cruel violence he endured while enslaved, and his moving journey of gaining literacy and emancipating himself. Even today, it's a stirring example of how sharing your own story holds the power to change minds and make history, and a reminder of the long American cultural tradition of using our freedom, and our expression, as tools we can employ to help someone else get free.

**125. Neuromancer**  
by William Gibson

In a dystopian future, a data hacker is recruited for a high-stakes heist where succeeding is his only chance at survival. This seminal work of the cyberpunk genre touches on themes of technology, artificial intelligence, and corporate influence. -SH

**126. Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America**  
by Barbara Ehrenreich

Although the minimum wage has increased in many states since its original publication in 2001, Ehrenreich's incisive exploration of life near the poverty line remains painfully relevant today. Ehrenreich explores firsthand the high cost of living in the United States while working for minimum wage (a shocking six or seven dollars at the time) as a waitress, hotel maid, house cleaner, nursing-home aide, and Walmart salesperson across the country, from Florida to Maine to Minnesota. -EC

**127. Oh the Places You'll Go**  
by Dr. Seuss

Despite being a children's book, this is really a book for transitions, often given to graduates, children moving from home or anyone who's starting a new journey. It takes what might be a scary time and turns it into one of hope and optimism. Dr. Seuss is a prolific staple in children's literature; this, the last book published in his lifetime, may be the one that comes to mind most when thinking of his legacy. -MM

**128. On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous**  
by Ocean Vuong

Written in the form of a letter from a young man to his mother, this novel reads like both a poem and a dream. Through his main character, Vuong reflects on language, legacy, queerness, culture, gender, and what home means. While telling a deeply specific story, anyone who has ever felt alienated will see echoes of themselves in Vuong's impeccable writing. -JH

**129. On Photography**  
by Susan Sontag

Published as a single volume in 1977, Susan Sontag wrote a searing critique of one of the era's increasingly available technologies: the image. Sontag's observations about photography as appropriation and voyeurism were provocative but necessary. Nearly 50 years later, in the age of the nonstop news cycle, social media and smartphones, Sontag's book is still required reading. -DM-G

**130. On the Road****by Jack Kerouac**

A chronicle of two drifters and their journey across 1950s America, this novel also depicts two hallmarks of the Beat Generation, of which Jack Kerouac was a central figure: rebellion against the status quo and the quest for meaning. -ML

**131. One Crazy Summer****by Rita Williams-Garcia**

In the summer of 1968, Delphine Gaither and her younger sisters travel from Brooklyn, New York to Oakland, California to visit their estranged mother, Cecile—a poet and printer. Instead of a warm welcome, Cecile sends her daughters to a summer camp run by the Black Panthers where Delphine learns about injustices in her own life and in the larger world, while also gaining a better understanding of the mother she barely knows. -EC

**132. One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest****by Ken Kesey**

This debut novel of a 1960s literary superstar urges readers to reassert their personhood (manhood) and question authority. In a desolate psychiatric ward where docile men cower before the domineering Nurse Ratched, McMurphy—a petty criminal who pled insanity to escape prison time—seems to offer hope and change, though most of the characters in this allegory come to a bleak end. -MMcG

**133. Only This Beautiful Moment****by Abdi Nazemian**

This intergenerational novel follows teenage Moud, traveling to Iran for the first time in 2019; engineering student Saeed, emigrating from Tehran to the US in 1978; and Bobby, who's ready to risk everything to tell his best friend that he loves him in 1939 Los Angeles. Nazemian explores what it means to be unapologetically yourself in times and places where being gay can lead to arrest or worse. Throughout, this book reminds us to hold onto beauty in a world that wants to tear it away. -EC

**134. Orientalism****by Edward Said**

This foundational work criticized the ways Western scholarship, art and politics have “othered” the Eastern Hemisphere. This intentional othering cultivated a distorted, romanticized and fetishized vision of “The Orient” and helped to uphold white colonial power structures. Orientalism was fundamental in developing post-colonial studies programs across the United States and continues to be essential in the discussion of cultural representation and its political impact. -GN

**135. Our Bodies, Ourselves****by Boston Women's Health Book Collective**

Our Bodies, Ourselves is crucial for revolutionizing women's health and urging women to be active participants in their care. This book laid the groundwork for the women's health movement and supported the founding of the National Women's Health Network, pushing for better research and policy on women's health. -RB

**136. Our Town****by Thornton Wilder**

Our Town is the story of Groves Corners. Through its lack of scenery, breaking the fourth wall, and the gentle guidance of the Stage Manager, Our Town is a lovely, moving look at the everyday miracles that make up a life. Quiet, heartbreaking and deeply normal, it reminds us that the meaning of life is contained within life itself. -JH

**137. Parable of the Sower****by Octavia E Butler**

Butler is a powerhouse, a foundational author of science fiction. So many of her books seem almost prophetic in how much they speak to our time, but maybe none more so than Parable. Set in a post-apocalyptic world ravaged by social inequality and climate crisis, Lauren sets off to try and find a haven for herself. With the threat of violence around every corner, her only solace is in a religion she crafted herself. -MM

**138. Phasers on Stun!: How the Making (and Remaking) of Star Trek Changed the World****by Ryan Britt**

For the last 60 years, Star Trek has shaped Americans' views on the future and on the present. This groundbreaking TV show spawned the advent of fan culture as we know it, and it also introduced the first Black woman in a major role and the first interracial kiss on network TV. This book chronicles the history of every Star Trek series and their cultural impact on the US. -GK

**139. Radiant Child: The Story of Young Artist Jean-Michel Basquiat****by Javaka Steptoe**

This award-winning picture book highlights Jean-Michel Basquiat as a child, finding inspiration in the vivid streets of New York City, games and traditional art—influences that informed his groundbreaking artwork and unconventional style as an artist in the 1980s. -EC

**140. Rebel****by Beverly Jenkins**

Jenkins is respected in the romance community for her range as an author, her advocacy, and her commitment to highlighting Black Joy throughout her work. Set in the Reconstruction Era, this series starter features Valinda Lacey, who's determined to help New Orleans's newly emancipated community rebuild in the wake of the Civil War. Valinda crosses paths with Captain Drake LeVeque—an architect who is just as committed to the community—and romance ensues. -EC

**141. Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877: Updated Edition****by Eric Foner**

Prior to Foner's Reconstruction, the Reconstruction Era (1865 –1877) was largely presented by scholars as a corrupt failure on the part of an inept U.S. government. In this seminal text, we see it reframed not only as a noble but unfinished revolution, but also as a monumental moment in the proliferation of a more liberal American democracy that placed freedmen and Black political leaders at the forefront of this profound and crucial shift. -GN

**142. Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry****by Mildred D Taylor**

The 1977 Newbery Medal award-winning novel provides readers with an unflinching portrayal of systemic racism and the fight for justice in Jim Crow-era Mississippi through the eyes of a nine-year-old African American girl named Cassie Logan. -GN

**143. Roots****by Alex Haley**

Haley traced his family lineage back to the African village where his ancestor Kunta Kinte was kidnapped and subsequently brought to America as a slave. Haley described Roots as “faction,” acknowledging that the exact details in the story are imagined. Through its 46 weeks on the NYT bestseller list, popular 1977 miniseries, and continued notoriety, Roots brought the reality of slavery into light for many American households and sparked an interest in African American genealogy. -JH

**144. Saga, Vol 1****by Fiona Staples, Brian K Vaughan**

This Star Wars-inspired series prompted many readers to pick up comics for the first time with its beautiful art and evergreen themes of love, resistance, and “war is hell.” -JH

**145. Sears, Roebuck & Co: Consumer's Guide for 1894**

Sears & Roebuck used to be THE place to get your goods; anything and everything could be ordered via their catalog. If you're curious about how your ancestors shopped, then wonder no further. Peek inside this 1894 consumer's guide to see how times, prices and shopping have changed in the US in the past 250 years. -MM

**146. Silent Spring****by Rachel Carson**

A watershed moment for environmental science in the United States, *Silent Spring* exposed the dangerous effects of the pesticide DDT on wildlife, ecosystems and people's health. Carson laid the groundwork for the Environmental Movement with her revolutionary text and encouraged readers to view themselves as part of a larger ecosystem. The public backlash to the use of this pesticide led to its banning and the creation of the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). -GN

**147. Sister Outsider****by Audre Lorde**

Audre Lorde was a philosopher and scholar who was groundbreaking in her time and continues to influence thinkers today. In this collection of essays and speeches, she explores intersectional identity. While she criticizes the white heterosexual patriarchy that remains prevalent in the United States, she also offers messages of hope and shows us a path towards change. -MM

**148. Slaughterhouse Five****by Kurt Vonnegut**

Largely based on personal experience, this is beloved writer Vonnegut's groundbreaking take on the absurdities of war and its undeniable human cost. Though major parts of the novel take place during the fire-bombing of Dresden, as a device to deal with the trauma of war, episodes skip through time and space, as far as the distant planet of Tralfamadore. -MMcG

**149. Slouching Towards Bethlehem****by Joan Didion**

The first essay collection by the legendary Joan Didion, *Slouching Towards Bethlehem* is an essential text. Writing mostly about her experiences in California, Didion put together poignant pieces that start with popular culture from her time and expand into observant works that still feel modern and true today. For readers seeking a New York story, don't miss "Goodbye to All That"—her seminal essay on leaving the city behind. -DM-G

**150. Speak****by Laurie Halse Anderson**

A ground-breaking young adult novel from the 1990s, *Speak* explores, in an epistolary and non-linear story, the trauma faced by a teen girl who is raped by a classmate at a party and how she finds her voice to speak up. Frequently targeted in book bans, this novel has been vital for critical analysis in classrooms and for providing courage to other teens to speak up about sexual assault. -SV

**151. Stamped from the beginning: the Definitive History of Racist Ideas In America****by Ibram X Kendi**

Kendi traces the history of racist ideas in America, clearly linking the racism that allowed for the deaths of slaves to lynching and to police brutality today. In this way, it is a history of America. Kendi asks readers to question their own beliefs and offers tools to expose how they fit into segregationist, abolitionist or anti-racist frameworks. Kendi ends by imagining a world in which the work is complete and anti-racism is the norm. -JH

**152. Stevie****by John Steptoe**

Published when its Brooklyn-native author was still in his teens, this picture book not only perfectly captured the image, idiom and emotion of a city child but also paved the way for more Black stories by Steptoe and others, including his much-beloved *Mufaro and His Beautiful Daughters*. *Stevie* is both an evocative snapshot of the late 1960s and a timeless depiction of childhood's conflicting emotions. -MMcG

**153. Stone Butch Blues****by Leslie Feinberg**

A foundational text of lesbian and trans fiction, *Stone Butch Blues* explores the intersections of class, sexuality, and gender. Never shying away from the harsh realities of living in a world often built by hate, Feinberg also shows how healing love can be and the power that change can bring. As much a call to action as it is a novel, you might forget that this is a work of fiction. -MM

**154. Tar Beach****by Faith Ringgold**

Set in Harlem in the late 1930s, Ringgold uses mixed media quilting to illustrate her story. Cassie flies over New York City, claiming it as her own despite the discrimination her family faces day to day. Ringgold's art is the kind that you can pore over, and time and again find new details to be in awe of. -MM

**155. Team of Rivals: the Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln****by Doris Kearns Goodwin**

Rather than shunning his political adversaries after winning the election, President Abraham Lincoln embraced them and appointed them to his cabinet. It was with this "team of rivals" that Lincoln achieved victory in the Civil War, saved the Union and abolished slavery. Steven Spielberg cited this book as one of the sources for his film, *Lincoln*. -ML

**156. The 1619 Project: A New Origin Story****by Nikole Hannah-Jones**

Ilana Glazer on *The 1619 Project*: "This book uniquely accounts for the contradictions and complexities of what the United States has truly been, and what its people have dreamed it to be, since our nation's inception. It is thorough research written beautifully and with gentle grace. The backlash this brilliant work repeatedly receives from those in the highest positions of power proves how much it resonates with our national tenet, 'We, the people,' and this ongoing discourse is what makes it culturally important and hot."

**157. The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian****by Sherman Alexie**

This semi-autobiographical story follows Junior, a low-income, disabled, Spokane teen boy who decides to attend a mostly white high school off the reservation. One of the most notorious pieces of Native American literature, it provides much-needed representation and a voice for Indigenous teens. The book is also an excellent introduction to themes of race and class for teen readers, interwoven with classic adolescent themes and humor. -SV

**158. The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn****by Mark Twain**

This novel's two main characters, Huck and Jim, are both seeking freedom: Huck from an abusive father and Jim from enslavement. Huck tells the story of their adventures on the Mississippi River in everyday language, frequently casting a satirical eye on a society that fails to uphold its supposed moral foundation. -ML

**159. The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay****by Michael Chabon**

From Superman to Marvel, superheroes are an inescapable part of American pop culture. Chabon's magnum opus tells the story of two cousins who go on to create one of these superheroes, intertwining their coming of age and creative aspirations with the World War raging in Europe. *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay* captures the hope that superheroes represent in the American psyche, both for their creators and their readers. -JH

**160. The Autobiography of Malcolm X****by Malcolm X**

In this modern classic, Malcolm X tells the story of his early life of crime and subsequent incarceration. While in prison, he educated himself by reading books he borrowed from the prison library. He became a devout Muslim and a crusader for equal rights for African Americans until he was assassinated. -ML

**161. The Battle of Brooklyn, 1776****by John J Gallagher**

Six weeks after the Americans declared independence from Great Britain, the largest battle of the Revolutionary War took place in Brooklyn. John J. Gallagher recounts the battle step by step, explaining the strategic importance of Brooklyn, the brave but flawed American defense of Brooklyn, and George Washington's heroic evacuation that enabled American troops to continue fighting and eventually achieve victory. -ML

**162. The Birchbark House****by Louise Erdrich**

Follow 7-year-old Omakayas through life on the Island of the Golden-Breasted Woodpecker in 1847 Lake Superior. While some things remain the same for Omakayas and her close-knit family in their Ojibwa tribe, many things change as the chimookoman, white people, continue to encroach on their land. This book is a perfect choice to read in conversation with Laura Ingalls Wilder's Little House on the Prairie series to add an Indigenous perspective to the settler colonial narrative. -EC

**163. The Big Myth****by Naomi Oreskes**

In this groundbreaking work, historians Oreskes and Conway analyze events and primary source documents to deconstruct and contest the concept of the free market. The authors make the case that the ideology was popularized by a 20th century disinformation campaign organized by big business and corporate executives in collaboration with key political figures, intellectual icons, and the media. -GN

**164. The Black Panther Party: A Graphic Novel History****by David Walker**

This graphic novel history of the Black Panther Party is an approachable, gorgeously rendered look at the movement. Illustrated portraits tell the story of key figures, while the rest of the book delves into the influence and legacy of the Panthers. -JH

**165. The Bluest Eye****by Toni Morrison**

Toni Morrison is one of the greatest American authors ever. Period. Reading any work by Morrison is the equivalent of eating an extravagant feast; it feeds your soul. In addition to her writing ability, she is skilled at examining the human condition. Controversial and banned in many places, The Bluest Eye is her debut and a classic of her oeuvre; the novel considers generational trauma and the damage that racism does to our society. -MM

**166. The British Are Coming: The War for America, Lexington to Princeton, 1775-1777****by Rick Atkinson**

In this well-researched narrative, Pulitzer Prize-winning historian and journalist Rick Atkinson highlights the first three years of the American Revolution, describing strategies and tactics of both the Britains and Americans, as well as the words and actions of their leaders and the experiences of their front-line combatants. -ML

**167. The Buffalo Hunter Hunter****Stephen Graham Jones**

Stephen Graham Jones is fast becoming one of the greatest voices of horror. His works explore being Indigenous in the United States and the very real horror that history carries, all the while twisting with something far more supernatural beneath the surface. Exploring history through found journals, The Buffalo Hunter Hunter will suck the blood right out of you. What happens when the hunters become the hunted? -MM

**168. When No One Is Watching****by Alyssa Cole**

This fast-paced thriller takes place in a rapidly gentrifying neighborhood in Brooklyn. It is both a psychological horror and a social commentary that asks: what if gentrification is the real evil? -JH

**169. The Coldest Winter Ever****by Sister Souljah**

Sister Souljah's epic cautionary tale centers on Winter Santiago, the young, ambitious, street-smart daughter of a NYC drug dealer. A cold reality hits home when Winter's father is arrested by federal agents, her mother turns to drugs to cope with reality, and her younger sister is put into foster care. Winter will stop at nothing to maintain her lavish lifestyle and street status. -CS

**170. The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes****by Langston Hughes**

A poet, writer and leading figure in the Harlem Renaissance movement, Langston Hughes's work portrays the history, life and reality of the African American experience. This powerful collection of 800 poems includes "The Negro Speaks of Rivers," "When Sue Wears Red," and "Ask Your Mama: 12 Moods of Jazz," his landmark jazz poem. -CS

**171. The Color of Water: A Black Man's Tribute to His White Mother****by James McBride**

James McBride recounts how his mother survived a dysfunctional, abusive upbringing and eventually raised 12 children, all of whom graduated from college and went on to successful careers. When the young James, grappling with issues of race and his own interracial heritage, asks his mother about God's color, she tells him that God is the color of water. -ML

**172. The Color Purple****by Alice Walker**

Celie is an African American character born into poverty in the rural South. Married to a man who views her more as a servant and less as a wife, Celie fights an emotional battle of self-worth and loneliness. Life takes a drastic turn when she meets Shug, a confident singer and her husband's mistress. The Color Purple is a story about strength, love, and sisterhood. -CS

**173. The Crucible: A Play in Four Acts****by Arthur Miller**

A historical fictional play based on the 1692 Salem Witch Trials, The Crucible has remained an important staple of the classroom, providing insight into the American psyche and how groupthink and hysteria, driven by misogyny and fear, can control a population. -SV

**174. The Da Vinci Code****by Dan Brown**

When the body of the museum curator is found at the Louvre, Harvard professor Robert Langdon is called to the scene of the crime to interpret symbols that were found on the victim. While working on the case, Langdon discovers riddles and puzzles leading to clues that question religious and historical references from around the world. -CS

**175. The Death and Life of Great American Cities****by Jane Jacobs**

If you've ever enjoyed a stroll through Grand Central Station or a walk through Washington Square Park, you should thank Jane Jacobs. The urbanist decried the use of zoning and highlighted the importance and utility of mixed zoning as a means for community life and public safety. Jacobs's seminal work, first published in 1961, remains as relevant as ever in our city. -DM-G

**176. The Deep****by Rivers Solomon**

Growing and morphing from a spoken word performance, this speculative fiction masterpiece uses the horrors of the Middle Passage as the springboard for an exploration of a new form of ocean life and of what keeping (or giving away) traumatic memories can do to an individual and community. -MMcG

**177. The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test****by Tom Wolfe**

Tom Wolfe is a 1970s writer and journalist who ushered in the term "New Journalism." In this firsthand account, Wolfe accompanies Ken Kesey and The Merry Prankster on their travels from coast to coast, exploring the use of LSD, marijuana, and other mind-altering drugs. -CS

**178. The Exorcist****William Peter Blatty**

Published near the beginning of the Satanic Panic and inspiring one of the best-known horror movies of all time, *The Exorcist* changed the psyche of the United States. In addition to supernatural horror, the novel deals with themes of faith and the internal struggle one feels when your lifelong beliefs are suddenly tested. -MM

**179. The Feminine Mystique****by Betty Friedan**

Often cited as the spark that started the second wave of feminism in the United States, this book spoke to a generation of women growing dissatisfied with the pressure to become housewives and mothers due to systemic and cultural sexism. Though divisive for its lack of inclusion of Black and LGBTQIAP+ women, it is undeniable that *The Feminine Mystique* provided an imperative dogmatic shift in gender studies and what women are capable of in a modern society. -GN

**180. The Fifth Season****by N.K. Jemisin**

This deeply feminist fantasy novel explores the catastrophic effects of climate change when it is pushed to its logical conclusion. As disturbing as it is provocative, Jemisin's writing shines a harsh light on our society, forcing the reader to grapple with whether this world is actually worth saving. -JH

**181. The Fire Next Time****by James Baldwin**

This two-essay collection is an eye-opening look at America's racial barriers. "My Dungeon Shook: Letter to My Nephew on the One Hundredth Anniversary of the Emancipation" highlights the harsh reality of racism in America, while "Down at the Cross: Letter from a Region in My Mind" is a longer essay discussing race, religion and Baldwin's life in Harlem. -CS

**182. The Gilda Stories****by Jewelle Gomez**

A Black lesbian vampire escapes slavery and spends eternity searching for meaning in this pioneering work of speculative fiction that explores themes of queer identity, race, and family. -SH

**183. The Giver****by Lois Lowry**

*The Giver* was one of the first dystopian novels for children and teenagers, providing a harrowing warning against eugenics, loss of community, and the erasure of cultural memory. Emphasizing the importance of interconnectedness, both with other people and the environment, this book is an important introduction to dystopian themes in literature. -SV

**184. The Godfather****by Mario Puzo**

Some legends and stories are uniquely American, and few more so than the Corleone family. This book (and its subsequent movie adaptation) became a smash hit and a staple of US pop culture. -GK

**185. The Grapes of Wrath****by John Steinbeck**

This Pulitzer Prize-winning novel follows a family's epic journey during the Dust Bowl and Great Depression, chronicling their search for a better life as they confront questions of labor, family bonds, and human dignity. -SH

**186. The Great Bridge: The Epic Story of The Building of The Brooklyn Bridge****by David G McCullough**

Celebrated as the "Eighth Wonder of the World" when it was completed in 1883, the Brooklyn Bridge represents Brooklyn at its most iconic. Eminent historian David McCullough tells the story of the bridge from vision to reality, culminating in uniting what were then the independent cities of Brooklyn and New York. -ML

**187. The Great Gatsby**  
by **F Scott Fitzgerald**

This Jazz Age novel has remained an important part of the American literary canon for over 100 years. Cynically capturing the death of the American Dream and the realities of class, race and gender divides in 1920s America, this is a tragic and alluring story. -SV

**188. The Hate U Give**  
by **Angie Thomas**

Sixteen-year-old Starr Carter code switches between the poor neighborhood she lives in with her family and the suburban prep school she attends as one of the few Black students. Starr is the only witness when her childhood friend Khalil is pulled over by a police officer and shot without cause. Testifying could mean justice for Khalil, but it could also mean intense media scrutiny only to have the case end with an acquittal. Thomas's debut novel is a scathing indictment of the cultural biases and racism that brought the United States to this point but also a call for better for future generations who deserve so much more. -EC

**189. The House on Mango Street**  
by **Sandra Cisneros**

Told in vignettes in part based on her own experiences, Cisneros portrays the coming-of-age of a 12-year-old Mexican American girl named Esperanza Cordero in the Hispanic quarter of South Chicago. This frequently banned book is a modern classic that is standard reading for both high school and university students. -GN

**190. The Hunger Games**  
by **Suzanne Collins**

The first volume of this popular young adult dystopian series explores several heavy themes, including social/economic inequality, distrust of government, the dangers of a totalitarian state, media as a vehicle for propaganda, war ethics, and the importance of retaining one's humanity. This series is widely accredited with kicking off a large surge in the publication of YA dystopian novels. -AW

**191. The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks**  
by **Rebecca Skloot**

Used in the development of vaccines, cancer studies and more, the immortal cell line known as HeLa came from one Henrietta Lacks, an African American woman whose cancer cells were taken without her consent. While diving into the impact of the HeLa line on medical research, Skloot also focuses on the burden of that impact on the Lacks family, touching on questions of medical privacy and patient rights. -SH

**192. The Irony of American History**  
by **Reinhold Niebuhr**

Trained as a theologian, Reinhold Niebuhr was also active in public affairs in the mid-20th century. In this work, he sees the irony of an American system in which its ideals do not necessarily conform to its actions. Both Martin Luther King Jr. and Barack Obama, among others, have cited Niebuhr's writings as having a profound influence on their thinking. -ML

**193. The Joy Luck Club**  
by **Amy Tan**

Written by renowned Chinese American author Amy Tan, this novel explores cultural identity, generational conflict, and the complexity of mother-daughter relationships. It was adapted into a movie in 1993; one of the first major American films to feature an Asian American cast in non-stereotyped roles. -AW

**194. The Jungle**  
by **Upton Sinclair**

The Jungle laid bare the horrific conditions of the meatpacking industry in the early 1900s. A master class in how poverty, cruel working conditions, and rampant corruption can deteriorate the human spirit into a spiral of hopelessness and profound cynicism. This realistic portrayal of the meat industry led to an immediate public outcry and the creation of federal sanitation and safety laws such as the Meat Inspection Act. -GN

**195. The Left Hand of Darkness****by Ursula K. Le Guin**

Le Guin is inarguably one of the most influential science fiction writers in our time. In this novel, she explores gender and sexuality, as well as loyalty, betrayal, and cultural norms. While Le Guin herself admitted that some of the writing in this book does not hold up to progressive ideals today, at the time it was considered one of the foremost feminist works of science fiction. -JH

**196. The Lightning Thief****by Rick Riordan**

This book launched a resurgence in kids' interest in mythology and was adapted into two movies and a TV series. Our adorable hero first discovers that he is a demigod destined to save the world, then discovers that the gods are as shortsighted and petty as any human. -MMcG

**197. The Lottery****by Shirley Jackson**

Originally received with hate mail and canceled subscriptions when published in The New Yorker in 1948, this short story describes a small American town's annual lottery and the senseless violence that can occur when tradition goes unquestioned. -SH

**198. The Maltese Falcon****by Dashiell Hammett**

Private detective Sam Spade is recruited to assist in finding the elusive Maltese Falcon, supposedly a priceless, centuries-old, jewel-encrusted statuette. The Maltese Falcon serves as the prototype of the "hard-boiled" genre of American detective fiction: a tough, detached detective, a femme fatale, eccentric adversaries, and crimes that take place in dark alleys and other gruesome locations. -ML

**199. The Miseducation of the Negro****by Carter Godwin Woodson**

Written in the early 20th century, Carter G. Woodson argues that the US public education system either overlooked or distorted African-Americans' contributions to the country's history, to their detriment. In this work, he advocates for a thorough revision of the educational system. Woodson is credited as being the driving force behind the creation of Black History Month. -ML

**200. The Monster at the End of This Book****by Various**

Sesame Street and The Muppets have made an indelible mark on American culture, and this classic children's book, which plays on anticipation and suspense with a loveable, nervous guide, has taught generations to read with feeling. The reader accompanies Grover, ignoring his entreaties not to turn the next page, to the ending's not-so-scary revelation. -MMcG

**201. The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in The age of Colorblindness****by Michelle Alexander**

Incarceration has profound impacts in American society. The numbers are staggering. In the introduction, Alexander notes: "The United States now has the highest rate of incarceration in the world, dwarfing the rates of nearly every developed county, even surpassing those in highly repressive regimes like Russia, China and Iran." The book was first published in 2010, but the issues it presents have only become more important. -DM-G

**202. The Other America: Poverty in the United States****by Michael Harrington**

Written as a striking juxtaposition to the Age of Affluence in 1950s America, Harrington brought to light the poverty and destitution that prevailed across the United States. Hidden beneath the postwar ideals of suburban prosperity, Harrington revealed that there were millions who continued to live in "The Other America," one of impoverishment and hardship. This book was influential in Lyndon B. Johnson's "War on Poverty" policies and the push towards anti-poverty legislation in the 1960s. -GN

**203. The Outsiders****by SE Hinton**

Ethan Hawke on The Outsiders: “S. E. Hinton’s The Outsiders is a kind of literary miracle. Written when she was 16 years old, the book possesses a rare and extraordinary power to speak so clearly and directly to young people that readers fall not simply in love with the novel but with the bliss of reading. For 60 years now, The Outsiders has been a gateway drug to the high and wisdom that literature has to offer. The story dives into the painful truths of poverty, class, and anger that rest as a bedrock of growing up as an American. I’ve read the novel at 14, 33, and 50. It gets better every time. ‘Stay gold, Ponyboy.’ “

**204. The Pelican Brief****by John Grisham**

Darby Shar is a bright law student who writes a legal brief that uncovers a national conspiracy. With no one to trust, Shar seeks help from a reporter to help investigate the murder of her professor and lover. -CS

**205. The Perks of Being a Wallflower****by Stephen Chbosky**

Set in the early 1990s, The Perks of Being a Wallflower follows Charlie, a high school freshman navigating mental health, sexuality, and trauma. While frequently a target of book bans due to its content, this coming-of-age novel is celebrated for candidly portraying the realities of adolescence and self-discovery. -SH

**206. The Poet X****by Elizabeth Acevedo**

Written in verse, this modern classic is an empathetic look into the life of a teenager. Xiomara is a poet and uses her poetry to express her frustrations with the world. From patriarchy and religion to boys and family, Xio uses her voice to uplift herself in a world that would beat her down. -MM

**207. The Power Broker****by Robert Caro**

This gargantuan work about Robert Moses is one of the most informative books about New York City history. In more than 1,300 pages, Caro describes the life of Moses, who can be credited for much of NYC’s present landscape. Though never elected to public office, Moses left his mark in every place, from the city’s parks to its expressways. For anyone turned off by the number of pages, BPL offers the audiobook version in three parts, totaling more than 60 hours. -DM-G

**208. The Presidents and the People: Five Leaders Who Threatened Democracy and the Citizens Who Fought to Defend It****by Corey Brettschneider**

Corey Brettschneider provides historical insights recalling incidents in history where five American presidents threatened the foundation of democracy and the US citizen while waging war on the press, supporting segregation and racism. Courageous leaders Frederick Douglass, Ida B. Wells, Daniel Ellsberg and more fought back to restore democracy while inspiring future activists and leaders. -CS

**209. The Price of Salt****by Patricia Highsmith**

In a time and genre known for limiting stereotypes and tragic fates, The Price of Salt stood out for its rare portrayal of a lesbian relationship with a hopeful ending, following Therese and Carol as they navigate their desires amid societal pressures in the 1950s. -SH

**210. The Proudest Blue: a Story of Hijab and Family****by Ibtihaj Muhammad**

Faizah and Asiya are excited to go back to school. One sister has a new backpack and light-up sneakers, and the other is wearing a beautiful hijab for the first time. The Proudest Blue is a story of sisterhood, courage, and cultural pride. -CS

**211. The Search for Signs of Intelligent Life in the Universe****by Jane Wagner**

Penned by Jane Wagner and brought to life onstage by Lily Tomlin, this acclaimed solo performance explored feminist ideas and received the 1986 Drama Desk Award for Unique Theatrical Experience. By inhabiting characters from a rebellious teenage punk rocker to a middle-aged farm wife, Tomlin's many voices unite to deliver a universal message that still resonates today. -KD

**212. The Secret History****by Donna Tartt**

A modern classic, this novel is a suspenseful reverse whodunnit that provides a compelling snapshot of class, gender and other social tensions at private New England universities. Paying homage to the history of the American campus novel, it's become a seminal text in the dark academia genre as well. -AW

**213. The Secret of the Old Clock****by Carolyn Keene**

This is the first book in the original Nancy Drew mystery series, which spawned numerous book, video game, and show spinoffs. Chronicling the adventures of amateur sleuth Nancy Drew, this series has been read and beloved by generations of mystery lovers. Intelligent, independent and capable, Nancy Drew has served as a positive female role model for the past century. -AW

**214. The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo****by Taylor Jenkins Reid**

American's fascination with celebrity has existed since the very beginning of Hollywood. This novel looks back at a fictional movie star's time in the spotlight as she grapples with how it affected her and the life that she wanted to live. Though Evelyn Hugo is not based on any one movie star, readers will recognize Elizabeth Taylor, Ava Gardner, and Rita Hayworth's stories in Evelyn's. -JH

**215. The Snowy Day****by Ezra Jack Keats**

Filled with the simple joys and vast imagination of a child, this is a classic picture book that all ages can relate to about the joy of a snowy day. Ezra Jack Keats was a Brooklynite, and many New Yorkers will recognize scenes from our beloved city. Keats wrote this at a time when few Black protagonists were featured in picture books, and his decision changed the face of picture books as we know them. -MM

**216. The Souls of Black Folk****by WEB Dubois**

Written in 1903, W.E.B. Du Bois states in *The Souls of Black Folk* that "the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line." In a series of essays, Du Bois confronts this "problem" and suggests techniques to bring about social and political equality, most notably by educating those African Americans most capable of effecting these changes, whom Du Bois refers to as "the talented tenth." -ML

**217. The Story of Barbie and the Woman Who Created Her****by Cindy Eagan**

Since the doll's creation in 1959, Barbie has remained a bestselling toy, impacting multiple generations of American children. This story explains Barbie's origin and provides insight into creator Ruth Handler. -SV

**218. The Theory of the Leisure Class****by Thorstein Veblen**

Originally published in 1899, this prescient study introduced the term "conspicuous consumption" and provides a thorough investigation into social stratification, the division of labor, and the socioeconomic hierarchies that continue to define modern day society. -SH

**219. The Undocumented Americans****by Karla Cornejo Villavicencio**

In this blend of memoir and journalism, Karla Cornejo Villavicencio starts by inviting readers into her life as one of the first undocumented students at Harvard University. But Cornejo Villavicencio goes beyond her own story. She also highlights the lives of other undocumented persons making their way in the United States. In New York, some even supported the clean-up efforts after the 9/11 attacks in 2001. -DM-G

**220. The Varieties of Religious Experience****by William James**

Published in 1902, this compilation of lectures challenges ideas about religion, science and human nature. James, a philosopher and psychologist known as the Father of American Psychology, was instrumental in establishing Harvard's psychology department. -CS

**221. The War of Art: A History of Artists' Protest In America****by Lauren O'Neill-Butler**

At the intersection of activism and creative expression is protest art, a vital thread woven through the cultural history of resistance in the United States. Offering an in depth survey from the 1960s to the present, The War of Art sheds light on how activists used art to make their voices heard and covers a wide range of issues and mediums. -SH

**222. The Warmth of Other Suns: the Epic Story of America's Great Migration****by Isabel Wilkerson**

Wilkerson tells a remarkable story of three unforgettable Black Americans traveling from the segregated South during the Great Migration, when more than 6 million people migrated North to have a better quality of life and escape the Jim Crow laws. -CS

**223. The Waste Land****by TS Eliot**

T. S. Eliot's "The Waste Land" is considered one of the most influential poems written in the 20th century. It begins despairingly with the now famous line "April is the cruellest month..." but concludes on a note of hope by repeating the Sanskrit word for peace, "Shantih," three times. Written in the aftermath of World War I, the many multilingual allusions reinforce the poem's cosmopolitanism. -ML

**224. The Westing Game****by Ellen Raskin**

Winner of the 1979 Newberry Medal, The Westing Game is a classic children's mystery, providing a cast of characters and an intriguing plot for minds young and old to puzzle over. For books to be thought of as distinguished or classic, people (mistakenly) think that they must be serious and dour—Raskin proves them wrong here. But as you giggle and guffaw over her words, you may also find yourself thinking deeper on people, relationships, and inheritance. -MM

**225. The Wonderful Wizard of Oz****by L Frank Baum**

A classic of children's literature for a reason, The Wonderful Wizard of Oz is considered one of the United States' most enduring fairy tales. A book that takes children seriously and treats its audience to a story about the value of friendship, never judging a book by its cover, and learning how powerful you truly are. -MM

**226. Their Eyes Were Watching God****by Zora Neale Hurston**

Zora Neale Hurston was a central figure of the Harlem Renaissance. In Their Eyes Were Watching God, her most acclaimed novel, she tells the story of Janie Crawford, who refuses to allow her first two husbands to control her. Her third marriage, to a man who treats her as his equal, although brief, is fulfilling. -ML

**227. There There****by Tommy Orange**

This stunning debut brings to light the experiences of the “urban Indian” through the voices of a dozen Native Americans, each with a different motivation to make it to the Big Oakland Powwow. As the celebration approaches and plans weave together and take shape, readers come to deeply sympathize with characters struggling with generational trauma, violence and drug use, and to marvel at their drive to unify and honor the past. -MMcG

**228. They Called Us Enemy****by George Takei**

In this poignant graphic memoir, actor George Takei details his childhood during World War II and the harsh realities of the Japanese internment camps in the United States, and how these experiences shaped his future as an actor. This heartbreaking true story explores what it means to be American and resilience in the face of legalized racism. -SV

**229. This Is the Rope: A Story from the Great Migration****by Jacqueline Woodson**

This picture book pairs prose from a skillful author who weaves stories of the Black experience for all age groups with beautiful and lifelike oil paintings by master illustrator James Ransome, and uses a simple piece of twine to trace a family’s Great Migration journey from the rural South to the bustling streets of New York as, generation after generation, from the piney woods to a Brooklyn brownstone, girls continue to skip rope and make friends. -MMcG

**230. To Kill a Mockingbird****by Harper Lee**

This Pulitzer Prize–winning classic explores powerful themes of racial injustice, gender roles, and the loss of innocence in the Deep South during the Great Depression. Widely taught in public school classrooms across the country, it helps students develop empathy and courage. Although it is frequently challenged for its depictions of violence, offensive language, and racism, these difficult subjects reflect realities that cannot be ignored or avoided in our society. -KD

**231. Tomorrow, and Tomorrow, and Tomorrow****by Gabrielle Zevin**

This epic novel follows the 30-year friendship between Sadie Green and Sam Masur, who met as children before growing apart. Reunited as college students, the two begin a years-long collaboration creating generation-defining video games in this singular story of romantic and platonic love, disability, and the American experience. -EC

**232. Twelve Angry Men****by Reginald Rose**

An important look into the psyche of the American man and the American judicial system, this book was the basis for the critically-acclaimed film and stage drama. -SV

**233. Unbought and Unbossed****by Shirley Chisholm**

Published in 1970, Shirley Chisholm describes her life, from her Brooklyn childhood to becoming the first Black congresswoman. She writes about overcoming racial barriers, sexism and political challenges while advocating for equality. In 2015, Chisholm’s memoir gained renewed recognition when President Barack Obama awarded her with the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian honor in the United States. -CS

**234. Five Days at Memorial: Life and Death in a Storm-Ravaged Hospital****by Sheri Fink**

In this work of investigative journalism, Fink examines the decisions made around healthcare amidst the chaos and destruction of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans. Fink breaks down the ethics surrounding these decisions as well as the impact of large-scale disasters. In doing so, she makes the case that America is woefully unprepared. -JH

**235. Uncle Tom's Cabin**  
**by Harriet Beecher Stowe**

Written in 1852 by abolitionist Harriet Beecher Stowe, Uncle Tom's Cabin is the story of an enslaved African American man. With over 300,000 copies sold in the USA in 1852 and about 2 million copies sold worldwide, Stowe's novel brought awareness to the horrors of slavery. -CS

**236. Walden**  
**by Henry David Thoreau**

Thoreau was a practitioner of Transcendentalism, a philosophical, spiritual and literary movement that took root in 1830s Northeastern United States as a response to the rise of Intellectualism in 19th century America. Transcendentalists believed that humans are inherently good but easily corrupted by society and government, thus it remains best for the human spirit to be self-reliant. Walden, an example of this ideology in application, is allegorical, symbolic and undeviating in its message—the need for a simple life, self-sufficiency, and awakening one's inner spirit by experiencing nature. -GN

**237. War Against All Puerto Ricans: Revolution and Terror in America's Colony**  
**by Nelson A Denis**

Nelson Denis's War Against All Puerto Ricans: War and Terror in America's Colony explores the systemic cultural erasure of Puerto Rico in its complex relationship with the United States. If you've ever wondered why Puerto Ricans are loud and proud about their flag, language and island, this book will give you a glimpse at how hard they fought (and continue to fight) to preserve their identity. ¡Wepa! -MG

**238. Maus**  
**by Art Spiegelman**

The first graphic novel to win the Pulitzer Prize, Maus blends history, biography, memoir, and fiction to create something entirely new. By blending his serious subject matter (his father's experience during the Holocaust) with a "low" art form, its publication catapulted comics into a larger cultural conversation, ultimately lending credibility to the oft-maligned genre. -JH

**239. We Are Not Here to Be Bystanders: A Memoir of Love and Resistance**  
**by Linda Sarsour**

Linda Sarsour describes what it was like growing up in Brooklyn as a young Palestinian American girl. Faced with the decision to pursue her education or follow her heart, Linda started her path as an activist and community organizer. She was named one of Fortune's 50 Greatest Leaders and featured among Time magazine's 100 Most Influential People in the World in 2017. -CS

**240. We the People: the Modern-Day Figures Who Have Reshaped and Affirmed the Founding Fathers' Vision of America**  
**by Juan Williams**

Award-winning journalist, novelist and political analyst Juan Williams introduces readers to a new generation of America Founders. He dives into the memorable lives of figures like President Reagan, Thurgood Marshall, Martin Luther King Jr., Billy Graham and First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, and shows how their contributions to society reshaped the fundamental aspects of America in the 21st century. -CS

**241. We the People: A History of the U.S. Constitution**  
**by Jill Lepore**

Jill Lepore sees the Constitution as a living document throughout the course of American history. One of its most prominent features, which she analyzes in detail, is the amending process, which, under the best of circumstances, enables each generation to ensure that every individual's rights will continue to be protected. -ML

**242. What is the Constitution?**  
**by Patricia Demuth**

This illustrated book is away to introduce younger readers to historical facts about the USA and democracy, the roles of the founding fathers and the making of constitutional laws of the United States. -CS

**243. When Brooklyn Was Queer****by Hugh Ryan**

This book uncovers Brooklyn's largely forgotten LGBTQ+ past from the mid-19th century to the years before Stonewall, illuminating how gender and sexuality were lived and understood—especially among working-class queer people long ignored by historians—and restoring their stories to the broader history of New York City and of sexuality itself. -KD

**244. When the Tides Held the Moon****by Venessa Vida Kelley**

Informed by the author's own Puerto Rican heritage, this historical fantasy explores intersectionality and cultural identity. Protagonist Benny Caldera's search for community with an eclectic group of sideshow performers in 20th century Coney Island leads him to a deeper understanding of himself and unlikely romance. The book includes illustrations by the author. -EC

**245. Where the Sidewalk Ends****by Shel Silverstein**

It would be hard to talk about American children's poetry without mentioning the impact of Shel Silverstein. His work is darkly funny, incisive, introspective, and continues to be topical decades after its release. The audio recording of *Where the Sidewalk Ends* even won a Grammy! -AW

**246. Where the Wild Things Are****by Maurice Sendak**

A featured design on one of BPL's library cards and the most borrowed book in the system, *Where the Wild Things Are* shows the power of dreaming, imagination, and wild rumpus. Banned in some states, as one Cleveland Press review wrote, "Boys and girls may have to shield their parents from this book. Parents are very easily scared." -MM

**247. White Noise****by Don DeLillo**

As a black cloud of lethal fumes threatens his town, a professor at a liberal arts college in Middle America makes a disturbing discovery while trying to live a somewhat normal life. This National Book Award-winning novel, a hallmark of postmodern literature, satirizes American consumerism and technology. -CS

**248. Woman Warrior****by Maxine Hong Kingston**

Originally published in 1976, the story begins with a conversation between a mother and her daughter, revealing a tragedy that the family swore to forget. The author shares her mother's stories and stories about women, Chinese cultures and traditions, transporting readers from the past to present chapter by chapter. -CS

**249. Words That Built a Nation: A Proulx Person's Collection of Historic American Documents****by Marilyn Miller**

A book featuring over 40 historical documents and speeches that introduce younger readers to the words and ideas that shape democracy. -CS

**250. Wrinkle in Time****by Madeline L'Engle**

With its battle between good and evil and its clear warning about the dangers of conformity under a totalitarian regime, this novel remains poignant and important today. Since it was first published in 1962, *A Wrinkle in Time* has been a favorite of kids and adults alike, and the plucky young heroine Meg Murray continues to inspire young readers. -JH