

Voices + Voicelessness

Enjoyed this? Take it further...

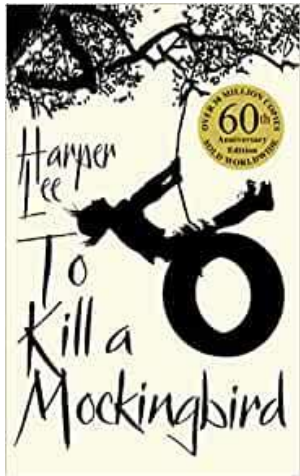


Of Mice and Men by John Steinbeck

In 1930s America, George and Lennie are two itinerant workers who must travel from ranch to ranch to find work.

At the ranch in Soledad, they meet a variety of characters and finally start to feel like they might have found a place to call home.

But events will take a decidedly tragic for the worse that will leave their dreams in tatters....



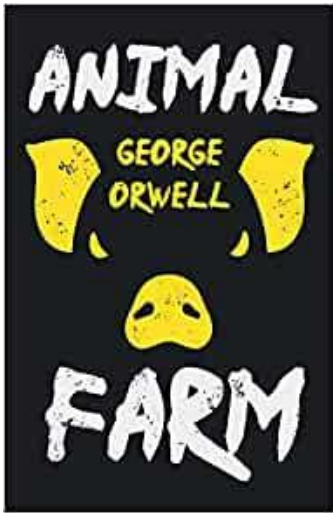
To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee

'Shoot all the bluejays you want, if you can hit 'em, but remember it's a sin to kill a mockingbird.'

A lawyer's advice to his children as he defends the real mockingbird of Harper Lee's classic novel - a black man falsely charged with the rape of a white girl. Through the young eyes of Scout and Jem Finch, Harper Lee explores with exuberant humour the irrationality of adult attitudes to race and class in the Deep South of the 1930s. The conscience of a town steeped in prejudice, violence and hypocrisy is pricked by the stamina of one man's struggle for justice. But the weight of history will only tolerate so much.

To Kill a Mockingbird is a coming-of-age story, an anti-racist novel, a historical drama of the Great Depression and a sublime example of the Southern writing tradition.

Voices + Voicelessness

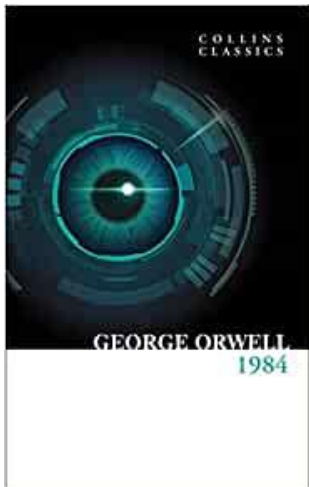


Animal Farm by George Orwell

Animal Farm tells the story of a rebellion and how it goes wrong. The animals' lives on the farm are terrible - there is not enough food, the work is hard, and animals are dying.

One day, the animals kick out the farmer and start to run the farm. Soon, a group of animals - the pigs - becomes more and more important, but things are not better for most of the animals. Life for them is the same as before.

An absolute classic and must-read!



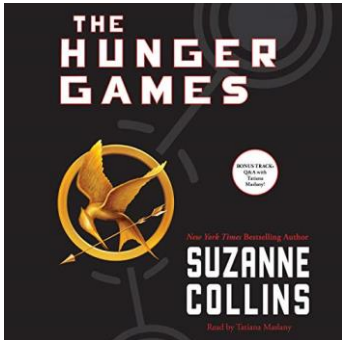
1984 by George Orwell

'It was a bright cold day in April and the clocks were striking thirteen.'

This is the opening sentence of the most influential novel of the century, in English or in any of the sixty or more languages which boast a translation. *Nineteen Eighty-Four* has been described as chilling, absorbing, satirical, momentous, prophetic and terrifying. It is all these things, and more.

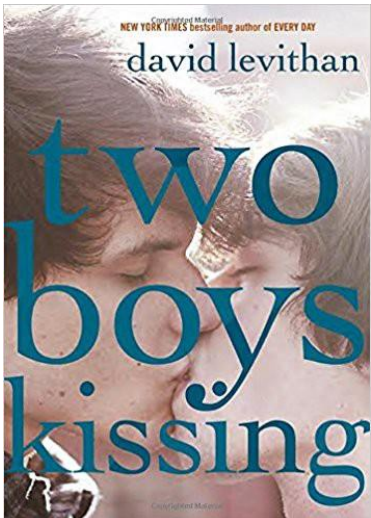
Not only does the novel have a ferocious impact, it has also made an irreplaceable contribution to the language – Big Brother, Newspeak, Thought Police, Unperson and Doublethink are just a few words it introduced.

Voices + Voicelessness



The Hunger Games by Suzanne Collins

In the dystopian future America of Panem, the children of poor communities are forced to fight to the death in a gruesome reality competition, for the entertainment of the rich and the anesthetization of the oppressed. (It's a fun book for teens!) Protagonist Katniss enters the Games to spare her sister, but when the rules of the game require her to kill her friend instead, she goes off-script—and unwittingly becomes the hero of a political resistance.

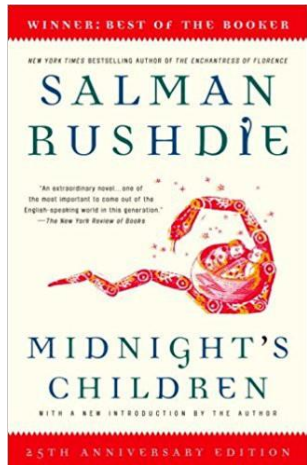


Two Boys Kissing by David Levithan

It was a challenge to narrow down to just *one* David Levithan title on this list, because he has written so many vital books that address the power of love and identity in making political change.

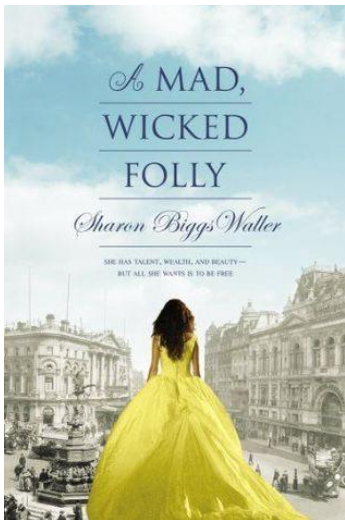
Based on a true story and written by the beloved author of *Nick and Norah's Infinite Playlist*, *The Lover's Dictionary*. After seventeen-year-olds Harry and Craig call it quits on their relationship, they partner up on a new project to beat a Guinness World Record by kissing for 32 hours straight. They're spurred on by a Greek chorus of the generation of gay men lost to AIDS, who narrate the novel. While Harry and Craig near the record-breaking hour, they become a personal and political channel for other boys dealing with their own desire on the internet, the consequences of coming-out in public, and what it means to have feelings for another person at all. For more David Levithan on politics, power, and young people make serious change, check out [Wide Awake](#), too.

Voices + Voicelessness



Midnight's Children by Salman Rushdie

Saleem Sinai, the protagonist of Rushdie's novel, is exactly as old as India's independence from Britain and partition from Pakistan: he was born at midnight on August 14, 1947. As he grows, he discovers that he and all the other Indian and Pakistani children born between midnight and 1 a.m. on that day have special powers, including the ability to communicate telepathically with each other. Saleem brings these 1,001 gifted children together in a psychic parliament, and their loves and friendships and conflicts both reflect and heal the traumas of Partition. But even with their enormous magical and political potential, are the Midnight's Children strong enough to save the country from a monstrous prime minister?



A Mad, Wicked Folly by Sharon Biggs Waller

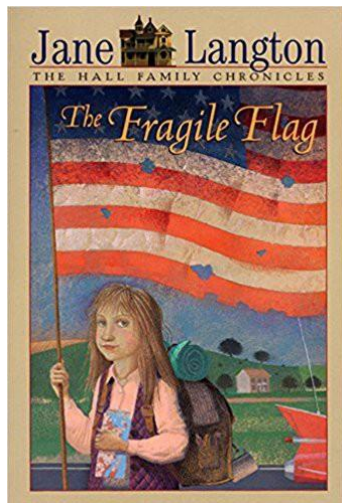
In this historical fiction, we meet another seventeen-year-old woman grappling with larger political forces limiting her personal and professional mission to go to art school and become an artist. It's 1909 and Victoria Darling is willing to do anything to make it happen. But when posing nude for an art class gets her kicked out of boarding school, she finds herself back in London. There, she gets involved in the suffragette movement and falls in love with a working-class boy (*her* muse), secretly applies to art school, and tries to figure out what she is willing to sacrifice for her dreams before her parents seal her fate as a well-married woman. It's geared towards young adults, but a compelling read for any woman who's angry and has ever felt compelled to live how she *wants* to rather than how she is *supposed* to.

Voices + Voicelessness



The Power by Naomi Alderman

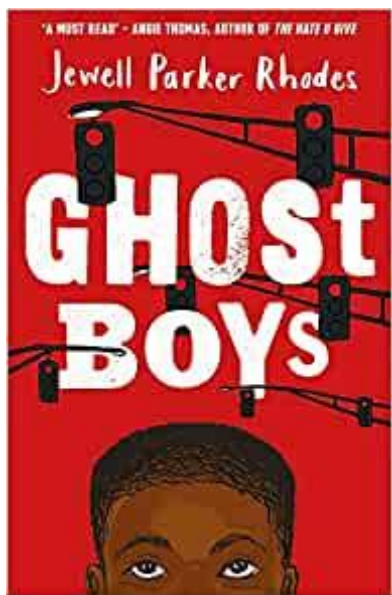
What happens when womanhood suddenly becomes a weapon? Alderman's novel is a nuanced and gripping exploration of that question. Its premise: teen girls across the world develop the ability to create an electrical charge with their bodies, strong enough to harm or kill a man. They teach this skill to older women, and women as a whole start to fight back in a way they never could before. One troubled teen becomes the kingpin (queenpin?) of a crime family; another becomes the head of a new religious movement made up of powerful girls. Alderman investigates the political, social, and interpersonal ramifications of this new power, both immediately and millennia into the future; it's both thought-provoking and impossible to put down.



The Fragile Flag by Jane Langton

The president of nine-year-old Georgie Hall's America is thoughtless, hawkish, obsessed with glitz, and in love with praise, like absolutely nobody we can think of. He's redesigned the American flag to be covered with sequins, and has announced a contest for children to write him letters in praise of how great it is. Oh, and he's also building a missile capable of destroying the earth. Georgie and her family and friends—including, as it happens, the president's grandson—decide to march from Massachusetts to D.C. in protest of the missile, carrying a tattered old non-sequined U.S. flag. Along the way they pick up new adherents, and their march enters the city as a Children's Crusade. This is a middle-grade book, but charming and refreshing in its optimism about young people's political power.

Voices + Voicelessness



Ghost Boys by Jewell Parker Rhodes

Twelve-year-old Jerome is shot by a police officer who mistakes his toy gun for a real threat. As a ghost, he observes the devastation that's been unleashed on his family and community in the wake of what they see as an unjust and brutal killing.

Soon Jerome meets another ghost: Emmett Till, a boy from a very different time but similar circumstances. Emmett helps Jerome process what has happened, on a journey towards recognizing how historical racism may have led to the events that ended his life. Jerome also meets Sarah, the daughter of the police officer, who grapples with her father's actions.

Once again Jewell Parker Rhodes deftly weaves historical and socio-political layers into a gripping and poignant story about how children and families face the complexities of today's world, and how one boy grows to understand American blackness in the aftermath of his own death.