

# Non-fiction

**Black Like Me** by John Howard Griffin

In a world still rife with bigotry and hatred, this 1960s book about a white journalist who traveled as a black man in America is still relevant.

**Che Guevara: A Revolutionary Life**

by Jon Lee Anderson

Definitive biography of the man whose life was interwoven with the conflicts and movements which defined half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

**The Devil's Highway** by Luis Alberto Urrea

Illegal immigrants in the American southwest.

**The Diary of a Young Girl** by Anne Frank

Gives an innocent voice to the millions of anonymous Jews who suffered and died under German occupation.

**Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight**

by Alexandra Fuller

A white childhood in Africa.

**Garlic and Sapphires: The Secret Life of a Critic in Disguise** by Ruth Reichl

We all need to read a book about eating, food and its importance in our lives.

**The Good War** by Studs Terkel

A must-read for those born "too late" to understand the effects of WWII on this country.

**Night** by Elie Wiesel

Devastating in its simplicity, a memoir of life in a concentration camp at the height of the Holocaust; most important because horrors endured by others will prompt us to take a stand.

**People's History of the United States**

by Howard Zinn

Enthusiastically partisan book that interprets American history from the standpoint of the marginalized, oppressed and resistant.

**Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books**

by Azar Nafisi

A vivid portrait of the repressive Iranian regime; American educated Iranian woman professor conducts clandestine book groups to exercise some degree of freedom in a totalitarian state.

## Non-fiction - contd.

**A Room of One's Own** by Virginia Woolf

Even though feminism has made great strides, we must start with ourselves.

**Shakespeare: The World as a Stage** by Bill Bryson

Easy read about Shakespeare's life and times; a crash course.

**The Silent Passage** by Gail Sheehy

Author interviews over 100 women going through the various stages of menopause; offers sage advice for navigating the great sea change.

**The Snow Leopard** by Peter Matthiessen

Memoir of an unforgettable search for peace (wife had just died of cancer) and one of the most elusive creatures on earth in a fascinating land (Himalayas).

**Travels with Charley: In Search of America**

by John Steinbeck

Travel memoir from one of the great American writers as he cruised America on the eve of his 60<sup>th</sup> birthday. Amazing, prophetic observations of 1960s America.

**The Voyage on HMS Beagle** by Charles Darwin

Darwin's five year voyage on HMS Beagle which provided him with the inspiration and evidence for the Theory of Evolution based on natural selection.

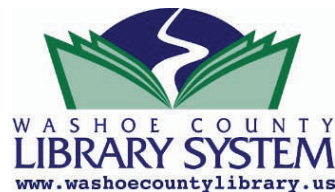
**West of Kabul, East of New York** by Tamin Ansary

View from an Afghan/American after 9/11.

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**The library has multiple copies  
of these titles, many in  
audiobook and eBook format.**

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# 50 Books to Read in a Lifetime



This list is in no particular order of importance, nor is it in any way definitive.

Its titles were contributed by seven well-read Washoe County librarians who sent along their all-time favorite books.

Authors from many countries are represented because we believe reading should enhance our understanding of the broader world.

# Fiction

**The Accidental Tourist** by Anne Tyler  
Beautifully written tale of bereavement and its impact on relationships. Funny, sad and full of wonderful characters.

**Anna Karenina** by Leo Tolstoy  
Russian passion is unparalleled.

**Beloved** by Toni Morrison  
One of the most powerfully written novels of slavery and its unthinkable legacy.

**Captain Corelli's Mandolin** by Louis de Bernieres  
Set on Greek Cephalonia during WWII, it explores how individuals share a common humanity even as war and national allegiances tear them apart.

**The Children's Book** by A.S. Byatt  
A literary feast telling the story of turn-of-the-century English characters and their world, one brimming with talk of anarchy, women's suffrage and the devastation of war.

**The Corrections** by Jonathan Franzen  
Epic tale of the dysfunctional Lambert family that is a hugely courageous, funny, empathetic critique of modern times.

**The Distant Land of My Father** by Bo Caldwell  
Treasure of a story that explores the complex father-daughter relationship, their choices and consequences.

**Even Cowgirls Get the Blues** by Tom Robbins  
Counterculture novel written in the 1970s, this is a hilarious, idea-driven novel of feminism, art and freedom.

**A Fine Balance** by Rohinton Mistry  
Bombay in 1975, four characters share their lives and hopes during a declared state of emergency.

**Gone With the Wind** by Margaret Mitchell  
The book is better than the movie, trust us.

**The Good Earth** by Pearl S. Buck  
Rags to riches in 1920s pre-revolutionary China. Farmer Wang Lung and his slave bride work tirelessly on the land to survive and thrive.

## Fiction—contd.

**The Great Gatsby** by F. Scott Fitzgerald  
Beautiful, spare prose that captures the moral vacuity of a post-war America obsessed with wealth and status.

**The Handmaid's Tale** by Margaret Atwood  
Oppressive use of women by a controlling, nightmarish society; scary, futuristic scenario.

**The House of Mirth** by Edith Wharton  
Insightful analysis of the characters' desires and intentions in a novel full of scandal, assassination and suicide.

**Imperfect Birds** by Anne Lamott  
Extraordinary story about a teen's drug addiction, her family's denial and the brave choices made toward healing.

**A Judgment in Stone** by Ruth Rendell  
Psychological thriller featuring a cleaning woman so mortified by her inability to read, she must do away with those who discover her illiteracy.

**The Left Hand of Darkness** by Ursula K. Le Guin  
Science fiction story that explores the questions: would a race without a gender be better than our own; and can cultural prejudices be overcome?

**Midnight's Children** by Salman Rushdie  
Rushdie's brilliant story of the birth of Pakistan; Muslim and Hindu struggles continue to impact the world.

**The Murder of Roger Ackroyd** by Agatha Christie  
Hercule Poirot, genius Belgian sleuth, unravels the mysterious death of a rich manufacturer. Plot twists abound.

**The Namesake** by Jhumpa Lahiri  
Astonishing writing filled with insights about the conflicts of cross-cultural life.

**One Hundred Years of Solitude**  
by Gabriel Garcia Marquez  
Known for its use of magical realism, this is a Colombian tale of politics, myth and magic.

**Our Mutual Friend** by Charles Dickens  
Dickens' last completed novel, this all-encompassing social satire is considered Dickens at his very best.

## Fiction—contd.

**Pillars of the Earth** by Ken Follett  
Epic tale of Tom Builder and his dream to build a cathedral in 12<sup>th</sup> century England. Strong, independent female characters.

**Pride and Prejudice** by Jane Austen  
A timeless story of the Bennet sisters and the challenges of courtship and marriage in Regency England.

**Slaughterhouse Five** by Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.  
A deeply, but blackly, funny novel of war and the human condition.

**Sophie's Choice** by William Styron  
Dark and disturbing tale which analyzes the theme of racial hatred and tyranny.

**Tales of the City** by Armistead Maupin  
Set in San Francisco, the highly entertaining story of a Barbary Street neighborhood and its colorful characters.

**The Thousand Acres** by Jane Smiley  
King Lear set in rural 1980s Iowa. The madness of the father is wrought upon the daughters and the community.

**To Kill a Mockingbird** by Harper Lee  
Scout's innocence filters nothing.

**A Tree Grows in Brooklyn** by Betty Smith  
More than a coming-of-age novel, this is a disturbing, unsentimental portrait of urban life at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

**Wicked: the Life and Times of the Wicked Witch of the West** by Gregory Maguire  
We need to know what really happened in Oz, or, each girl chooses her own path.

**World According to Garp** by John Irving  
Life is tough and full of tragedy; laughter is one way of enduring it.

**Wuthering Heights** by Emily Bronte  
Lovers Heathcliff and Cathy are doomed by their different social classes. Heathcliff's bitterness, malevolence and revenge drive this Victorian novel.