

National Endowment for the Arts



**THE BIG
READ**

**“You don’t have
to burn books to
destroy a culture.
Just get people
to stop reading
them.”**

—RAY BRADBURY

**NATIONAL
ENDOWMENT
FOR THE ARTS**



**THE BIG
READ**



November 2008



NATIONAL
ENDOWMENT
FOR THE ARTS
A great nation
deserves great art.

The National Endowment for the Arts is a public agency dedicated to supporting excellence in the arts, both new and established; bringing the arts to all Americans; and providing leadership in arts education. Established by Congress in 1965 as an independent agency of the federal government, the Endowment is the nation's largest annual funder of the arts, bringing great art to all 50 states, including rural areas, inner cities, and military bases.



INSTITUTE of
Museum and Library
SERVICES

The Institute of Museum and Library Services is the primary source of federal support for the nation's 122,000 libraries and 17,500 museums. The Institute's mission is to create strong libraries and museums that connect people to information and ideas. The Institute works at the national level and in coordination with state and local organizations to sustain heritage, culture, and knowledge; enhance learning and innovation; and support professional development.



Arts Midwest connects people throughout the Midwest and the world to meaningful arts opportunities, sharing creativity, knowledge, and understanding across boundaries. One of six nonprofit regional arts organizations in the United States, Arts Midwest's history spans more than 25 years.

Educational materials for American Literary Landmarks are made possible through the generous support of the **Poetry Foundation**.

Transportation for The Big Read is provided by **Ford**.

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NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS

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Washington DC 20506-0001
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Office of the Chairman



The Big Read is the largest literary program in the history of the federal government. An initiative of the National Endowment for the Arts, in partnership with the Institute of Museum and Library Services and Arts Midwest, The Big Read is designed to bring the transformative power of literature into the lives of Americans.

A 2004 NEA report, *Reading at Risk: A Survey of Literary Reading in America*, identified a critical decline in reading for pleasure among American adults. In 2005, The Big Read was created to address the issue directly by providing citizens with the opportunity to read and discuss a single book within their communities. By June 2009, more than 500 Big Read programs will have occurred across all 50 states, in cities small and large, rural and urban.

The purpose of The Big Read, like the purpose of literature itself, is pleasure. Not necessarily an easy pleasure, but a deliciously rich and complex one. A great book combines enlightenment with enchantment. Literature awakens our imagination and enlarges our humanity. It can even offer harrowing insights that somehow console and comfort us.

The prospect of an America where only a few people share a love of reading is just too lonely to bear. Even if statistics didn't show that readers are more active in their own communities and more engaged in their own lives, the act of reading would still be an indispensable part of what makes us fully human.

It is for these reasons that we at the NEA invite you to join The Big Read. This catalogue features the books and poets included in The Big Read library. These great works of literature were selected by our Readers Circle—a group of distinguished librarians, professors, journalists, and fiction writers from across the country. We hope you'll agree that each book selected for The Big Read has the potential to inspire, enlighten, and enchant.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dana Gioia".

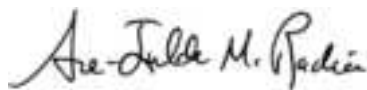
Dana Gioia
Chairman
National Endowment for the Arts



The Institute of Museum and Library Services is proud to partner with the National Endowment for the Arts on The Big Read. IMLS is the primary source of federal support for the nation's 122,000 libraries and 17,500 museums. Our involvement in this program promotes our mission to connect people to information and ideas.

We are encouraging libraries everywhere—in schools, on campuses, and in communities—to participate in The Big Read. Libraries are perfect partners positioned as centers of civic engagement for The Big Read. They are trusted places where groups come together to learn. And they have librarians—well-schooled experts who know about learning and literacy, and who know their communities and bring the diverse organizations contained therein to a single table. Such partnerships, focused on learning and literacy, unite people. Literacy and literature sharpen the imagination, promote empathy and learning, and hone critical thinking skills.

The Big Read is an outstanding initiative that benefits our entire nation. It has already united communities. We encourage your enthusiastic participation.



Anne-Imelda M. Radice, Ph.D.

Director

Institute of Museum and Library Services

Application Guidelines for The Big Read

The Big Read is an initiative of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), in partnership with the Institute of Museum and Library Services, designed to revitalize the role of literature in American culture and bring the transformative power of literature into the lives of its citizens. Created by the NEA in cooperation with Arts Midwest, The Big Read brings together partners across the country to encourage citizens to read for pleasure and enlightenment.

An organization applying to participate must be a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization or a division of state, local, or tribal government. Eligible applicants include such organizations as literary centers, libraries, museums, colleges and universities, art centers, historical societies, arts councils, tribal governments, humanities councils, literary festivals, and arts organizations. Applicant organizations must partner with a library (if the organization is not itself a library).

Community organizations participating in The Big Read develop and produce a well-planned and well-attended community-wide program with innovative, diverse activities and widespread community partnerships and participation. Programming should last approximately 4–6 weeks and focus on one book from the list of available Big Read titles.

Organizations selected to participate in The Big Read will receive a grant; financial support to attend a national orientation meeting; Reader's, Teacher's, and Audio Guides for their selected title; promotional materials for broad distribution; access to an online Organizer's Guide for developing and managing Big Read activities; inclusion of the organization and its events on The Big Read Web site; and the prestige of participating in a highly visible national initiative.

To learn more about The Big Read, including current programming and grant application deadlines, visit www.NEABigRead.org.

International Partnerships for The Big Read

The Big Read's international partnerships are designed to deepen dialogue and cultural understanding with other countries through the reading of great literature. In 2007, the first Big Read international partnership was formed with Russia. In coordination with the Open World Leadership Center and the Library for Foreign Literature in Moscow, a Russian delegation visited selected Big Read communities in the United States to learn how the program works. Subsequently, two regions in Russia, Ivanovo and Saratov, hosted Big Reads with programming centered on *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee. In early 2008, communities in three states—Illinois, Indiana, and Pennsylvania—took part in the U.S. component of Big Read Russia by hosting Big Read programs celebrating Leo Tolstoy's *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*.

As part of the Global Cultural Initiative undertaken with the U.S. Department of State and managed by Arts Midwest, the NEA expanded The Big Read to include Egypt. Between September 2008 and June 2009, four U.S. communities are reading Nobel laureate Egyptian author Naguib Mahfouz's *The Thief and the Dogs*. These grantees visited Egypt to learn about Mahfouz's life and writing, as well as Egyptian literature, history, government, and customs. Three Egyptian organizations are collaborating on this program: the American University in Cairo, the Bibliotheca Alexandrina, and the Egyptian Association for Educational Resources. Representatives of these Egyptian organizations visited the U.S. in spring 2008 to observe programming and learn how to adapt The Big Read for an Egyptian audience. Egyptian communities will conduct Big Reads around new translations of Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* and Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*, as well as a reissued translation of John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*.

These Egyptian communities will also use many of The Big Read materials for these books, which will be translated into Arabic.

The Big Read with Mexico brought together partners on both sides of the border for a pilot program in September and October 2008. The book of Mexican literature, *Sun, Stone, and Shadows: 20 Great Mexican Short Stories*, was published expressly for The Big Read by Mexico's Fondo de Cultura Económica. Its stories were selected with U.S. readers in mind. For the pilot program, the El Paso Public Library hosted the book's editor and an author of one of the stories for activities in El Paso, Texas, and across the border in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico. The University of Texas at Brownsville and Texas Southmost College conducted Big Read activities in Brownsville, Texas, and in neighboring Matamoros, Mexico.



These three international titles—*The Death of Ivan Ilyich*, *The Thief and the Dogs*, and *Sun, Stone, and Shadows*—will remain permanent selections in The Big Read library and are open to all applicants. For grant application guidelines, including information about The Big Read's current international partnership opportunities, visit www.NEABigRead.org.

How The Big Read Books Are Chosen

The National Endowment for the Arts is renowned for the panel process that informs all our grants, including national initiatives such as The Big Read. To select books for The Big Read, the NEA enlists a panel of literary experts and laypeople with a passion for literature to serve on the Readers Circle. The panelists make recommendations, which are then reviewed by the NEA's Literature staff.

To give cities and towns even greater choice, the number of Big Read books has continued to increase as the program expands. Twenty-seven books embodying a broad array of traditions, cultures, and regions have been selected so far. Though The Big Read offers communities a diverse choice of reading, the one constant is literary excellence.

The Readers Circle

Wendell Berry
poet and novelist

Dr. James H. Billington
Librarian of Congress

Matthew Brucoli
scholar and professor
(1931-2008)

James Lee Burke
author

Lan Samantha Chang
author and professor

Maureen Corrigan
author, book critic,
and professor

Michael Dirda
book critic

Anne Fadiman
author and essayist

Pico Iyer
journalist and
novelist

Mitchell Kaplan
former American
Booksellers
Association president

Ted Kooser
former United States
Poet Laureate

Jim Lehrer
journalist and author

Jonathan Lethem
author

Aimee Mann
musician

Lorrie Moore
author

Azar Nafisi
author and professor

Marilyn Nelson
former Connecticut
State Poet Laureate

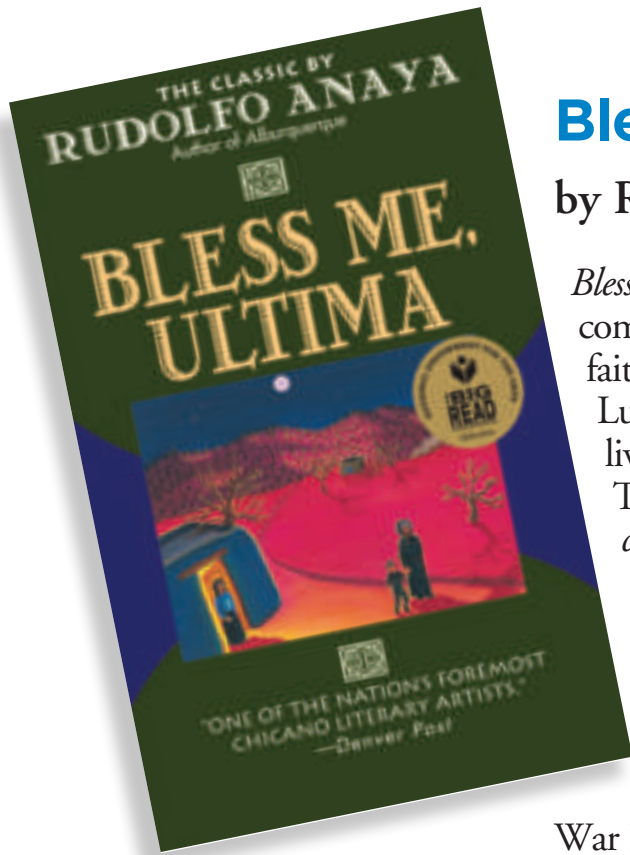
Kathleen Norris
author

P.J. O'Rourke
essayist and humorist

Nancy Pearl
author and librarian

Richard Rodriguez
author

Kevin Starr
historian and former
California State
Librarian



Bless Me, Ultima

by Rudolfo Anaya

Bless Me, Ultima (1972) by Rudolfo Anaya is a coming-of-age novel about pride and assimilation, faith and doubt. The summer before Antonio Juan Luna Márquez turns seven, an old woman comes to live with his family in Guadalupe, New Mexico. This woman—called La Grande or Ultima—is a *curandera*, a traditional healer feared by many but respected by all. Ultima teaches Antonio, and their bond deepens as he endures several events that profoundly shake his understanding of his heritage and destiny. Antonio’s dreams often foreshadow the future and feature his three older brothers, just demobilized from World War II. These surreal dreams also reflect his existential questions: Why is there evil in the world? Why does God sometimes punish the good? Where will I go after death? How can I know the truth?

THEMES:

cultural identity, death, education, religion, tradition

PERFORMANCE POSSIBILITY:

- *La Llorona*, opera in three acts, libretto by Rudolfo Anaya

ACCESSIBILITY MATERIALS:

- unabridged audio version available
- National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS) resources available (www.loc.gov/nls/)

Reader’s Guide available in Spanish



THE AUTHOR

Rudolfo Anaya was born in the small village of Pastura, New Mexico, to a cowboy father and his bride. The author of more than 30 books, including *The Heart of Aztlan* (1976), *Tortuga* (1979), and *Albuquerque* (1992), he lives in New Mexico with his wife, Patricia. In 2001 Anaya received the National Medal of Arts, the nation’s highest award for artists.

“I was happy with Ultima . . . She taught me to listen to the mystery of the groaning earth and to feel complete in the fulfillment of its time. My soul grew under her careful guidance.”

—from *Bless Me, Ultima*

Fahrenheit 451

by Ray Bradbury

On October 19, 1953, a young Californian published a novel with the odd title *Fahrenheit 451*. In a gripping story both disturbing and poetic, Ray Bradbury took the materials of pulp fiction and transformed them into a visionary parable of a society gone awry, in which firemen burn books and the state suppresses learning. Meanwhile, the citizenry sits by in drug-induced and media-saturated indifference. One fireman, Guy Montag, secretly saves a few books from a burning house and begins to read deeply for the first time in his life. As his knowledge expands, his growing dissatisfaction leads him to leave home and join a resistance force of readers, each one responsible for memorizing—and therefore preserving—an entire book. More relevant than ever a half-century later, *Fahrenheit 451* has achieved the distinction of being both a literary classic and a perennial bestseller.

THEMES:

censorship, courage, the effects of technology on society, honor, justice

FILM ADAPTATION:

- *Fahrenheit 451* (1966, starring Oskar Werner and Julie Christie, directed by Francois Truffaut)

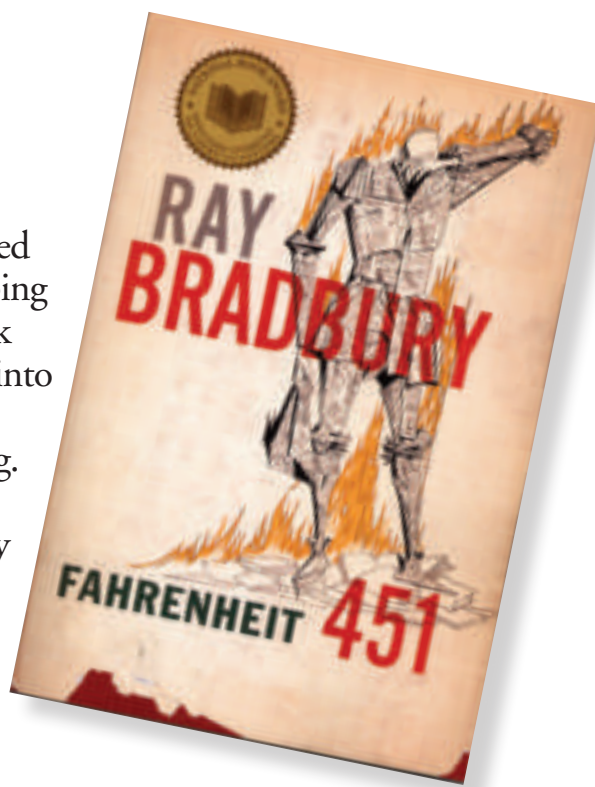
PERFORMANCE POSSIBILITIES:

- *Fahrenheit 451*, play by Ray Bradbury (www.dramaticpublishing.com)
- *Fahrenheit 451*, film score by Bernard Herrmann
- *Fahrenheit 451*, professionally staged adaptation through the American Place Theater's Literature to Life program

ACCESSIBILITY MATERIALS:

- unabridged audio versions available
- National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS) resources available (www.loc.gov/nls/)

Reader's Guide available in Spanish



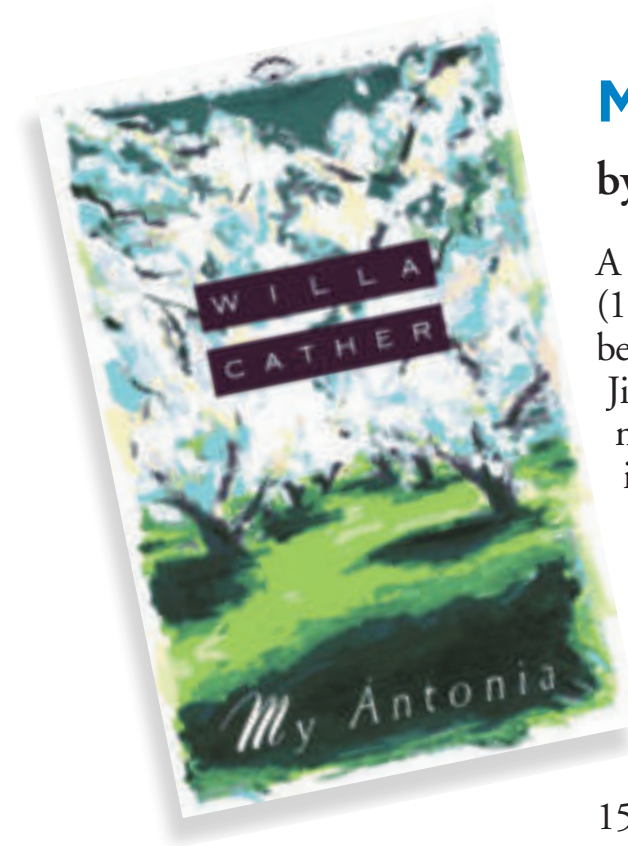
THE AUTHOR

Ray Bradbury was born in 1920, in Waukegan, Illinois. When his family drove across the country to California, young Ray would pile out of their car at every stop to explore the local library. With the publication of *The Martian Chronicles* in 1950, Bradbury ensured his own lasting place on library shelves. The author of more than 85 books, Bradbury lives in Los Angeles.



“It was a pleasure to burn. It was a special pleasure to see things eaten, to see things blackened and changed.”

—from *Fahrenheit 451*



My *Antonia*

by Willa Cather

A beloved American classic, Willa Cather's *My Antonia* (1918) may be best summarized by its epigraph—"the best days are the first to flee." The adult narrator, Jim Burden, looks back on his childhood through memories of his friend, Antonia Shimerda, an inquisitive immigrant girl from Bohemia. Like Cather, 10-year-old Jim has left Virginia for Nebraska by train and is shocked by the barren prairie on his first wagon ride. With time, he comes to love the land and his immigrant neighbors, even after he leaves Nebraska to pursue his education in Boston and his career in New York. Although Jim hears rumors of Antonia's ruin, more than 15 years pass before he musters the courage to return to Nebraska and find out what really happened to her. The novel teems with romance, violence, tenderness, cruelty, and tragedy—all bustling side by side in a narrative at once elegant and compassionate.



THE AUTHOR

Born in 1873 in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley, Willa Cather left nine years later to join her grandparents in the Nebraska territory. Her best-known novels—*O Pioneers!* (1913), *The Song of the Lark* (1915), and *My Antonia* (1918)—all take place in Nebraska, but she lived most of her life in New York. She died in 1947 and is buried in Jaffrey, New Hampshire.

THEMES:

friendship, the immigrant experience in America, memory, the taming of the land, youth

DOCUMENTARY FILM:

- *Willa Cather: The Road Is All* (PBS *American Masters* documentary)

PERFORMANCE POSSIBILITY:

- Music by Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904), the Bohemian composer whose Symphony No. 9 ("From the New World") and String Quartet in F (the "American" Quartet) are said to draw on spirituals and Native American themes absorbed during an 1890s sojourn in Iowa and New York

ACCESSIBILITY MATERIALS:

- unabridged audio version available
- large print edition available
- National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS) resources available (www.loc.gov/nls/)

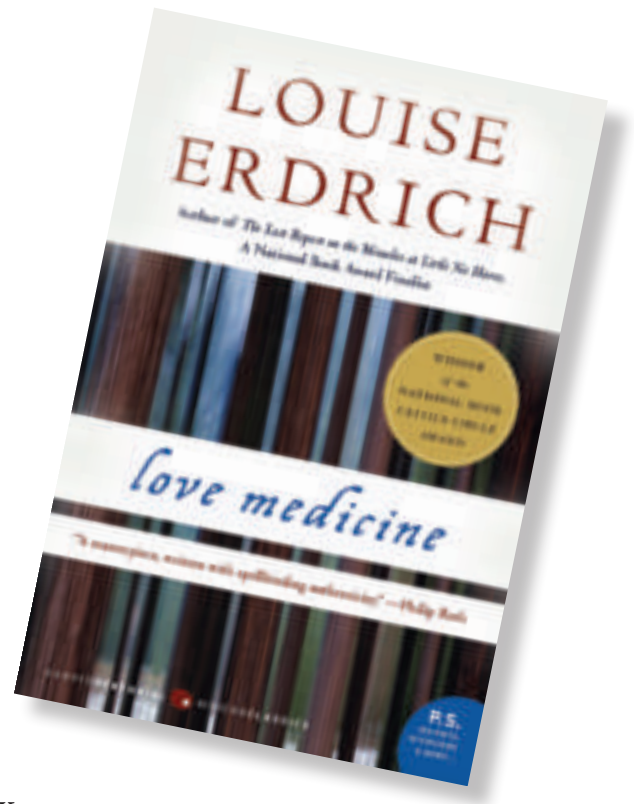
"There was nothing but land . . . I had never before looked up at the sky when there was not a familiar mountain ridge against it. But this was the complete dome of heaven."

—from *My Antonia*

Love Medicine

by Louise Erdrich

An impressive range of comic and tragic voices narrate *Love Medicine* (1984). Set between 1934 and 1984, the novel traces several generations of two interconnected families—the Kashpaws and the Lamartines. Their saga is told primarily by Chippewa men and women, some of whom live on the reservation near a fictional North Dakota town. The novel begins as June Kashpaw, drunk and disoriented, sets off on foot into a blizzard. She never makes it home. Her relatives gather to mourn and stitch together memories of June’s life. With these voices, Erdrich leads the reader through the interwoven lives of generations. *Love Medicine* is a powerful book about vibrant, complex characters and the enduring power of love.



THEMES:

anger, desire, faith, family, healing, tradition

PERFORMANCE POSSIBILITY:

- *Love Medicine*, a theatrical adaptation by Meryl Friedman

ACCESSIBILITY MATERIALS:

- abridged audio version available
- National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS) resources available (www.loc.gov/nls/)

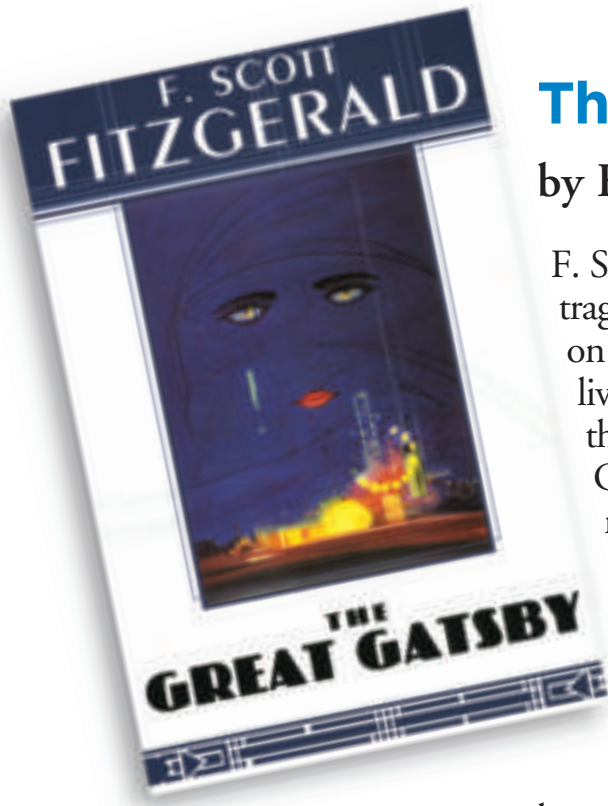
“At times the whole sky was ringed in shooting points and puckers of light gathering and falling, pulsing, fading, rhythmical as breathing. All of a piece. As if the sky were a pattern of nerves and our thought and memories traveled across it. As if the sky were one gigantic memory for us all.”

—from *Love Medicine*

THE AUTHOR

Louise Erdrich was born in 1954 in Minnesota, the eldest of seven children. Erdrich’s heritage is Ojibwe, French, and German. *Love Medicine* (1984), her first novel, won the National Book Critics Circle Award. Erdrich has published several other novels, children’s books, collections of poetry, and works of nonfiction. She lives in Minnesota. She received an NEA Literature Fellowship in 1983.





The Great Gatsby

by F. Scott Fitzgerald

F. Scott Fitzgerald's 1925 novel *The Great Gatsby* is a tragic love story, a mystery, and a social commentary on American life. The novel concerns the wasteful lives of four wealthy characters as observed by the narrator, Nick Carraway. The story of Jay Gatsby's desperate quest to win back his first love reverberates with themes at once characteristically American and universally human, among them the importance of honesty, the temptations of wealth, and the struggle to escape the past. Though Gatsby's love, Daisy, pledged to wait for his return from World War I, she married wealthy Tom Buchanan. Gatsby still worships her as his golden girl and, having made a great fortune, sets out to win her back. In the novel's famous conclusion, the characters collide, leaving human wreckage in their wake.



THE AUTHOR

Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald was born in St. Paul, Minnesota, in 1896. During World War I, Fitzgerald was stationed in Montgomery, Alabama, where he met his future wife, Zelda. After *The Great Gatsby*, Fitzgerald took nine years to finish his next novel, *Tender Is the Night* (1934). He died of a heart attack in Hollywood in 1940 and is buried in Rockville, Maryland.

THEMES:

class, fidelity, living in the past, loyalty, temptation

FILM ADAPTATION:

- *The Great Gatsby* (1974, starring Robert Redford, adapted by Francis Ford Coppola)

PERFORMANCE POSSIBILITIES:

- *The Great Gatsby*, theatrical adaptation by Simon Levy
- *The Great Gatsby*, opera by John Harbison, libretto by Murray Horwitz

ACCESSIBILITY MATERIALS:

- unabridged audio version available
- large print edition available
- National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS) resources available (www.loc.gov/nls/)

“At his lips’ touch she blossomed for him like a flower and the incarnation was complete.”

—from *The Great Gatsby*

A Lesson Before Dying

by Ernest J. Gaines

Set in Louisiana in the 1940s, Ernest J. Gaines's *A Lesson Before Dying* (1993) transports the reader into the pre-Civil Rights-era South, where the divide between races was deeper than the Mississippi. Jefferson, a young uneducated black man, is sentenced to death for a white storekeeper's murder. The teacher at a former plantation's schoolhouse, Grant Wiggins, is asked to help Jefferson die with dignity. Though Grant desperately wants to escape the poverty and racism of the parish, he is rooted to the area by a sense of duty and cannot break away. Using evocative narration and pitch-perfect dialogue, Gaines treats his characters and the Louisiana countryside with honesty and understanding. The result is an evocative look at the brutality of racism and the power of compassion.

THEMES:

duty, education, family, human dignity, racism

FILM ADAPTATION:

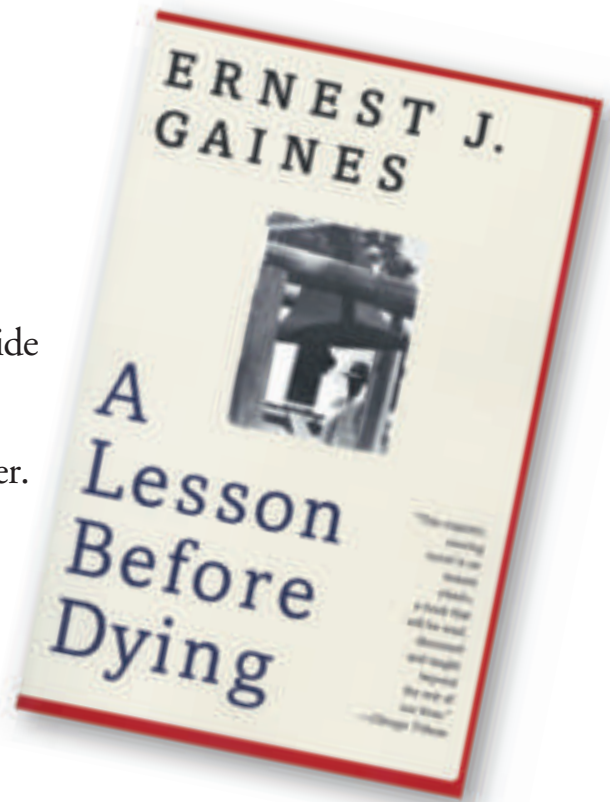
- *A Lesson Before Dying* (1999, starring Don Cheadle, directed by Joseph Sargent)

PERFORMANCE POSSIBILITY:

- *A Lesson Before Dying*, theatrical adaptation by Romulus Linney

ACCESSIBILITY MATERIALS:

- unabridged audio version available
- large print edition available
- National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS) resources available (www.loc.gov/nls/)



THE AUTHOR

Ernest J. Gaines was born on a plantation in Pointe Coupee Parish, Louisiana. At 15, he joined his mother and stepfather in Vallejo, California. The author of other acclaimed novels such as *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman* (1971) and *A Gathering of Old Men* (1983), he is Professor Emeritus of Creative Writing at University of Louisiana at Lafayette and lives in Oscar, Louisiana. He received an NEA Literature Fellowship in 1968.



“You have the chance of being bigger than anyone who has ever lived on this plantation or come from this little town. You can do it if you try.”

—from *A Lesson Before Dying*



The Maltese Falcon

by Dashiell Hammett

Dashiell Hammett's third novel, *The Maltese Falcon* (1930), fulfilled his stated ambition to elevate the detective novel to the status of literature. Hammett's clean prose and sharp ear for dialogue produced a compulsively readable novel that is at once a thriller, a love story, and a dry, acerbic comedy. A tough, independent detective in San Francisco, Sam Spade gets hired under false pretenses by the beautiful and mysterious Brigid O'Shaughnessy. After his partner turns up dead, Spade's personal moral code dictates that "when a man's partner is killed he's supposed to do something about it." He soon realizes the death is linked to a group of shady characters seeking an elusive jeweled falcon statuette once owned by the legendary Knights of Malta. The quest for the falcon and the killer has enough twists and surprises to keep the reader turning the pages, chasing the truth.



THE AUTHOR

Dashiell Hammett was born in St. Mary's County, Maryland, in 1894. In 1920 he moved to San Francisco and began writing detective stories for pulp magazines. Works such as *Red Harvest* (1929), *The Maltese Falcon* (1930), and *The Thin Man* (1934) cemented his reputation as a master of hard-boiled fiction. Hammett died in 1961, and is buried in Arlington National Cemetery.

THEMES:

greed, honor, justice, loyalty

FILM ADAPTATIONS:

- *The Maltese Falcon* (1931, starring Ricardo Cortez)
- *Satan Met a Lady* (1936, starring Bette Davis)
- *The Maltese Falcon* (1941, starring Humphrey Bogart; adapted and directed by John Huston)

ACCESSIBILITY MATERIALS:

- unabridged audio version available
- National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS) resources available (www.loc.gov/nls/)

Reader's Guide available in Spanish

"My clients are entitled to a decent amount of secrecy.... As far as I can see, my best chance of clearing myself of the trouble you're trying to make for me is by bringing in the murderers—all tied up."

—from *The Maltese Falcon*

A Farewell to Arms

by Ernest Hemingway

Ernest Hemingway is the notorious tough guy of modern American letters, but it would be hard to find a more tender and rapturous love story than *A Farewell to Arms* (1929). It also would be hard to find a more harrowing American novel about World War I. The tragic love story between an American ambulance driver, Lieutenant Frederic Henry, and his English nurse, Catherine Barkley, takes place in Italy and Switzerland. Badly wounded at the front, Frederic finds himself bedridden in a Milan hospital, where he and Catherine fall deeply in love. While Frederic recovers from surgery and prepares to return to action, Catherine discovers that she is pregnant. Though the couple escapes the war, there are dangers that cannot be anticipated or avoided. The final chapter is one of the most famous, and heartbreaking, conclusions in modern literature.

THEMES:

courage, death, honor, liberation, love, war

FILM ADAPTATIONS:

- *A Farewell to Arms* (1932, starring Gary Cooper and Helen Hayes)
- *A Farewell to Arms* (1957, starring Rock Hudson and Jennifer Jones)

DOCUMENTARY FILM:

- *Ernest Hemingway: Rivers to the Sea* (PBS *American Masters* documentary)

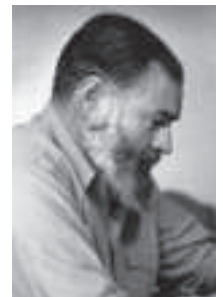
ACCESSIBILITY MATERIALS:

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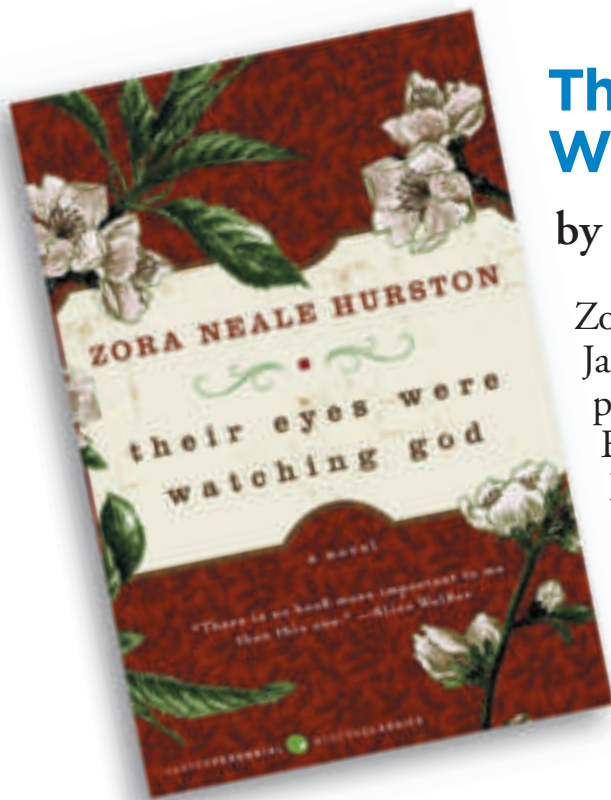
THE AUTHOR

Born in Oak Park, Illinois, in 1899, Ernest Hemingway served, like his hero in *A Farewell to Arms*, as an ambulance driver in World War I, received a severe wound, and fell in love with one of his nurses. His other classic works include *The Sun Also Rises* (1926) and *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940). He died in Ketchum, Idaho, in 1961.



“If people bring so much courage to this world the world has to kill them to break them, so of course it kills them. The world breaks every one and afterward many are strong at the broken places.”

—from *A Farewell to Arms*



Their Eyes Were Watching God

by Zora Neale Hurston

Zora Neale Hurston's 1937 novel chronicles Janie Crawford's journey from her grandmother's plantation shack, to marriage, to the Florida Everglades—until a tragedy brings her back home. From this vantage point, Janie narrates her life story to her best friend, satisfying the “oldest human longing—self-revelation.” Hurston's conviction that black culture is valuable and unique comes through in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* via its harmonious blend of folklore and black idiom. In Janie Crawford,

Hurston rejects the 19th- and 20th-century stereotypes for women and creates a protagonist who—though silenced for most of her life—ultimately finds her own voice.



THE AUTHOR

Zora Neale Hurston was born in 1891 in Notasulga, Alabama. Her lifelong passion to record the many voices of her people informed her fiction and anthropology, including *Mules and Men* (1935), *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937), and her autobiography, *Dust Tracks on a Road* (1942). Hurston died in poverty and obscurity in 1960, years before her books came back into print.

THEMES:

finding one's voice, folklore, racism, religion, sexism

FILM ADAPTATION:

- *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (2005, starring Halle Berry, adapted by Suzan-Lori Parks)

PERFORMANCE POSSIBILITIES:

- *Jump at the Sun*, radio play by Kathleen McGhee-Andersen (produced by L.A. Theatre Works)
- *Mule Bone*, play by Hurston and Langston Hughes
- *Zora*, professionally staged adaptation through the American Place Theater's Literature to Life program

ACCESSIBILITY MATERIALS:

- unabridged audio version available
- National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS) resources available (www.loc.gov/nls/)

“The wind came back with triple fury, and put out the light for the last time.... They seemed to be staring at the dark, but their eyes were watching God.”

—from *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

Washington Square

by Henry James

Catherine Sloper, the steadfast heroine of *Washington Square*, craves love—from the father disappointed in her lack of good looks and intellect, from the aunt raising the motherless girl, and especially from her handsome suitor, Morris Townsend. Her father, refusing to believe his unremarkable daughter could attract Townsend with anything other than her wealth, forbids the match and threatens to disinherit her. Faced with choosing between obedience to her father and marrying the man she loves, Catherine accompanies her father on an extended trip to Europe but tries to maintain her relationship with Townsend. Though the novel was not commercially successful when published in 1880, it gained popularity as Henry James's literary reputation grew and has become a much-loved classic whose themes of loyalty and love still resonate with readers.

THEMES:

dignity, fidelity, honor, love, obedience, social expectations

FILM ADAPTATIONS:

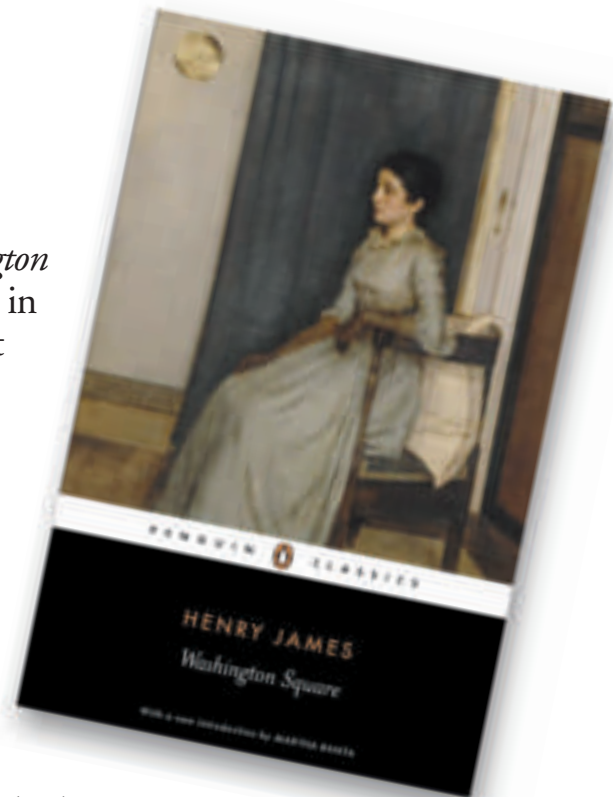
- *The Heiress* (1949, adapted from *Washington Square*, starring Olivia de Havilland)
- *Washington Square* (1997, starring Jennifer Jason Leigh)

PERFORMANCE POSSIBILITIES:

- *The Heiress*, 1947 play adapted by Augustus and Ruth Goetz
- *Washington Square*, opera by Thomas Pasatieri, libretto by K. Elmslie
- *Washington Square*, ballet set to music by Charles Ives, choreography by Rudolf Nureyev, adapted by Nureyev and Jean-Claude Carrière

ACCESSIBILITY MATERIALS:

- unabridged audio version available
- large print edition available
- National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS) resources available (www.loc.gov/nls/)



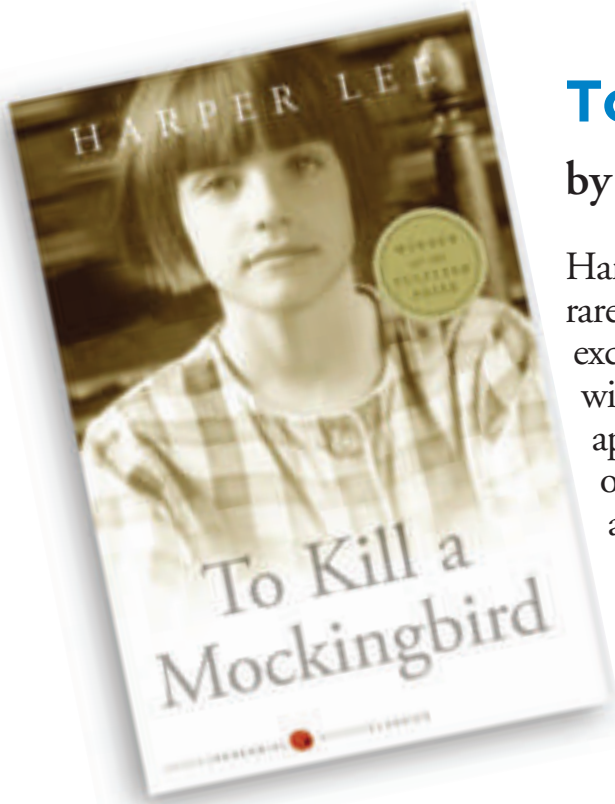
THE AUTHOR

Henry James was born in New York City in 1843. After the publication of *Daisy Miller* (1879) and *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881), James enjoyed popularity in Europe and America while maintaining friendships with such writers as Edith Wharton, Ivan Turgenev, and Gustave Flaubert. Eventually a British subject, he received the Order of Merit from King George V in 1916 and died a month later.



“She grew up a very robust and healthy child, and her father, as he looked at her, often said to himself that, such as she was, he at least need have no fear of losing her.”

—from *Washington Square*



To Kill a Mockingbird

by Harper Lee

Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1960) is the rare American novel that can be discovered with excitement in adolescence and reread into adulthood without fear of disappointment. Few novels so appealingly or convincingly evoke the daily world of childhood. Scout Finch, the novel's narrator, and her brother, Jem, live in the small, rural town of Maycomb, Alabama, where they attempt to lure a reclusive neighbor, Boo Radley, out of his house. When the children's father, the attorney Atticus Finch, agrees to defend a black man falsely accused of raping a white woman, his decision angers the townspeople and endangers his family. Tying the stories together are his simple but profound words, "You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view. . . . Until you climb into his skin and walk around in it." For many young people, this funny and humane novel becomes their first big read, the grown-up story against which all later books will be measured.



THE AUTHOR

Harper Lee was born in Monroeville, Alabama, in 1926. She attended Huntingdon College in Montgomery, Alabama, and studied law at the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa before moving to New York City to pursue a career as a writer. Lee's only novel, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, received the Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 1961 and has sold more than 30 million copies in 18 languages.

"The one thing that doesn't abide by majority rule is a person's conscience."

—from *To Kill a Mockingbird*

THEMES:

justice, literacy, poverty, racism, responsibility

FILM ADAPTATION:

- *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1962, starring Gregory Peck, adapted by Horton Foote)

PERFORMANCE POSSIBILITIES:

- *To Kill a Mockingbird*, stage adaptation by Christopher Sergel
- *To Kill a Mockingbird*, film score by Elmer Bernstein

ACCESSIBILITY MATERIALS:

- unabridged audio version available
- large print edition available
- National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS) resources available (www.loc.gov/nls/)

Reader's Guide available in Spanish

A Wizard of Earthsea

by Ursula K. Le Guin

A Wizard of Earthsea (1968)—the first book of Ursula K. Le Guin’s Earthsea series—originated at the request of Le Guin’s publisher. Intended as a fantasy story for ages 11 and up, Le Guin created a world that has fascinated both children and adults. Influenced by Norse myths and Native-American legends, *A Wizard of Earthsea* is a coming-of-age fantasy adventure. The hero is a young boy, Ged, with magical talents and a hunger for greater knowledge and power. When Ged fights a forbidden duel, he inadvertently summons a spirit from the dead. An attack from this spirit almost kills him, and a nameless evil shadow is unleashed and wanders Earthsea. The novel traces Ged’s growth as a man and a wizard, as he learns that wisdom comes from humility, silence brings strength, and the most powerful magic derives from learning one’s true name.

THEMES:

adolescence, the interrelationship of good and evil, the power of language

FILM ADAPTATION:

- *Gedo Senki* (2006, based on *Tales from Earthsea*, directed by Goro Miyazaki)

ACCESSIBILITY MATERIALS:

- unabridged audio version available
- large print edition available
- National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS) resources available (www.loc.gov/nls/)



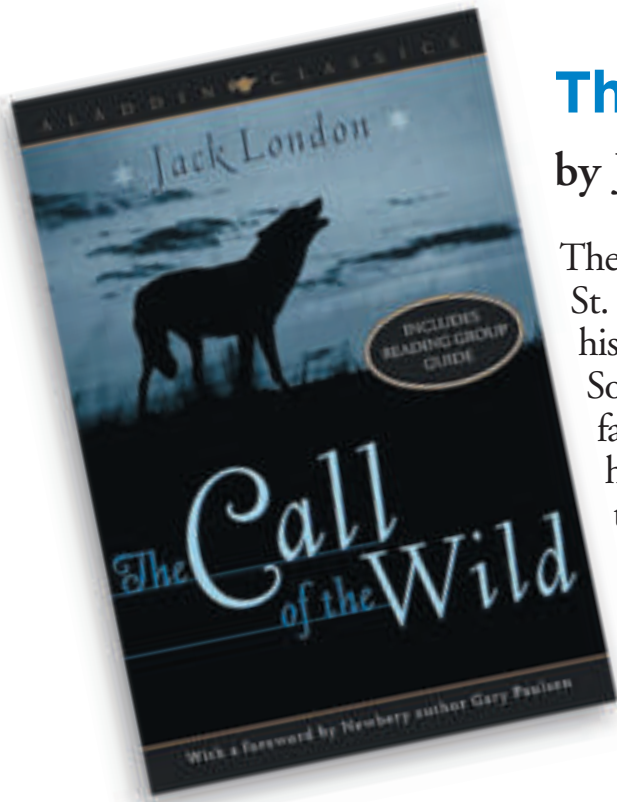
THE AUTHOR

Born in Berkeley, California, Ursula K. Le Guin has written novels, short stories, children’s books, and poetry. Other major works include novels *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969) and *The Lathe of Heaven* (1971). Her many honors include a National Book Award, five Nebula Awards, and five Hugo Awards. She lives in Portland, Oregon.



“For magic consists in this, the true naming of a thing.”

—from *A Wizard of Earthsea*



The Call of the Wild

by Jack London

The hero of *The Call of the Wild* is Buck, a St. Bernard/Scotch Shepherd dog abducted from his comfortable home as a pet in Northern California. Sold as a sled dog, Buck learns “the law of club and fang.” He courageously survives cruelty—from both his trainers and the wilderness—and rises to become the leader of the sled team. Buck’s primordial instincts return as he endures hunger and fatigue, learns to scavenge for food, and fights with his rival. Set during the Klondike Gold Rush of 1897–98 in Canada’s Yukon territory and Alaska, *The Call of the Wild* was serialized in *The Saturday Evening Post* during the summer of 1903. Despite its frequent classification as juvenile fiction, generations of adults have found London’s portrayal of humans and animals unforgettable and their struggle for survival in a hostile environment moving.

THEMES:

civilization vs. instinct, nature vs. nurture, socialism vs. individualism

FILM ADAPTATIONS:

- *The Call of the Wild* (1935, starring Clark Gable)
- *The Call of the Wild* (1976, adapted by James Dickey)

ACCESSIBILITY MATERIALS:

- unabridged audio version available
- large print edition available
- National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS) resources available (www.loc.gov/nls/)

Reader’s Guide available in Spanish

The development of resource materials for *The Call of the Wild* was made possible, in part, by a grant from the Paul G. Allen Family Foundation.



THE AUTHOR

Born in Oakland, California, in 1876, Jack London lived a life of romantic adventure. At 15, he was an oyster pirate, and by 21 a miner in the Klondike Gold Rush—an experience he drew from for *The Call of the Wild* (1903) and *White Fang* (1906). By the time of his death in 1916, he was arguably the most famous writer in America.

“Deep in the forest a call was sounding, and as often as he heard this call, mysteriously thrilling and luring, he felt compelled to turn his back upon the fire, and to plunge into the forest.”

—from *The Call of the Wild*

The Thief and the Dogs

by Naguib Mahfouz

Naguib Mahfouz's *The Thief and the Dogs* (1961) is equal parts crime thriller, morality tale, and political allegory. The novel begins with career criminal Said Mahran's release from prison. He immediately sets off to settle a score and reunite with his young daughter, Sana. Rejected and disillusioned, Said's quest for vengeance carries readers from the banks of the Nile River, through the boulevards and back alleys of Cairo, to Bab al-Nasr, a medieval gateway on the outskirts of the city. Mahfouz's first use of the stream-of-consciousness technique, the novel is a ground-breaking work that allows intimate access to the thoughts, emotions, and motivations of a man consumed by rage and hell-bent on self-destruction.

THEMES:

Arabic culture, freedom, reconciliation, redemption, spiritual enlightenment, worldly temptations

FILM ADAPTATION:

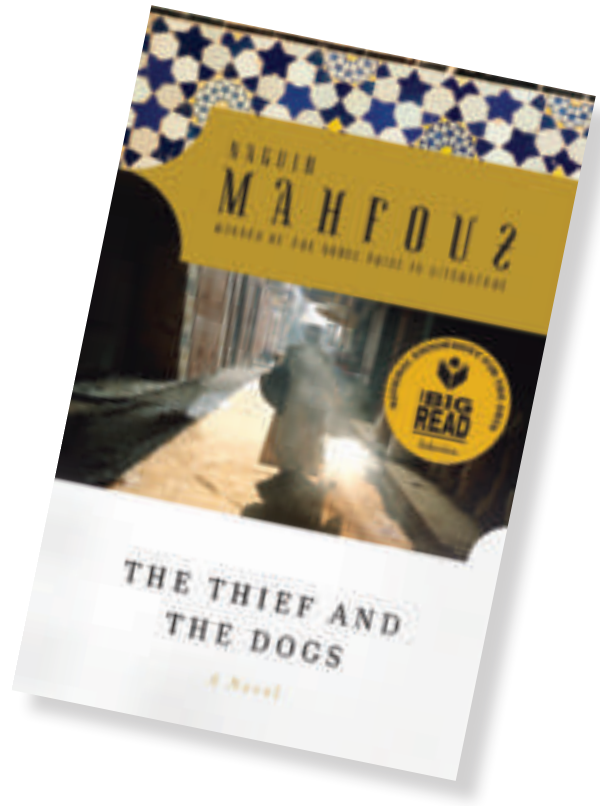
- *Chased by the Dogs* (1962 film adaptation of *The Thief and the Dogs*, directed by Kamal El Sheikh)

ACCESSIBILITY MATERIALS:

- National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS) resources available (www.loc.gov/nls/)

“Leaving his hideout made him all the more conscious of being hunted. He now knew how mice and foxes feel, slipping away on the run. Alone in the dark, he could see the city’s lights glimmering in the distance, lying in wait for him.”

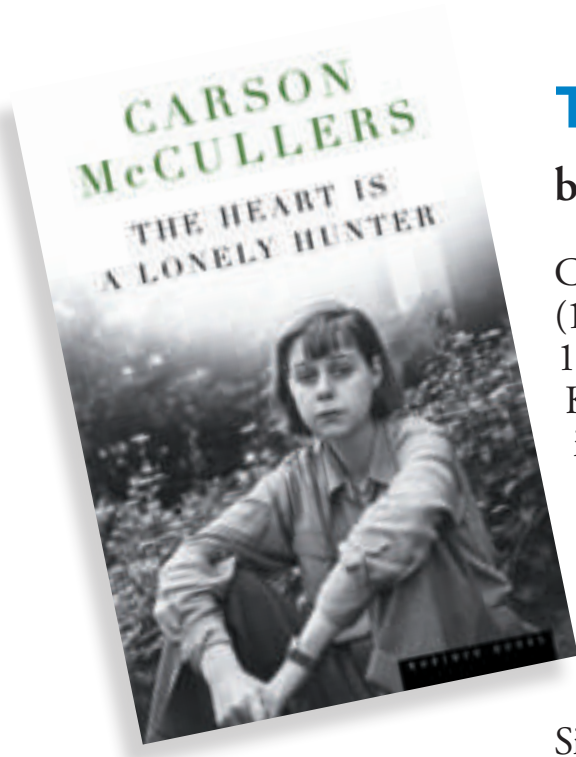
—from *The Thief and the Dogs*



THE AUTHOR

Naguib Mahfouz was born in Cairo, Egypt, in 1911. After graduating from college, Mahfouz entered the civil service, holding a variety of posts until his retirement. A prolific and internationally distinguished writer, in 1988 he became the first Arab author to win the Nobel Prize for Literature. That same year Mahfouz received the Order of the Nile, Egypt's highest honor, from President Hosni Mubarak. Naguib Mahfouz died in 2006 at the age of 94.





The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter

by Carson McCullers

Carson McCullers's *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* (1940) is set in a small Georgia mill town in the late 1930s. John Singer, a deaf man, rents a room in the Kelly house after his companion, Spiros Antonapoulos, is sent away to an asylum. The amiable Singer becomes confidant to four of the town's misfits—Mick Kelly, a teenage girl who dreams of becoming a musician; Benedict Mady Copeland, the town's black doctor; Jake Blount, an alcoholic socialist; and Biff Brannon, the owner of the local café. Over the course of a year, the characters find solace in Singer, who pines for his friend, Antonapoulos. This tragic, small-town drama is so ambitious in its scope—presenting five radically different characters whose troubled lives intersect in the Depression-era South—it is hard to believe that *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* was the first book of a 23-year-old writer.



THE AUTHOR

To know Mick Kelly—the precocious, dreamy heroine of *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*—is to know a young Carson McCullers, born in 1917 in Columbus, Georgia. At 17 she left Georgia for New York City to become a writer. The author of five novels, two plays, 20 short stories, poetry, and more than two dozen works of non-fiction, McCullers died in 1967.

THEMES:

communication, isolation, loneliness, loss, racism, suffering

FILM ADAPTATION:

- *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* (1968, starring Alan Arkin)

PERFORMANCE POSSIBILITY:

- Beethoven's Symphony No. 3 in E flat, Op. 55 (*Eroica*) (which holds Mick Kelly spellbound in the novel)

ACCESSIBILITY MATERIALS:

- unabridged audio version available
- large print edition available
- National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS) resources available (www.loc.gov/nls/)

“The town was in the middle of the deep South. The summers were long and the months of winter cold were very few. Nearly always the sky was a glassy, brilliant azure and the sun burned down riotously bright.”

—from *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*

The Things They Carried

by Tim O'Brien

Tim O'Brien's *The Things They Carried* (1990) is considered one of the finest books written about the Vietnam War. Merging memoir and fiction in interrelated stories, O'Brien examines the war from a variety of perspectives to make sense of his platoon's experience. A narrator named "Tim O'Brien" recounts the plight of an isolated unit as they dodge sniper fire and their own misgivings, all while lugging memories of home through the jungles. O'Brien then undercuts the stories by claiming they never happened—challenging the book's powerful sense of autobiographical authority. O'Brien's unique storytelling style gets at the truth of war by mapping the emotional landscape of a battlefield without a front. The resulting book is brutal, sometimes funny, and always profound, presenting a new way of writing about war.

THEMES:

courage, death, fear, memory, storytelling, truth, war

FILM ADAPTATION:

- *A Soldier's Sweetheart* (1998, starring Kiefer Sutherland, adapted by Thomas Michael Donnelly from the story "Sweetheart of the Song Tra Bong" by Tim O'Brien)

PERFORMANCE POSSIBILITY:

- *The Things They Carried*, professionally staged adaptation through the American Place Theater's Literature to Life program

ACCESSIBILITY MATERIALS:

- unabridged audio version available
- National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS) resources available (www.loc.gov/nls/)

"The thing about a story is that you dream it as you tell it, hoping that others might then dream along with you, and in this way memory and imagination and language combine to make spirits in the head."

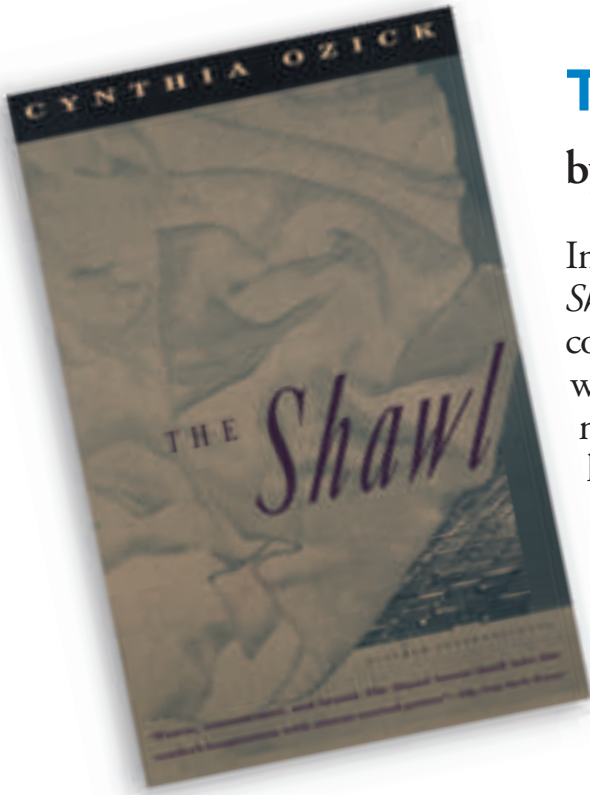
—from *The Things They Carried*



THE AUTHOR

Born in 1946 and raised in Worthington, Minnesota, Tim O'Brien was drafted in 1968 and served in Vietnam as an infantryman for the U.S. Army until 1970. *The Things They Carried* (1990) was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Critics Circle Award. O'Brien's other works include the National Book Award winner *Going After Cacciato* (1979) and *In the Lake of the Woods* (1994), named Best Novel of the Year by *Time* Magazine. He teaches creative writing at Texas State University.





The Shawl

by Cynthia Ozick

In the opening pages of Cynthia Ozick's *The Shawl* (1989), Rosa Lublin is a prisoner in a Nazi concentration camp during World War II, “a place without pity” where she witnesses her young daughter’s murder. The rest of the book takes place 30 years later in Miami, where Rosa lives “among the elderly, in a dark hole, a single room.” Still traumatized by her past suffering, Rosa struggles to reclaim at least a portion of the life stolen from her while clinging tenaciously to a mother’s dreams for what her child might have become. Though Ozick examines the brutality of which man is capable, ultimately the book testifies to the resilience of the human spirit. Readers should not be fooled by the slimness of *The Shawl*. Ozick’s prose is both intensely poetic and emotionally unsettling. The book—actually a short story, “The Shawl,” followed by a related novella, “Rosa”—carries the impact of a work many times its length, and each story earned the coveted Best American Short Story and O. Henry awards.



THE AUTHOR

The daughter of Russian immigrants, Cynthia Ozick was born in New York City in 1928. She has won the Rea Award for the Short Story and received four nominations for the National Book Critics’ Circle Award, winning for *Quarrel & Quandary* (2000). She received an NEA Literature Fellowship in 1968 and lives in New York.

THEMES:

discrimination, genocide, grief, loss, poverty, resilience

ACCESSIBILITY MATERIALS:

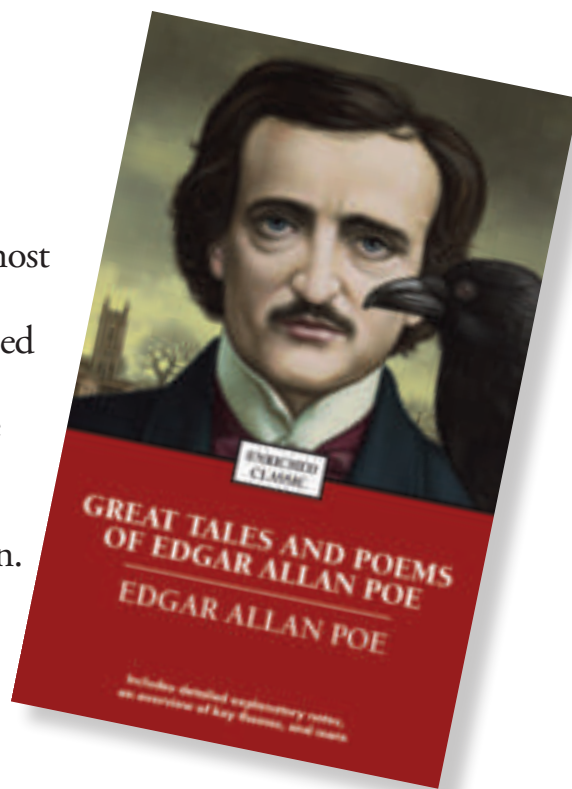
- unabridged audio version of *The Shawl* available
- unabridged audio version of the short story “The Shawl” available, read by Cynthia Ozick (part of *The Best American Short Stories of the Century*)
- National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS) resources available (www.loc.gov/nls/)

“Blue digits on the arm,
what difference? They
don’t call you a woman
anyhow. *Survivor*.”

—from *The Shawl*

The Stories and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe

The work of Edgar Allan Poe remains among the most innovative and original contributions to American poetry and fiction. Poe almost single-handedly shaped what were then only emerging genres of horror and science fiction, and he all but invented the detective story. From “The Tell-Tale Heart” to “The Fall of the House of Usher,” Poe’s mastery of psychology and suspense plunges the reader right into the action. What Walt Whitman called Poe’s “intense faculty for technical and abstract beauty” comes alive on every page. Combining stylistic virtuosity with a deep understanding of the darkness of the human heart, Poe’s stories and poems feel as alive today as they did more than 150 years ago.



THEMES:

crime, death, mystery, psychology, revenge, romance

FILM ADAPTATIONS:

- *The Fall of the House of Usher/The Pit and the Pendulum* (1960 DVD double feature, starring Vincent Price, directed by Roger Corman)
- *The Masque of the Red Death/The Premature Burial* (1964 DVD double feature, starring Vincent Price, directed by Roger Corman)

DOCUMENTARY FILM:

- *Edgar Allan Poe: Terror of the Soul* (1995, PBS *American Masters* series)

PERFORMANCE POSSIBILITIES:

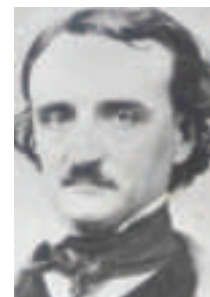
- Poetry Out Loud recitation competition of Edgar Allan Poe’s poetry, www.poetryoutloud.org
- *The Bells*, choral symphony by Sergei Rachmaninov
- *The Fall of the House of Usher*, opera by Philip Glass

ACCESSIBILITY MATERIALS:

- unabridged audio versions available for selected works
- large print editions available for selected works
- National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS) resources available (www.loc.gov/nls/)

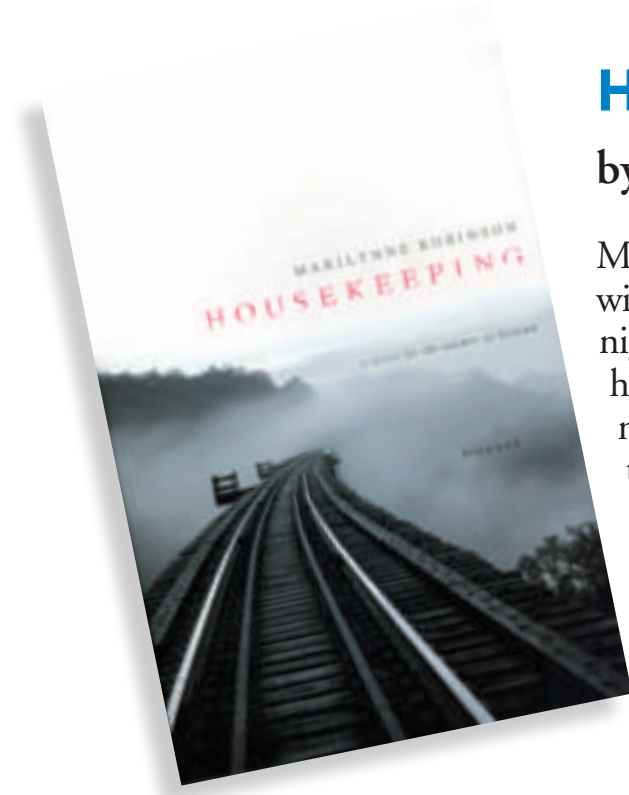
THE AUTHOR

Born in 1809 in Boston, Edgar Allan Poe was raised in Virginia, expelled from West Point, and served as an editor up and down the East Coast. Poe was widely acknowledged during his lifetime for his literary criticism. His own writing gained attention with *The Raven and Other Poems* in 1845. Since his mysterious death in 1849, Poe’s poetry and short fiction have haunted critics and readers alike.



**“Deep into that darkness peering, long I stood there wondering, fearing,
Doubting, dreaming dreams no mortals ever dared to dream before . . .”**

—from “The Raven”



Housekeeping

by Marilynne Robinson

Marilynne Robinson's *Housekeeping* (1981) begins with a train wreck on a lonely lake during a moonless night. Because her grandfather died in the crash and her mother later drowned in the same lake, the novel's narrator, Ruth, has grown up with her sister under the care of a succession of female family members. Set in the fictional Idaho town of Fingerbone, the story's lake is a powerful presence in all their lives. *Housekeeping* examines each character with precision and clarity, revealing the complex relationships of individuals caught between familial responsibility and the wish for freedom.



THE AUTHOR

Marilynne Robinson was born in 1943 and grew up in the Idaho town of Sandpoint, not unlike Fingerbone in *Housekeeping*. Many know her as the author of the Pulitzer Prize-winning novel *Gilead* (2004), the saga of an ailing Congregationalist pastor, recounting his life for a son he will never know. Her most recent novel is *Home* (2008). Robinson also has written two nonfiction books, and teaches at the University of Iowa Writers' Workshop.

THEMES:

abandonment, adoption, grieving, nontraditional families, small-town life

FILM ADAPTATION:

- *Housekeeping* (1987, adapted and directed by Bill Forsyth)

ACCESSIBILITY MATERIALS:

- unabridged audio version available
- National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS) resources available (www.loc.gov/nls/)

“To crave and to have are as like as a thing and its shadow . . . and when do our senses know any thing so utterly as when we lack it?”

—from *Housekeeping*

The Grapes of Wrath

by John Steinbeck

John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939) is both a great novel and a catalyst for change in American history. Capturing the plight of millions of Americans impoverished by the Dust Bowl and the Great Depression, Steinbeck awakened the nation's comprehension and compassion. The novel begins with young Tom Joad's return home from prison to find his family's Oklahoma farmstead in ruins. The Joads soon set out for a better life in California, only to find a plantation economy whose bounty makes no provision for them except as occasional day laborers. Written in an amazing five-month burst of productivity, *The Grapes of Wrath's* creation stands testament to perhaps its greatest theme: the dignity of hard work, done by hand and beset by doubt, with all one has, and for others to share.

THEMES:

the American Dream, ecology, immigration, individuals vs. corporations, redemption, tolerance

FILM ADAPTATION:

- *The Grapes of Wrath* (1940, starring Henry Fonda, directed by John Ford)

PERFORMANCE POSSIBILITIES:

- *The Grapes of Wrath*, stage adaptation by Frank Galati
- *The Grapes of Wrath*, opera by Ricky Ian Gordon, libretto by Michael Korie

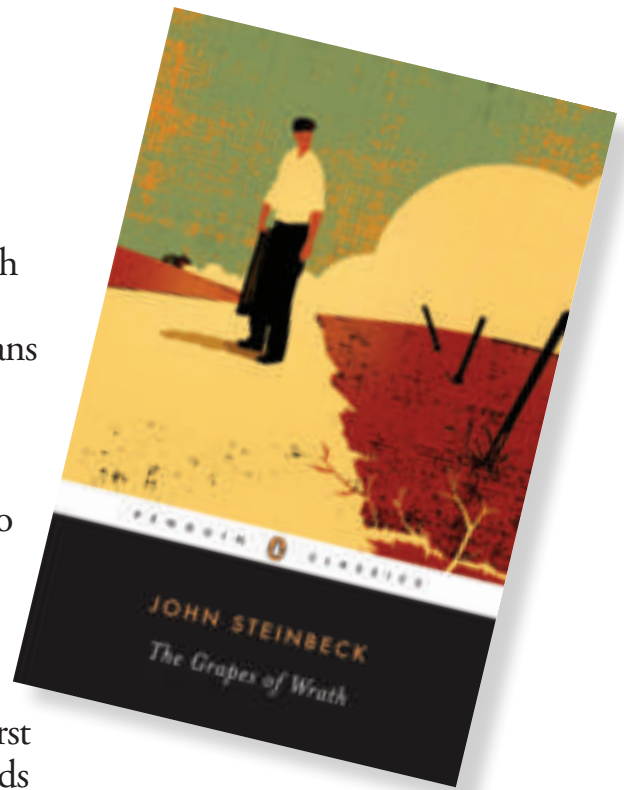
ACCESSIBILITY MATERIALS:

- unabridged audio version available
- National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS) resources available (www.loc.gov/nls/)

Reader's Guide available in Spanish

“On the highways the people moved like ants and searched for work, for food. And the anger began to ferment.”

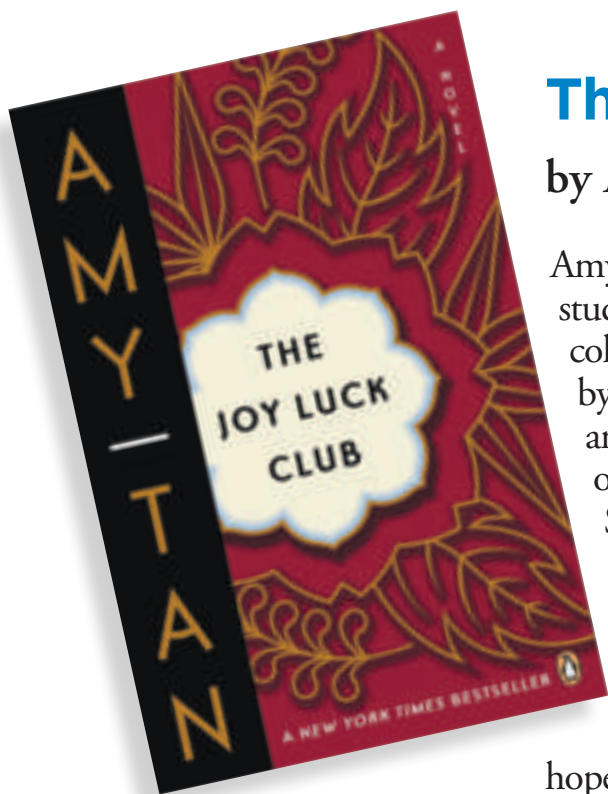
—from *The Grapes of Wrath*



THE AUTHOR

Born in the California Central Valley in 1902, John Steinbeck endured decades of enmity from his hometown for its depiction in the Pulitzer Prize-winning *The Grapes of Wrath*. The 1962 memoir *Travels With Charley: In Search of America* freshened and deepened Steinbeck's already wide readership. That same year, he won the Nobel Prize for literature. He died in Manhattan in 1968.





The Joy Luck Club

by Amy Tan

Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club* (1989) is itself a joyful study in luck. Initially intended as a short-story collection, the novel is a mother-daughter saga written by a woman whose own mother wanted her to be anything but a writer. The novel features four pairs of mothers and daughters. One of these mothers, Suyuan Woo, invented the original "Joy Luck Club" in China, before the Japanese invaded the city of Kweilin. After Suyuan reaches America, she resurrects the club with three other Chinese immigrants, and the four reinvent themselves in San Francisco's Chinatown. These four mothers hope the mix of "American circumstances with Chinese character" will give their California-born daughters better lives. Through the power of storytelling, all eight women struggle to connect despite the ghosts and secrets of the past.



THE AUTHOR

Amy Tan was born in Oakland, California, in 1952, several years after her parents immigrated to the Bay area from China. After her first trip to China with her mother, Tan wrote *The Joy Luck Club*. Her other works include several acclaimed novels, the children's book *Sagwa*, *The Chinese Siamese Cat* (1994), and the essay collection *The Opposite of Fate* (2003). She lives in northern California.

THEMES:

fate, hope, memories, parent-child relationships, sacrifice

FILM ADAPTATION:

- *The Joy Luck Club* (1993), co-written by Amy Tan and Ronald Bass, directed by Wayne Wang

PERFORMANCE POSSIBILITY:

- *The Joy Luck Club*, film score by Rachel Portman

ACCESSIBILITY MATERIALS:

- abridged audio version available
- large print edition available
- National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS) resources available (www.loc.gov/nls/)

"They see that joy and luck do not mean the same to their daughters, that to these closed American-born minds 'joy luck' is not a word, it does not exist."

—from *The Joy Luck Club*

The Death of Ivan Ilyich

by Leo Tolstoy

The 1886 novella *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* dramatizes Leo Tolstoy's central spiritual concerns. Although Ivan Ilyich Golovin is a Russian judge and official, he is also a middle-class everyman whose eventual death results from a trivial accident while he's hanging a curtain in his home. As his disease progresses, Ivan Ilyich recognizes the hypocrisy of his society and the insincerity of his family, and ultimately confesses the futility of his life. Surrounded by his wife, daughter, colleagues, and doctors, Ivan Ilyich feels even more isolated and alone. As his physical pain increases, so does Ivan Ilyich's emotional awareness of a horrifying truth: he has not lived a meaningful life. The power of the novella stems from Tolstoy's psychological insight, sharp satire, and sensory realism.

THEMES:

conformity, death, hypocrisy, mortality

FILM ADAPTATIONS:

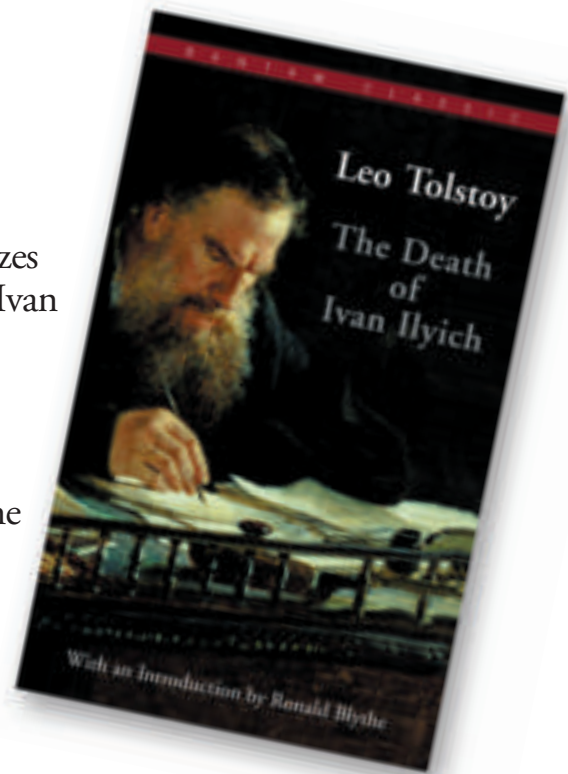
- *Ikiru* (1952, inspired by *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*, directed and co-written by Akira Kurosawa)
- *A Question of Faith* (1979, starring Harry Andrews)
- *Ivans xtc* (2000, starring Danny Huston)

ACCESSIBILITY MATERIALS:

- large print edition available

“Ivan Ilyich’s life had been most simple and most ordinary and therefore most terrible.”

—from *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*



THE AUTHOR

Count Leo Nikolaevich Tolstoy (1828-1910) was orphaned at nine. He later joined the army and served in the Crimean War. Between 1863 and 1869 Tolstoy wrote *War and Peace*, his epic of France's 1812 invasion of Russia. *Anna Karenina* (1875-77) followed, as did his preoccupation with early Christianity subtly present in *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* (1886).



The Adventures of Tom Sawyer

by Mark Twain

Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876) is a story of a mischievous boy growing up before the Civil War in a small Mississippi River town. Twain's first full-length novel brims with the exultation of a world-class sprinter finding out he can run marathons, too. What many people mistake for a children's novel is really a natural introduction—or re-introduction—to the pleasures of literature, whatever a reader's age. As Twain himself wrote in his preface, “Although my book is intended mainly for the entertainment of boys and girls, I hope it will not be shunned by men and women

on that account, for part of my plan has been to try to pleasantly remind adults of what they once were themselves, and of how they felt and thought and talked, and what queer enterprises they sometimes engaged in.”

THEMES:

childhood, education, family, racism

FILM ADAPTATION:

- *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1938, starring Walter Brennan)

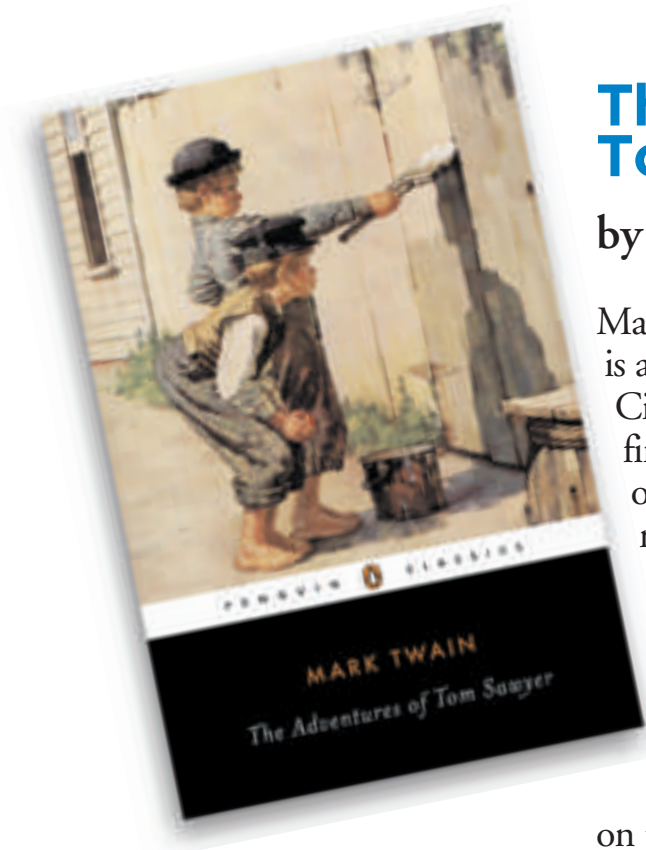
DOCUMENTARY FILMS:

- *Mark Twain* (3-1/2 hours, two-part documentary from Ken Burns)
- *Mark Twain Tonight!* (starring Hal Holbrook)

ACCESSIBILITY MATERIALS:

- unabridged audio version available
- large print edition available
- National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS) resources available (www.loc.gov/nls/)

Reader's Guide available in Spanish



THE AUTHOR

The writer we know as Mark Twain was born Samuel Clemens in 1835 in Florida, Missouri. He wrote comic newspaper stories in the California goldfields, uproarious nonfiction such as *Roughing It* (1872), and novels—including *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1885)—in which not just his heroes, but all of American literature grows up. He died in 1910 in Redding, Connecticut.

“Like it? Well I don’t see why I oughtn’t to like it. Does a boy get a chance to whitewash a fence every day?”

—from *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*

The Age of Innocence

by Edith Wharton

Edith Wharton's *The Age of Innocence* (1920) begins at the opera on a January evening in the 1870s. In the audience is Newland Archer, an affluent New York lawyer in his 30s, "sincerely yet placidly in love" with beautiful May Welland. Newland never questions that his fiancée will be the perfect wife until May's cousin, Countess Ellen Olenska, returns home suddenly after many years in Europe. From the moment Ellen enters the opera, she shocks Old New York, but when she wants to divorce her Polish husband, she risks public disgrace. With time, Newland not only falls in love with Ellen—despite his impending wedding to May—but also begins to see the hypocrisy of his world. Will he follow the wishes of his family and convince Ellen to remain in an oppressive marriage? Or will he risk his own name and encourage her to seek a divorce?

THEMES:

conformity, desire, divorce, duty, marriage, temptation

FILM ADAPTATION:

- *The Age of Innocence* (1993, starring Daniel Day-Lewis and Michelle Pfeiffer, adapted by Jay Cocks, directed by Martin Scorsese)

PERFORMANCE POSSIBILITY:

- *Faust* by Charles Gounod (1859, the opera that begins and ends the novel)

ACCESSIBILITY MATERIALS:

- unabridged audio version available
- large print edition available
- National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS) resources available (www.loc.gov/nls/)



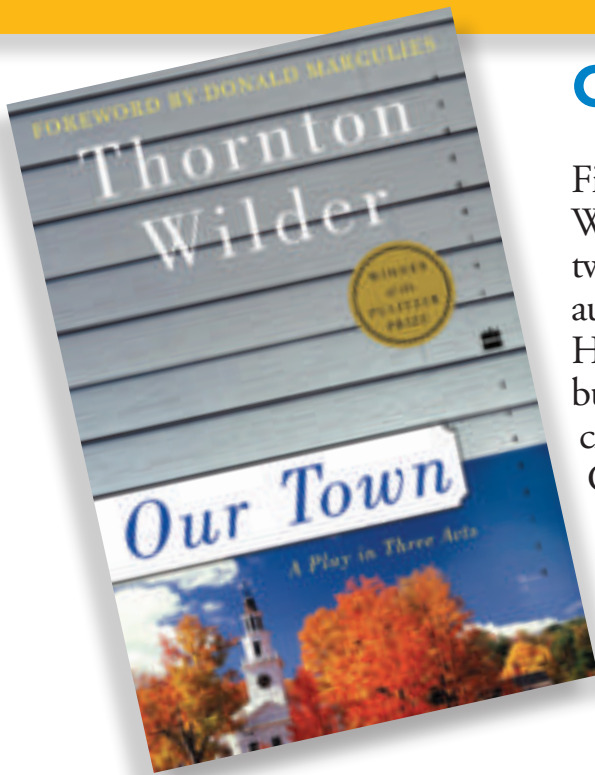
THE AUTHOR

Born in New York in 1862, Edith Wharton won literary fame with *The House of Mirth* (1905). One of the 20th century's most prolific, wealthy, and distinguished American writers, Wharton published more than 45 books of poetry, non-fiction, stories, and novels to both popular and critical acclaim. She died in 1937 in France, where she had lived the last 27 years of her life.



“In reality they all lived in a kind of hieroglyphic world, where the real thing was never said or done or even thought, but only represented by a set of arbitrary signs.”

—from *The Age of Innocence*



Our Town

First produced in 1938, *Our Town* remains Thornton Wilder's most enduring play. At the dawn of the twentieth century, the Stage Manager guides the audience through three days in Grover's Corners, New Hampshire: an ordinary day, a wedding day, and a burial. In Act Three, Wilder positions the deceased characters on stage as spectators of life in Grover's Corners. One character gets to re-experience a single day of her life on earth. Unable to alter or prolong the day, she finds once-inconsequential details now crushingly precious and painfully brief. Wilder's enduring characters ask us to consider our lives—our towns—and the sanctity of each mundane, fleeting day.

THEMES:

family, love, marriage, mortality, preciousness of life

FILM ADAPTATIONS:

- *Our Town* (1940, adapted by Thornton Wilder, starring William Holden, original score by Aaron Copland)
- *Our Town* (2003, PBS Masterpiece Theater Collection, starring Paul Newman, directed by James Naughton)

DOCUMENTARY FILMS:

- *OT: Our Town, A Famous American Play in an Infamous American Town* (2002, documentary, directed by Scott Hamilton Kennedy)
- *Living and Dying in "Our Town"* (2007, hosted by Eli Wallach, interviews with Paul Newman, Cynthia Nixon, and Eric Stoltz)

PERFORMANCE POSSIBILITIES:

- *Our Town*, opera in two acts based on the play (2006, composed by Ned Rorem, libretto by J.D. McClatchy)
- *Our Town*, film score by Aaron Copland

PERFORMANCE REQUIREMENT:

- Staged production of *Our Town*

ACCESSIBILITY MATERIALS:

- large print edition available
- National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS) resources available (www.loc.gov/nls/)



THE AUTHOR

Thornton Niven Wilder was born in Madison, Wisconsin, in 1897. He attended Yale and Princeton and remained a passionate teacher of languages and literature throughout his life. Wilder received Pulitzer Prizes for three works: *The Bridge of San Luis Rey* (1927), *Our Town* (1938), and *The Skin of Our Teeth* (1943). He died in Hamden, Connecticut, in 1975.

“Good-by, Good-by, world. Good-by, Grover’s Corners. . . . Oh, earth, you’re too wonderful for anybody to realize you.”

—from *Our Town*

The Bridge of San Luis Rey

Thornton Wilder’s Pulitzer Prize-winning second novel, *The Bridge of San Luis Rey* (1927), is set in eighteenth-century Peru. The novel begins as the narrator recalls the tragic collapse of a rope bridge that claimed five victims. Questioning why those five people perished, a Franciscan missionary, Brother Juniper, investigates the victims’ lives—a pursuit that jeopardizes his own. Beneath the novel’s deceptively simple premise stirs an unruly, timeless human question: Does life have an assigned course beyond individual control?

THEMES:

chance, destiny, familial and romantic love, retribution

FILM ADAPTATIONS:

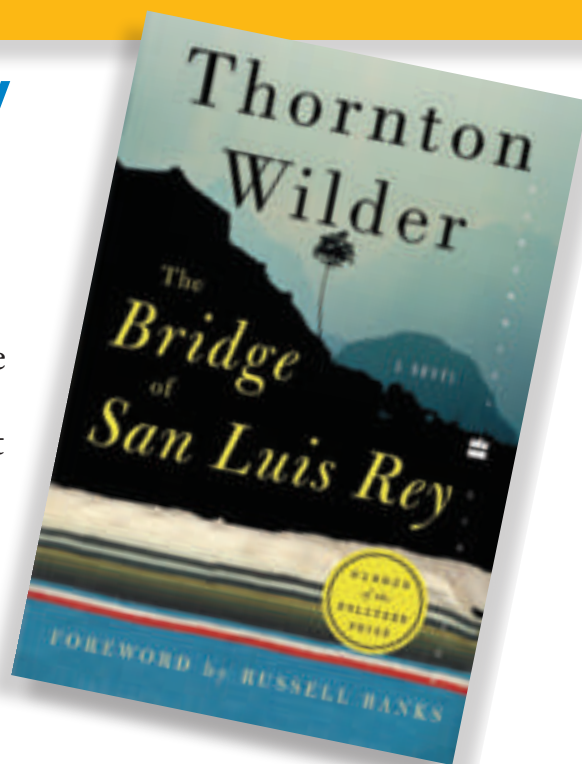
- *The Bridge of San Luis Rey* (1944, starring Alla Nazimova and Donald Woods, adapted by Howard Estabrook, directed by Rowland V. Lee)
- *The Bridge of San Luis Rey* (2005, starring Kathy Bates, Gabriel Byrne, and Robert De Niro, adapted and directed by Mary McGuckian)

ACCESSIBILITY MATERIALS:

- unabridged audio version available
- National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS) resources available (www.loc.gov/nls/)

**“There is a land of the living
and a land of the dead and the
bridge is love, the only survival,
the only meaning.”**

—from *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*



SPECIAL JOINT PROGRAM

The Big Read communities that select Thornton Wilder will create programming around both *The Bridge of San Luis Rey* and *Our Town*, including a production of *Our Town* performed by a local school drama department, community theater, or professional theater company.



Old School

by Tobias Wolff

In Tobias Wolff's *Old School* (2003), the characters talk and think about literature as if their lives depend upon it. Wolff's narrator, a secretly half-Jewish scholarship student from the Northwest, is nearing graduation at a classy all-boy prep school during the Kennedy era. The first three sections of the novel take the form of campus visits by the poet Robert Frost, the writer Ayn Rand, and novelist Ernest Hemingway, whose anticipated arrival drives Wolff's hero-worshipping narrator to an act of desperation. The fourth section comes decades later as the adult narrator reckons with his earlier conduct while visiting the school as a guest writer himself. *Old School* examines the price of sacrificing integrity and the powerful allure of artistic fame.



THE AUTHOR

Born in Birmingham, Alabama, in 1945, Tobias Wolff is an accomplished writer and teacher. The memoirs *This Boy's Life* (1989) and *In Pharaoh's Army* (1994) recall his adolescence in Washington State and four years in the military. *This Boy's Life* and *Old School* were each nominated for the National Book Critics' Circle Award. Wolff teaches at Stanford University and lives in northern California. He also has received two NEA Literature Fellowships in 1978 and 1985.

THEMES:

education, fame, honor, integrity, plagiarism, truth

PERFORMANCE POSSIBILITY:

- Poetry Out Loud recitation contest of Robert Frost's poetry, www.poetryoutloud.org

ACCESSIBILITY MATERIALS:

- unabridged audio version available
- National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS) resources available (www.loc.gov/nls/)

**“Make no mistake, he said:
a true piece of writing is
a dangerous thing. It can
change your life.”**

—from *Old School*

Sun, Stone, and Shadows

20 Great Mexican Short Stories

Edited by Jorge F. Hernández

Sun, Stone, and Shadows: 20 Great Mexican Short Stories has the distinction of being the first book created expressly for The Big Read. Its stories, selected with U.S. readers in mind, represent a remarkable array of Mexico's rich and vibrant literary history. This collection includes 20 tales of extraordinary quality, written by the finest Mexican authors born during the first half of the twentieth century—among them Rosario Castellanos, Carlos Fuentes, Octavio Paz, and Juan Rulfo. Through these pages, readers will tour the literary, historic, and geographic landscape of Mexico. *Sun, Stone, and Shadows* is a catalyst for cultural understanding and conversation between the people of Mexico and the United States.

THEMES:

Mexican culture, revolution, social justice, spirituality, surrealism

FILMS RELATED TO MEXICAN AUTHORS OR CULTURE:

- *Los Olvidados* (1950, written and directed by Luis Buñuel)
- *Viva Zapata!* (1952, starring Marlon Brando, written by John Steinbeck, directed by Elia Kazan)
- *Pedro Páramo* (1967, co-adapted by Carlos Fuentes from Juan Rulfo's novel)
- *Old Gringo* (1989, adapted from Carlos Fuentes's novel, *The Old Gringo*, directed by Luis Puenzo)

PERFORMANCE POSSIBILITIES:

- Music by Mexican composers such as Carlos Chávez (1899–1978), Blas Galindo (1910–1993), José Pablo Moncayo (1912–1958), and Silvestre Revueltas (1899–1940)
- *Danzón No. 2*, referred to as the second Mexican national anthem, composed by Arturo Márquez (b. 1950)
- *Rappaccini's Daughter*, composed by Daniel Catan, libretto by Juan Tover, based on a story by Nathaniel Hawthorne as retold by Octavio Paz

The anthology, Sun, Stone, and Shadows, and Audio, Reader's, and Teacher's Guides available in English and Spanish



ANTHOLOGY WRITERS

Inés Arredondo, Juan José Arreola, Juan de la Cabada, Rosario Castellanos, Salvador Elizondo, Carlos Fuentes, Elena Garro, Francisco Rojas González, Martín Luis Guzmán, Efrén Hernández, Jorge Ibarguengoitia, José Emilio Pacheco, Octavio Paz, Sergio Pitol, Juan García Ponce, José Revueltas, Alfonso Reyes, Juan Rulfo, Francisco Tario, and Edmundo Valadés

“This collection presents a dignified enclave of the best writers and tales of Mexico, whose translation into other languages will develop into a faithful photograph (whether in black and white, or color) of Mexico’s varied faces, its flavors and colors . . .”

—Jorge F. Hernández from *Sun, Stone, and Shadows*

AMERICAN LITERARY LANDMARKS

In 2007, the National Endowment for the Arts created American Literary Landmarks, a new component of The Big Read, to celebrate great American poets and the nation's historic poetry sites. In partnership with the Poetry Foundation, the NEA provided these sites with educational and promotional materials similar to those created for the national Big Read program, as well as grants to support programming. This pilot initiative originally featured two poets: Robinson Jeffers and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. The pilot also will include the poet Emily Dickinson.

ROBINSON JEFFERS

The Big Read: The Poetry of Robinson Jeffers celebrated the poet and Tor House, Jeffers's family home in Carmel, California. In 2008, three central California organizations received grants to host a range of activities about Jeffers's life and work.

The Robinson Jeffers Tor House Foundation received a grant to support a month-long celebration of Jeffers throughout Monterey County. The National Steinbeck Center received a grant to support an exhibition showcasing Jeffers's poetry. Also included in the center's programming was a visit by Pablo Soler Frost, a Mexican writer and the translator of Jeffers's poetry. A third grant went to the University of California, Santa Cruz, to host a symposium on the work of Jeffers featuring a staged reading of Jeffers's adaptation of *Medea*, and readings by award-winning poets, including Adrienne Rich, Li-Young Lee, Gary Young, and Mark Jarman.

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW

The Big Read: The Poetry of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow launched in September 2007 with a grant to Longfellow's Wayside Inn in Sudbury, Massachusetts, to support a community-wide program. Educational materials were also provided to two additional Longfellow historic sites: the Craigie-Longfellow House (Cambridge, Massachusetts) and the Wadsworth-Longfellow House (Portland, Maine).

AMERICAN LITERARY LANDMARKS: 2009-2010 PROGRAMMING

Beginning with 2009-2010 programming, interested organizations nationwide can apply to host a Big Read program featuring one of three poets: Dickinson, Jeffers, or Longfellow. In addition to receiving a grant to support programming, one of the major benefits of The Big Read for community organizations is the availability of high-quality educational and promotional materials provided at no cost. The American Literary Landmarks educational and promotional materials are made possible through the generous support of the Poetry Foundation.

To learn more about American Literary Landmarks, including current application guidelines and featured poems, visit www.NEABigRead.org.

The Poetry of Emily Dickinson

Emily Dickinson's concise, powerful poems astutely examine pain, grief, joy, love, nature, and art. Over the course of her life, she wrote 1,789 poems, formally publishing only seven. Instead, Dickinson's work was kept largely private, with the exception of sending her writing to trusted friends or confidants such as Thomas Wentworth Higginson. Dickinson lived most of her life at her family home in Amherst, Massachusetts, where she devoted herself to her garden and her poetry. She became increasingly reclusive during the last 25 years of her life. After her death, Dickinson's younger sister, Lavinia, rescued the poems from her sister's private chest and fought to get the poems published. Emily Dickinson is now widely admired as one of America's most original and important poets.

THEMES:

death, hope, inspiration, longing, love, nature, religion

FILM ADAPTATION:

- *The Belle of Amherst* (1976, starring Julie Harris, based on a play by William Luce)

DOCUMENTARY FILMS:

- *Loaded Gun: Life, and Death, and Dickinson* (2008, a PBS documentary)
- *Emily Dickinson: A Certain Slant of Light* (2006)
- *Great Women Writers: Emily Dickinson* (2000)

PERFORMANCE POSSIBILITIES:

- *Come Slowly, Eden: A Portrait of Emily Dickinson*, a play by Norman Rosten
- *12 Poems of Emily Dickinson*, a song cycle by Aaron Copland

ACCESSIBILITY MATERIALS:

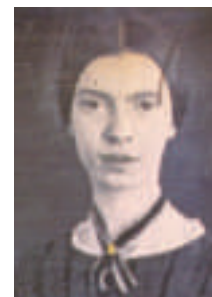
- unabridged audio versions available
- large print editions available
- National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS) resources available (www.loc.gov/nls/)



Emily Dickinson lived with her family at the Homestead in Amherst, MA.

THE POET

Emily Dickinson was born on December 10, 1830, in Amherst, Massachusetts. She became a promising student, advancing to Mount Holyoke Female Seminary. After one year, experiencing poor health and debilitating homesickness, Dickinson returned home. With the exception of this short period of study, and a few domestic trips, Dickinson lived at her childhood home. She died in 1886 and is buried in the Amherst town cemetery.



**“‘Hope’ is the thing with feathers—
That perches in the soul—
And sings the tune without the words—
And never stops—at all—”**

—from “‘Hope’ is the thing with feathers—”



Tor House and Hawk Tower is the home Robinson Jeffers built for himself on the shore of Carmel, CA.

The Poetry of Robinson Jeffers

The poetry of Robinson Jeffers is emotionally direct, magnificently musical, and philosophically profound. Determined to write truthful poetry purged of ephemeral things, Jeffers cultivated a style at once lyrical, tough-minded, and timeless, while scarcely stirring from his beloved home, Tor House in Carmel, California. Living on the edge of the Pacific, he found wisdom, strength, and perspective from observing the forces of nature around him. Once shunned for his unpopular political views and harsh critiques of mankind's egotism, Jeffers has regained popularity in recent years as environmentalism's most forceful poet-advocate. Featured on the cover of *Time* magazine in 1932, Jeffers's major works include the *Roan Stallion*, *Tamar and Other Poems* (1925), *The Women at Point Sur* (1927), and a 1946 adaptation of the Greek drama *Medea*.



THE POET

Born in the suburbs of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in 1887, Robinson Jeffers studied literature, medicine, and forestry before realizing poetry was his calling. Jeffers was catapulted to celebrity with the publication of *Roan Stallion*, *Tamar and Other Poems* in 1925. By World War II, Jeffers's critical reputation had collapsed and would not rise again until after his death in 1962.

THEMES:

animals, environment, man's relationship to the earth, respect for nature

DOCUMENTARY FILM:

- *Place for No Story* (1973, KQED public television documentary)

PERFORMANCE POSSIBILITIES:

- *Medea*, a play by Jeffers (1946)
- *Medea*, an opera by Alva Henderson based on Jeffers's play
- "The Beaks of Eagles" by the Beach Boys from their album *Holland* (1973)

ACCESSIBILITY MATERIALS:

- National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS) resources available (www.loc.gov/nls/)

**"One light is left us: the beauty of things, not men;
The immense beauty of the world, not the human world.
Look—and without imagination, desire nor dream—directly
At the mountains and sea. Are they not beautiful?"**

—from "De Rerum Virtute"

The Poetry of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow was not only a major American poet, but he was also one of the most influential figures in our national cultural history. His work commanded a readership that is almost unimaginable today, even for best-selling novels. In unforgettable poetic language that appealed to millions of readers across all classes, Longfellow helped create many of the songs, stories, characters, and images by which the young United States knew itself. Longfellow's greatest gifts were best suited to more public poetry—forceful clarity, evocative simplicity, emotional directness, and a genius for memorable (indeed often unforgettable) phrasing.

THEMES:

grief, love, memory, patriotism, the Revolutionary War, slavery, storytelling

FILM ADAPTATIONS:

- *The Village Blacksmith* (1922, directed by John Ford)
- *Evangeline* (1929, starring Dolores del Rio)
- *Hiawatha* (1952, starring Vince Edwards)

PERFORMANCE POSSIBILITIES:

- Music by Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904), the Bohemian composer whose Symphony No. 9 (“From the New World”) includes two movements inspired by Longfellow’s *The Song of Hiawatha*
- Samuel Coleridge-Taylor’s “Hiawatha’s Wedding Feast,” a cantata
- “The Children’s Hour,” composed by Charles Ives, choreographed as a ballet by Jerome Robbins

ACCESSIBILITY MATERIALS:

- unabridged audio versions available for selected works
- large print editions available
- National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS) resources available (www.loc.gov/nls/)

**“Lives of great men all remind us
We can make our lives sublime,
And, departing, leave behind us
Footprints on the sands of time . . .”**

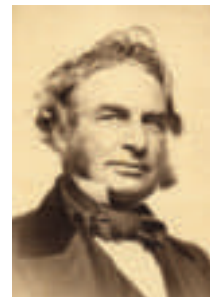
— from “A Psalm of Life”



Henry Wadsworth Longfellow lived at Craigie House from 1837 until his death in 1882. It was where he wrote some of his greatest poems.

THE POET

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow was born on February 27, 1807, in Portland, Maine. Although his father wanted him to become a lawyer, Longfellow eventually became a professor of modern languages at Harvard. Tragically losing his first wife to miscarriage and his second wife to a fire, Longfellow raised his six children in his house in Cambridge, Massachusetts. His books of poetry and translations brought him popularity and fame during his lifetime, and he died at his home on March 24, 1882.

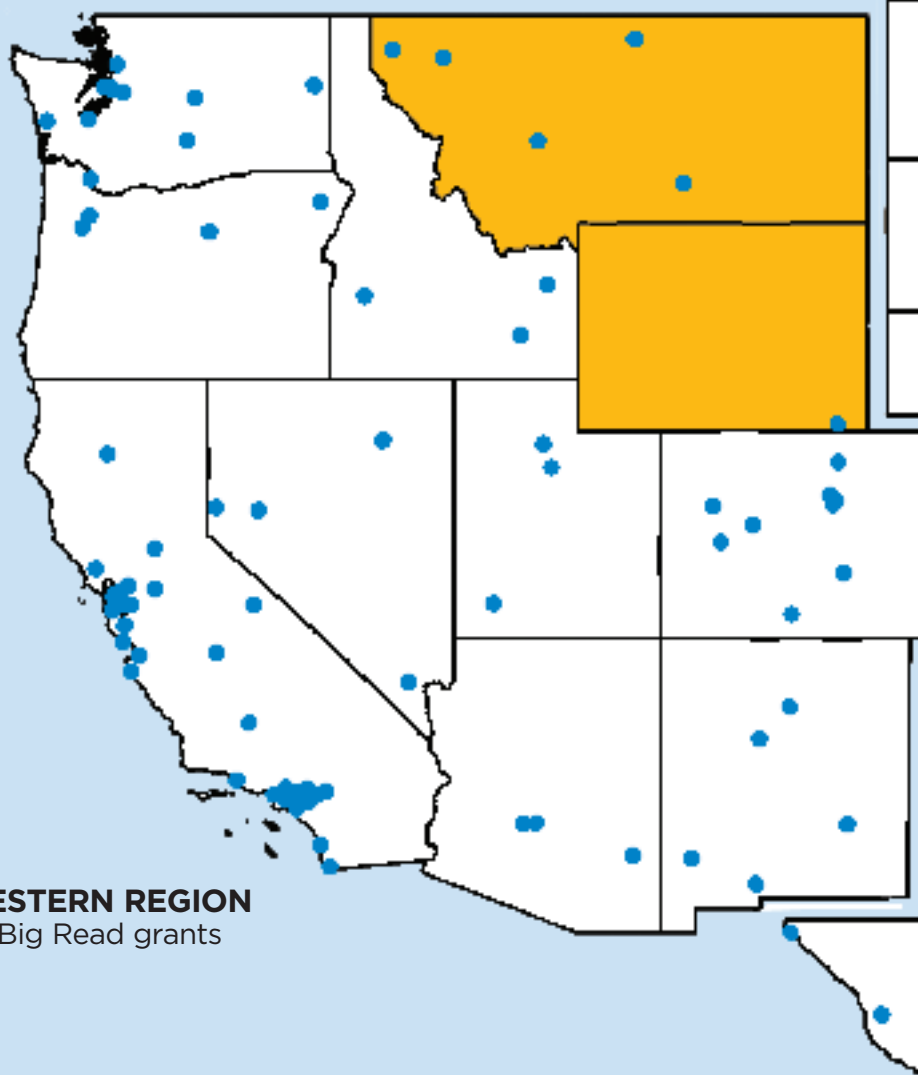




**THE BIG
READ**

Through June 2009:

- More than 500 Big Read grants have been awarded to more than 360 different cities across all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands
- More than 21,000 partner organizations have supported Big Read grantees
- More than two million people have attended more than 17,800 Big Read events nationwide
- Statewide Big Reads have been held in eight states (Arkansas, Delaware, Hawaii, Montana, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia, and Wyoming) as well as in the U.S. Virgin Islands

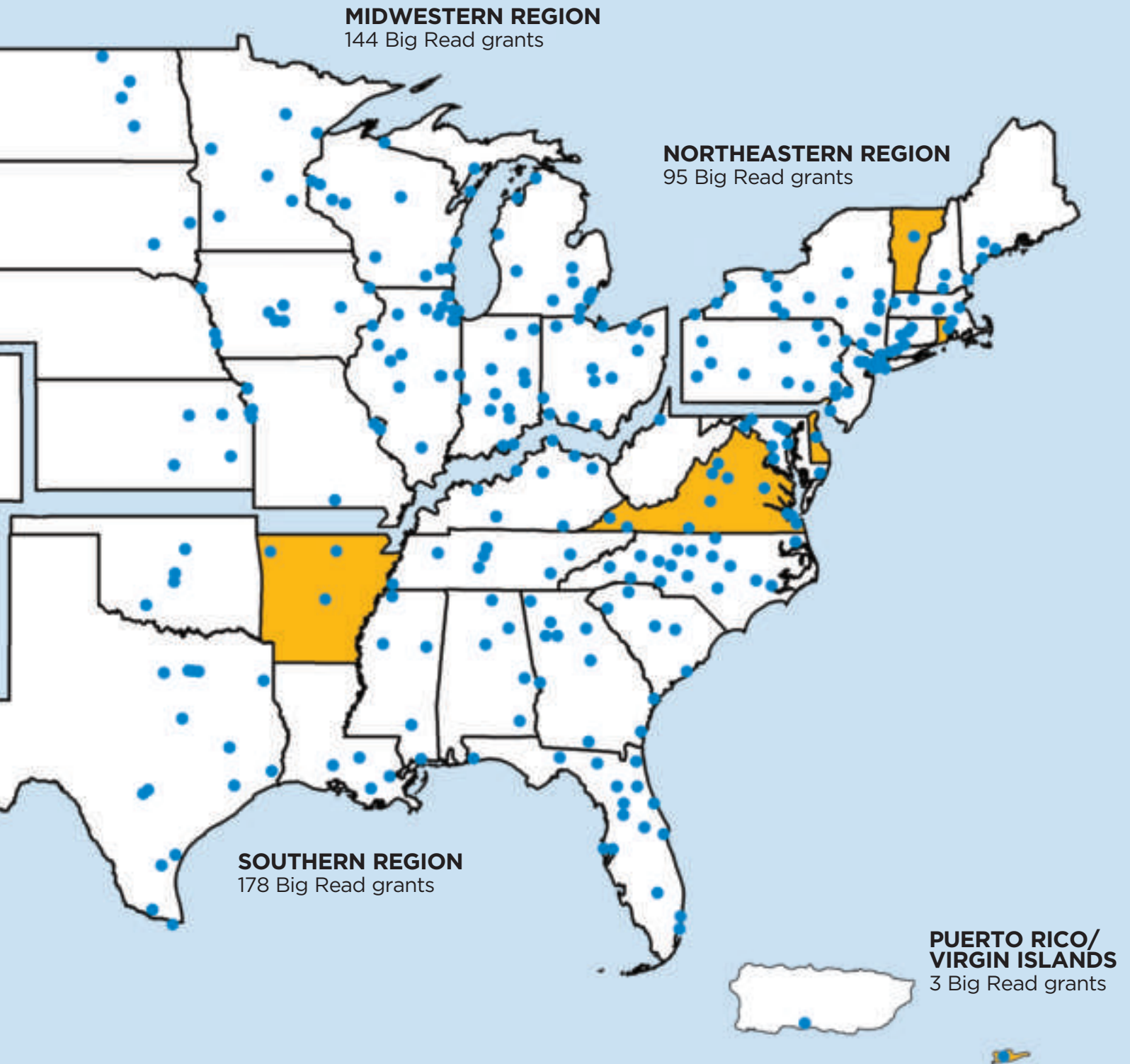


WESTERN REGION
113 Big Read grants



 **Statewide Big Reads**

Cities and States Hosting Big Read Programs



The Big Read Grantees, 2006–2009

ALABAMA

Auburn University
Auburn, AL

Gadsden Cultural Arts
Foundation
Gadsden, AL

Huntsville-Madison County
Public Library
Huntsville, AL

Jefferson County Library
Cooperative
Birmingham, AL

Ozark-Dale County Public
Library
Ozark, AL

ALASKA

Anchorage Public Library
Anchorage, AK

Kachemak Bay Campus-Kenai
Peninsula College-University
of Alaska Anchorage
Homer, AK

Sheldon Museum & Cultural
Center
Haines, AK

ARIZONA

Phoenix Public Library
Foundation
Phoenix, AZ

Safford City – Graham County
Library
Safford, AZ

West Valley Arts Council
Avondale, AZ

ARKANSAS

Arkansas Center for the Book
Little Rock, AR
(statewide)

Fayetteville Public Library
Fayetteville, AR

Ozarka College
Melbourne, AR

CALIFORNIA

Bakersfield Museum of Art
Bakersfield, CA

Berkeley Public Library
Berkeley, CA

Black Storytellers of San Diego
Chula Vista, CA

Cal Poly Pomona Foundation
Pomona, CA

California State University East
Bay Foundation
Oakland, CA

City of Los Angeles
Department of Cultural
Affairs
Los Angeles, CA

City of Ventura Cultural Affairs
Division
Ventura, CA

Contra Costa County Library
Pleasant Hill, CA

Corona Public Library
Corona, CA

County of Los Angeles Public
Library – East Los Angeles
Los Angeles, CA

County of Los Angeles Public
Library – Norwalk
Norwalk, CA

County of Los Angeles Public
Library – Santa Clarita
Santa Clarita, CA

County of Los Angeles Public
Library – South Gate
South Gate, CA

Fresno County Public Library
Fresno, CA

Friends of the Encinitas Library
Encinitas, CA

Hayward Public Library
Hayward, CA

The Henry E. Huntington
Library and Art Gallery
San Marino, CA

Los Medanos College
Pittsburg, CA

Mono County Libraries
Mammoth Lakes, CA

Montalvo Arts Center
Saratoga, CA

National Steinbeck Center
Salinas, CA

Orange County Public Library
Santa Ana, CA

PEN Center USA
Culver City, CA

Peninsula Library System
San Mateo, CA

Pleasanton Public Library
Pleasanton, CA

Rancho Cucamonga Public
Library Services
Rancho Cucamonga, CA

Riverside Arts Council
Riverside, CA

Robinson Jeffers Tor House
Foundation
Carmel, CA

Roseville Public Library
Roseville, CA

Rural California Broadcasting
Corporation/KRCB
Rohnert Park, CA

Shasta Public Libraries
Redding, CA

Stockton-San Joaquin County
Public Library
Stockton, CA

University of California,
Santa Cruz
Santa Cruz, CA

University of Redlands
Redlands, CA

Will & Company
Los Angeles, CA

COLORADO

Adams State College
Alamosa, CO

Arapahoe Library Friends
Foundation
Englewood, CO

Aspen Writers' Foundation
Aspen, CO

Aurora Public Library
Aurora, CO

Delta County Public Library
District
Paonia, CO

Garfield County Public Library
District
Rifle, CO

Pueblo City-County Library
District
Pueblo, CO

El Centro Su Teatro
Denver, CO

Weld Library District
Greeley, CO

CONNECTICUT

The City of Norwalk
Norwalk, CT

Hartford Public Library
Hartford, CT

New Britain Museum of
American Art
New Britain, CT

Norwalk Public Library
Norwalk, CT

Silas Bronson Library
Waterbury, CT

The City of Bridgeport
Bridgeport, CT

The Mattatuck Historical
Society
Waterbury, CT

The New Haven International
Festival of Arts & Ideas
New Haven, CT

DELAWARE

Delaware Division of Libraries
Dover, DE
(statewide)

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Humanities Council of
Washington, DC
Washington, DC

FLORIDA

Alachua County Library
District
Gainesville, FL

Brevard County Libraries
Cocoa Beach, FL

Communities in Schools of
Putnam County
Palatka, FL

Daytona Beach Community
College/DBCC Public
Broadcasting
Daytona Beach, FL

Florida Center for the
Book – Broward Public
Library Foundation
Ft. Lauderdale, FL

Florida Center for the Literary
Arts at Miami Dade College
Miami, FL

Hendry County Library
Cooperative
Clewiston, FL

Jacksonville Public Library
Foundation
Jacksonville, FL

LeRoy Collins Leon County
Public Library System
Tallahassee, FL

Marion County Public Library
System
Ocala, FL

Orange County Library System
Orlando, FL

Pinellas Public Library
Cooperative
Clearwater, FL

Suwannee River Regional
Library
Live Oak, FL

Tampa-Hillsborough County
Public Library Cooperative
Tampa, FL

West Florida Literary
Federation
Pensacola, FL

Young Performing Artists
Wildwood, FL

GEORGIA

Armstrong Atlantic State
University
Savannah, GA

Cherokee Regional Library
System
LaFayette, GA

Cultural Arts Council of
Douglasville/Douglas County
Douglasville, GA

Georgia College & State
University
Milledgeville, GA

Golden Isles Arts and
Humanities Association
Brunswick, GA

The Literary Center at the
Margaret Mitchell House &
Museum
Atlanta, GA

Live Oak Public Libraries
Savannah, GA

Muscogee County Friends of
Libraries
Columbus, GA

National Black Arts Festival
Atlanta, GA

Savannah State University
Savannah, GA

Towne Lake Arts Center
Woodstock, GA

University of Georgia/UGA
Libraries
Athens, GA

Valdosta State University,
Odum Library
Valdosta, GA

HAWAII

Hawai'i Capital Cultural
District
Honolulu, HI
(statewide)

IDAHO

Madison Library District
Rexburg, ID

Marshall Public Library
Pocatello, ID

The Cabin
Boise, ID

ILLINOIS

Acorn Public Library District
Oak Forest, IL

Aurora Public Library
Aurora, IL

Bartlett Public Library District
Bartlett, IL

Beverly Arts Center
Chicago, IL

Champaign Public Library
Champaign, IL

Columbia College Chicago
Chicago, IL

Cook Memorial Public
Library District
Libertyville, IL

Danville Area Community
College
Danville, IL

DeKalb Public Library
DeKalb, IL

Fremont Public Library District
Mundelein, IL

Galesburg Public Library
Galesburg, IL

Illinois State Library
Springfield, IL

Oak Park Public Library
Oak Park, IL

Orland Park Public Library
Orland Park, IL

Peoria Public Library
Peoria, IL

Quad City Arts
Rock Island, IL

Rend Lake College
Ina, IL

Sandburg Days Festival
Galesburg, IL

Spoon River College
Foundation
Canton, IL

Sterling Public Library
Sterling, IL

University of Illinois, Board
of Trustees
Urbana, IL

INDIANA

Bloomington Area Arts Council
Bloomington, IN

Columbus Area Arts Council
Columbus, IN

Community Foundation of
Morgan County
Mooresville, IN

Frankfort Community
Public Library
Frankfort, IN

The Big Read Grantees, 2006–2009, continued

Harrison County Public Library
Corydon, IN

Jackson County Public Library
Seymour, IN

Kosciusko Literacy Services
Warsaw, IN

Muncie Public Library
Muncie, IN

New Castle-Henry County
Public Library
New Castle, IN

TerraFirma
Auburn, IN

Vigo County Public Library
Terre Haute, IN

IOWA

African American Heritage
Foundation
Cedar Rapids, IA

Ames Public Library
Ames, IA

Carnegie – Stout Public Library
Dubuque, IA

Hometown Perry, Iowa
Perry, IA

Perry Public Library
Perry, IA

Sioux City Public Library
Sioux City, IA

State Historical Society of
Iowa Library, Department of
Cultural Affairs
Des Moines, IA

Waukee Public Library
Waukee, IA

KANSAS

Bowlus Fine Arts Center
Iola, KS

Friends of the Dorothy
Bramlage Public Library
Junction City, KS

Johnson County Library
Overland Park, KS

Johnson County Library
Shawnee Mission, KS

Kansas City, Kansas Public
Library
Kansas City, KS

Topeka and Shawnee County
Public Library
Topeka, KS

Wichita Public Library
Foundation
Wichita, KS

KENTUCKY

Gateway Community and
Technical College
Park Hills, KY

Kentucky Gateway Museum
Center
Maysville, KY

Kentucky State University
Frankfort, KY

The Louisville Free Public
Library Foundation
Louisville, KY

Olive Hill Adult Learning
Center
Olive Hill, KY

Owensboro Community and
Technical College
Owensboro, KY

Western Kentucky University
Foundation
Bowling Green, KY

Williamsburg Action Team
Williamsburg, KY

LOUISIANA

East Baton Rouge Parish
Library
Baton Rouge, LA

Houma Regional Arts Council
Houma, LA

Performing Arts Society of
Acadiana
Lafayette, LA

Pirate's Alley Faulkner Society
New Orleans, LA

Southern Food and Beverage
Museum Foundation
New Orleans, LA

MAINE

Auburn Public Library
Auburn, ME

Maine Writers & Publishers
Alliance
Portland, ME

Patten Free Library
Bath, ME

Victoria Mansion
Portland, ME

MARYLAND

Annapolis Charter 300
Committee
Annapolis, MD

College of Southern Maryland
La Plata, MD

Community Foundation of
Washington County, MD
Hagerstown, MD

Harbel Community
Organization
Baltimore, MD

MPT Foundation
Owings Mills, MD

Towson University
Towson, MD

Worcester County Library
Snow Hill, MD

MASSACHUSETTS

Amherst College and the Emily
Dickinson Museum
Amherst, MA

Attleboro Public Library
Attleboro, MA

Longfellow's Wayside Inn
Sudbury, MA

Pittsfield – Office of Cultural
Development
Pittsfield, MA

Pocumtuck Valley Memorial
Association
Deerfield, MA

Shrewsbury Public Library
Shrewsbury, MA

UMass Memorial Health Care
Worcester, MA

University of Massachusetts
Boston
Boston, MA

MICHIGAN

Arab Community Center for
Economic and Social Services
Dearborn, MI

Cromaine District Library
Hartland, MI

Detroit Public Library
Detroit, MI

Escanaba Public Library
Escanaba, MI

Genesee District Library
Flint, MI

Grand Rapids Public Library
Grand Rapids, MI

Grand Traverse Band of
Ottawa and Chippewa
Indians
Suttons Bay, MI

Ironwood Carnegie Library
Ironwood, MI

Jackson Community College
Jackson, MI

Jackson District Library
Jackson, MI

Little Traverse Bay Bands of
Odawa Indians
Harbor Springs, MI

The Foundation at Monroe
County Community College
Monroe, MI

Wayne-Metropolitan
Community Action Agency
Wyandotte, MI

West Shore Community
College
Scottville, MI

MINNESOTA

A Center for the Arts
Fergus Falls, MN

Carlton County Historical
Society
Cloquet, MN

The Givens Foundation for
African American Literature
Minneapolis, MN

Grand Rapids Area Library
Grand Rapids, MN

The Loft Literary Center
Minneapolis, MN

Marshall – Lyon County
Library
Marshall, MN

St. Cloud State University,
College of Education
St. Cloud, MN

MISSISSIPPI

College of Education,
Mississippi Valley State
University
Itta Bena, MS

DeSoto Arts Council
Hernando, MS

MS Gulf Coast Community
College – Jefferson Davis
Campus
Gulfport, MS

Starkville Reads
Starkville, MS

University of Southern
Mississippi Department of
English
Hattiesburg, MS

MISSOURI

Allied Arts Council of
St. Joseph, MO
St. Joseph, MO

Foundry Art Centre
St. Charles, MO

Juanita K. Hammons Hall for
the Performing Arts
Springfield, MO

Park University
Parkville, MO

Washington University in
St. Louis
St. Louis, MO

West Plains Council on the
Arts
West Plains, MO

MONTANA

Flathead County Library
System
Kalispell, MT

Lewis & Clark Library
Helena, MT

Lincoln County Public
Libraries
Libby, MT

Montana Historical Society
Helena, MT
(statewide)

The Havre-Hill County Library
Foundation
Havre, MT

YMCA Billings – The Writer's
Voice
Billings, MT

NEBRASKA

Omaha Reads
Omaha, NE

Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo
Omaha, NE

Plattsmouth Public Library
Plattsmouth, NE

NEVADA

Churchill County Library
Fallon, NV

Elko County Reading Council,
Silver State Reading
Association
Elko, NV

Friends of Washoe County
Library
Reno, NV

Las Vegas-Clark County
Library District
Las Vegas, NV

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Center for the Book at the New
Hampshire State Library
Concord, NH

Northeast Cultural Coop
Amherst, NH

Strawbery Banke Museum
Portsmouth, NH

NEW JERSEY

Burlington County Council,
Boy Scouts of America
Rancocas, NJ

Caldwell Public Library
Caldwell, NJ

Jersey City Free Public Library
Jersey City, NJ

The Parsippany – Troy Hills
Public Library System
Parsippany, NJ

United Way of Salem County
Salem, NJ

NEW MEXICO

Bernalillo County
Albuquerque, NM

Friends of the Public Library of
Silver City
Silver City, NM

Georgia O'Keeffe Museum
Santa Fe, NM

High Plains Writing Project
Roswell, NM

Regents of New Mexico State
University
Las Cruces, NM

The Santa Fe Opera
Santa Fe, NM

NEW YORK

African Voices
Communications
New York, NY

Bronx Council on the Arts
Bronx, NY

Brooklyn Public Library
Brooklyn, NY

Buffalo & Erie County
Public Library
Buffalo, NY

Columbia University in the
City of New York
New York, NY

Dormann Library
Bath, NY

Foothills Performing Arts
Center
Oneonta, NY

Heermance Memorial Library
Coxsackie, NY

Hudson Area Association
Library
Hudson, NY

Just Buffalo Literary Center
Buffalo, NY

The Big Read Grantees, 2006–2009, continued

Long Island Arts Council at
Freeport
Freeport, NY

Long Island Traditions
Port Washington, NY

The Mercantile Library Center
for Fiction
New York, NY

Monroe County Library System
Rochester, NY

Orange Library Association
Florida, NY

Poughkeepsie Public Library
District
Poughkeepsie, NY

Research Foundation of SUNY
on behalf of SUNY Cortland
Cortland, NY

Research Foundation of SUNY
on behalf of SUNY Fredonia,
Reed Library
Fredonia, NY

Research Foundation of SUNY
on behalf of SUNY New Paltz
New Paltz, NY

Society for the Preservation
of Weeksville and Bedford
Stuyvesant
Brooklyn, NY

Southeast Steuben County
Library
Corning, NY

Upper Hudson Library System
Albany, NY

Westchester Arts Council
White Plains, NY

Wood Library Association
Canandaigua, NY

Writers & Books
Rochester, NY

NORTH CAROLINA

A-B Tech Community College
Foundation for Together We
Read
Asheville, NC

Bennett College for Women
Greensboro, NC

Caldwell County Public Library
Lenoir, NC

Forsyth County Public Library
Winston-Salem, NC

Friends of the Cumberland
County Public Library and
Information Center
Fayetteville, NC

Iredell Friends of the Library
Statesville, NC

Johnston County Arts Council
Clayton, NC

Lenoir Community College
Kinston, NC

Livingstone College
Salisbury, NC

Montgomery Community
College
Troy, NC

Pasquotank-Camden Library
Elizabeth City, NC

Piedmont Community College
Roxboro, NC

Public Library of Charlotte &
Mecklenburg County
Charlotte, NC

Rowan Public Library
Salisbury, NC

Rutherford County Arts
Council
Forest City, NC

Sonja Haynes Stone Center for
Black Culture and History
Chapel Hill, NC

The Craven–Pamlico–Carteret
Regional Library
New Bern, NC

NORTH DAKOTA

Dakota Prairie Regional Center
for the Arts
New Rockford, ND

Shakespeare Club–Lake Region
Library
Devils Lake, ND

The Jamestown Arts Center
Jamestown, ND

Turtle Mountain Community
College
Belcourt, ND

OHIO

Center for Environmental
Education, Natural History,
and Conservation
Oxford, OH

Cuyahoga County Public
Library
Parma, OH

Delaware County District
Library
Delaware, OH

Greater Columbus Arts Council
Columbus, OH

Hiram College
Hiram, OH

Massillon Museum
Massillon, OH

Newark Public Library
Newark, OH

Northwest State Community
College
Archbold, OH

Sandusky Library
Sandusky, OH

Southern Ohio Performing Arts
Association
Portsmouth, OH

Southern State Community
College Library
Sardinia, OH

Toledo-Lucas County Public
Library
Toledo, OH

Young Audiences of Northeast
Ohio
Cleveland, OH

OKLAHOMA

Lawton Public Library
Lawton, OK

The Pioneer Library System
Norman, OK

Rose State College
Midwest City, OK

Stillwater Public Library
Stillwater, OK

OREGON

Fishtrap
Enterprise, OR

Friends of the St. Helens Public
Library
St. Helens, OR

Libraries of Eastern Oregon
Fossil, OR

Oregon Alliance for Arts
Education
Salem, OR

Woodburn Public Library
Woodburn, OR

PENNSYLVANIA

Altoona Area Public Library
Altoona, PA

American Readers Theater
Shohola, PA

Arts Council of Erie
Erie, PA

August Wilson Center for
African American Culture
Pittsburgh, PA

Easton Area Public Library
Easton, PA

Ephrata Public Library
Ephrata, PA

Franklin Public Library
Franklin, PA

Jump Street
Harrisburg, PA

Kittanning Public Library
Kittanning, PA

Lansdowne Public Library
Lansdowne, PA

Lycoming County Library
System
Williamsport, PA

Montgomery County
Community College
Foundation
Blue Bell, PA

Scranton Public Library
Scranton, PA

Susquehanna County Literacy
Program
Montrose, PA

PUERTO RICO

Museo de Arte de Ponce
Ponce, PR

RHODE ISLAND

Rhode Island Coalition Against
Domestic Violence
Warwick, RI
(statewide)

West Bay Collaborative
Warwick, RI

SOUTH CAROLINA

Anderson County Arts Center
Anderson, SC

Benedict College
Columbia, SC

Charleston County Public
Library
Charleston, SC

Spartanburg County Public
Libraries
Spartanburg, SC

Sumter County Library
Sumter, SC

SOUTH DAKOTA

Dakota Wesleyan University
Mitchell, SD

South Dakota Center for the
Book
Brookings, SD

South Dakota Humanities
Council
Brookings, SD

TENNESSEE

Adventure Science Center
Nashville, TN

The City of Franklin
Franklin, TN

Dixie Carter Performing Arts
Center
Huntingdon, TN

E.G. Fisher Public Library
Athens, TN

Rhodes College
Memphis, TN

South Central Tennessee
Workforce Alliance
Columbia, TN

YWCA Knoxville
Knoxville, TN

TEXAS

Communities in Schools
Southeast Texas
Beaumont, TX

El Paso Public Library
El Paso, TX

Friends of Corpus Christi
Public Libraries
Corpus Christi, TX

Friends of Marfa Public Library
Marfa, TX

Greater Waco Chamber of
Commerce/Community
Development Foundation
Waco, TX

Harris County Public Library
Houston, TX

Houston Library Board
Houston, TX

Huntsville Public Library
Huntsville, TX

Irving Public Library
Irving, TX

Latino Cultural Center, a
division of the Office of
Cultural Affairs, City of
Dallas
Dallas, TX

Mesquite Arts Center
Mesquite, TX

Northeast Lakeview College
Live Oak, TX

San Antonio Public Library
Foundation
San Antonio, TX

Texas A & M University
Kingsville
Kingsville, TX

University of Texas at
Brownsville and Texas
Southmost College
Brownsville, TX

University of Texas – Pan
American
Edinburg, TX

Weatherford College
Weatherford, TX

Wiley College
Marshall, TX

UTAH

Cedar City Public Library
Cedar City, UT

Friends of Salt Lake City Public
Library
Salt Lake City, UT

Orem Public Library
Orem, UT

Utah Arts Council
Salt Lake City, UT

VERMONT

Vermont Arts Council
Montpelier, VT
(statewide)

VIRGIN ISLANDS

Virgin Islands Council on
the Arts
St. Thomas, VI
(statewide)

VIRGINIA

Amazement Square
Lynchburg, VA

Arlington Cultural Affairs
Division
Arlington, VA

Barter Theatre
Abingdon, VA

The Community Foundation of
the Central Blue Ridge
Staunton, VA

Hampton University
Hampton, VA

Lonesome Pine Regional
Library
Wise, VA

Newport News Public Library
System
Newport News, VA

Pamunkey Regional Library
Hanover, VA

Piedmont Arts Association
Martinsville, VA

The Big Read Grantees, 2006–2009, continued

Regent University Library
Virginia Beach, VA

Rockingham Library
Association
Harrisonburg, VA

Virginia Foundation for the
Humanities
Charlottesville, VA
(statewide)

WASHINGTON

Bainbridge Public Library
Bainbridge Island, WA

King County Library System
Foundation
Issaquah, WA

North Central Regional Library
Wenatchee, WA

Pat Graney Company
Seattle, WA

Sno-Isle Libraries
Marysville, WA

Spokane Public Library
Spokane, WA

Timberland Regional Library,
Hoquiam
Hoquiam, WA

Timberland Regional Library,
Tumwater
Tumwater, WA

Yakima Valley Libraries
Yakima, WA

WEST VIRGINIA

ArtsLink
New Martinsville, WV

Martinsburg-Berkeley County
Public Libraries
Martinsburg, WV

WISCONSIN

Amery Public Library
Amery, WI

Irvin L. Young Auditorium
Whitewater, WI

Marathon County Public
Library
Wausau, WI

Mead Public Library
Sheboygan, WI

Menomonie Public Library
Menomonie, WI

Milwaukee Public Library
Milwaukee, WI

Peninsula Players Theatre
Foundation
Fish Creek, WI

St. Croix Falls Public
Library/Festival Theatre
St. Croix Falls, WI

University of Wisconsin –
Eau Claire Center for
Service-Learning
Eau Claire, WI

University of Wisconsin-
Richland Library
Richland Center, WI

Waukesha Public Library
Waukesha, WI

WYOMING

The Wyoming Center for
the Book
Cheyenne, WY
(statewide)

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“The concept combines local leadership with national-caliber materials. . . . [Chairman] Gioia likes to cite the example of librarian Marie Pyko of Topeka, Kansas, whose Big Read efforts around Hurston’s *Their Eyes Were Watching God* had the participation of beauty salons, churches, and blogging students. What the NEA puts into the effort is the promotional and educational power. . . . There are guidebooks for readers and teachers for the books selected by the NEA’s team of 22 independent literary experts and specialists.”

—*CNN*, June 2006

“Industries and governors have complained that Americans are reading less just when today’s jobs call for people who read better. The National Endowment for the Arts, which organized the Big Read projects, believes that people who read more will make better citizens.”

—*Washington Post*, March 2006

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National Endowment for the Arts

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