


501 Must-Read Books

Emma Beare (Editor)

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From Reader Review 501 Must-Read Books for online ebook

Traveller says

While I often agreed with the authors chosen, I did not always agree with the specific books of these chosen as their "best" works.

I also personally would have re-arranged the genre sections to have a proper non-fiction section.

..and how come we are doing SF and thrillers, but no horror or fantasy? ...for Pete's sake - an iconic author such as Tolkien is included under children's fiction...!! Could the "children's" section not rather have been named: "fantasy" which could have included children's fiction?

Non-fantasy children's novels could have been placed in a YA section.

Alternatively, could SF/Fantasy not have been placed together, since there is often a lot of crossover between these 2 genres?

I did not like the "thriller" section either, which seemed rather skewed in favor of early twentieth century detective novels. (...and in spite of that, Miss Marple doesn't even feature! LOL)

Surely, in any case, one must view the books as 'must-read' only if you are interested in the specific genre, so I feel more genres should have been represented here.

On the plus side, for those having nothing else to do, and nothing left to read, every novel gets an informative, succinct description, with some brief information on its author included, making this a useful and interesting, if lightweight, reference/coffee table addition to one's library.

The book can be read on its own mainly for entertainment and to fill out any gaps in personal literary knowledge, or can be used as a quick reference book, but it is lacking regarding the satisfaction of anything more serious than idle curiosity, since it most often doesn't even give information on other equally good or famous books a prolific author might have written.

Rupa says

5 thoughts on this book:

1. I have not yet finished the book and I am not going to do so anytime soon. To read it at one go is no fun, information overload, and I must save some fun for later
2. Books like this are weakness for readers like me who love to read about books and know more about different books
3. I like the genre based classification, because I believe that is the surest ways to get in or stay out of different worlds for book lovers.
4. I like the authors listed, but not the pick in this book. If Bleak House and Pride and Prejudice do not feature, I find it hard to accept that the list is good.
5. Glossy pictures, author photos, list of other works by the author, one page per book - all makes it a good coffee table book. But the description under each book is nothing great or engaging or even enlightening - just okay sort of thing.

I think this is a good book to go to for idle browsing, or to read something fun when I don't want to read anything in particular. But I cannot say it leaves me much wiser.

Linda says

Very good read for book lovers and a great resource for book clubs. Each must-read book includes a one-page synopsis. There are different genres: children, history, memoirs, classics, modern fiction, science fiction, thrillers, and travel. It's also illustrated with book covers and/or photographs of the authors.

Jan-Len says

I do not profess having read each and every description (at times deliberately, to avoid having entire plots being laid bare). It is a decent enough reference book but I encountered one particularly chilling error which seriously brings into question the credibility of the work as a whole - in the description of 'Slaughterhouse 5' by Kurt Vonnegut, the main protagonist is stated to be "Billy Piper". Holy mother of Zeus it's Billy "Pilgrim" not "Piper". It begs the question, did this particular contributor really read this novel? All I can say is, praise be to (insert applicable god) he didn't get to the bit where Kilgore "Salmon" was introduced. So it goes.

Mariam says

What a beautiful treasure!
Review coming soon!

Stevedutch says

No reader will ever agree on which books ought to be classified as 'must read'. I don't know about anyone else but as soon as someone recommends a book to me it puts me off reading it. This means, of course, that I have missed out on some excellent reads in the past, that only much later, I have found to be so. But that generally depends upon who recommended them and my age and the context in which they were recommended. I remember a work colleague about twenty years ago being horrified by my admission that I couldn't get on with 'Birdsong': I finally tried again about 6 years ago and found it to be excellent – in parts!

This book is a truly weighty tome so not something that you can or would want to carry around with you: it is definitely meant to sit on a coffee table, or reside sturdily on a shelf somewhere. The must-read books are classified into 8 sections comprising; Children's Fiction, Classic Fiction, History, Memoirs, Modern Fiction, Science Fiction, Thrillers and Travel all capped off with separate book and author indices. Each entry is given its own full page spread and nicely illustrated by the dust jacket of the first edition.

My own sense of outrage was stimulated, initially, by the omission of To Kill a Mockingbird and then fortified by the omissions of Cancer Ward and Dr Zhivago while Captain Correlli's Mandolin is featured! Well, I guess Lincoln was as wise in this as he was in almost every other way when he (is purported to have) said 'you can please some of the people some of the time all of the people some of the time some of the

people all of the time but you can never please all of the people all of the time’!

Shannon Gillissie Phoenix says

This is a great book for book lovers who are interested in the works of the greatest authors. Like movies, there are just some books that everyone must read, especially those who classify themselves as a bookworm, or the like. Most people from my generation have seen Jurassic Park; most avid readers have read ‘Catcher in the Rye’.

501 Must-Read Books outlines a collection of books from different genres and time periods that have withstood the test of time and still are considered great works of art for one reason or another. Some compilations not only show modern and classic literature, but ancient works that are still kicking around today. Each book is reviewed and the contributor explains why the book belongs on this particular list of must-read books. I was fascinated by some of the chosen titles and am really looking forward to working my way through reading these books, one-by-one. I was delighted to find that twenty-six of the 501 books already have a spot on my bookshelf. 475 to go!

Even for those who don’t particularly want to make it a mission to read each of these books, 501 Must-Read Books is still a fun read and exposes people to works that would not have been considered before. I have never considered myself to be a memoir reader, but after reading this list, I’m looking forward to some of the works I’ll be tackling.

And for people who enjoy reading but it’s not a passion, but entertainment, this book makes an attractive coffee table feature to be perused when you have a few spare moments. The articles are short enough to be read in a moment and almost each page has a photo.

Mission 501 Must-Read Books: Commence!

Steffi says

I really enjoyed to read this book. As a German I know a lot of german anthologies and best-book lists, but here I could see another perspective, a perspective from the point of english-speaking nations. I rediscovered a lot of good old friends - not only Germans like Erich Kaestner's children books, but also novels like 84 Charing Cross Road, Disgrace... The chapters are very well defined in some fiction and non-fiction areas.

Of course, I missed some of my favourites, but every list has to remain incomplete.

Manny says

~~Need a Title!!!~~

~~A Bunch of my Goodreads Reviews~~

~~739 of my Goodreads Reviews~~

~~327 of my Goodreads Reviews~~

~~501 of my Goodreads Reviews~~
~~501 Books I Keep Annoying My Friends With~~
~~501 Books I Kind of Like But There's No Earthly Reason You Will~~
~~501 Books I Kind of Like Some of Which Are Actually Good~~
~~501 Books I Like All of Which Are Really Good Cross My Heart~~
~~501 Books I Sometimes Tell People They Might Want to Read~~
~~501 Books I Often Tell People They Should Read~~
~~501 Books I Tell People They Must Read~~
~~501 Books You Must Read~~
501 Must-Read Books

Nathan says

Scanned it looking for new books. Shocked that call of the wild wasn't in there nor animal farm

David Freudenburg says

Beautiful reference book with clear, concise, 1-page descriptions of WAY TOO MANY books. The term "Must-Read" really loses some of its potency when it is attached to "501". I would be curious to see a book called "51 Must-Read Books." Now that would be much more interesting! The authors would have to make lots of very difficult and very interesting decisions.

Besides the fact that there are way too many must-read books, some of the selections are odd. It's nice to select only one book per author per genre, but why not pick the best or best-known of each author. Why select, for example, relatively unusual and unknown works of Dickens as opposed to "David Copperfield" and "Great Expectations"? How can that be "Must-Read"?

It is nice to separate the books by genre, but it would have been more helpful to list them chronologically within the genre, rather than alphabetically by author's last name. And, how can "Howard's End" by E. M. Forster be listed in the Classic Fiction genre, and "A Passage to India" by the same author is in the Modern Fiction genre!?

I respect the fact that the choices attempt a world-wide and international selection, but I am amazed that there are SO many books and authors I have never even heard of, much less read.

Karen says

This is a beautiful book for anyone who loves to read. In my opinion, their selections in the 2 areas with which I am quite familiar, (SciFi and Children's Lit), were extremely accurate. I therefore trust that their choices in other categories, such as History, Memoirs and Diaries, Contemporary Fic, etc., will be just as worth reading when the mood strikes me to venture out of familiar territory. The book is also a sheer physical pleasure to hold and look through.

Mary says

I picked this book up in the bargain books area of Borders this past weekend. Several people on Goodreads suggested this as a good reference to find good books and I can see why now after devouring the whole thing in one weekend. In the process I was able to find 12 books to add to my "to read" list - My Left Foot, Che Guevara: A Revolutionary Life, Brain Wave, It, and Unless among others.

Anyone who is interested in the lives of authors will love this book. I expected to only find lists of books with boring plot summaries, but found the writing to be interesting and the facts shared about various authors was a bonus. Many of the pages had photos of authors, which I like, being a collector of black and white postcards of favorite authors such as Toni Morrison, Stephen King, Virginia Wolfe, Ernest Hemingway, etc.

My best find was a science fiction book called Brain Wave by Poul Anderson. It centers around the earth's atmosphere changing and causing people and animals to become smarter literally overnight and is told from the viewpoints of several characters who are affected in different ways.

James M. Madsen, M.D. says

I just ran across this book at a local bookstore and quickly snapped it up. The list contains several books that I've read, more that I haven't, and many that I didn't recognize at all. I'm not simply going to import the list of books into my to-read list, but I do intend eventually to read them all. The list seems like a pretty good one, and the one-page book descriptions (complete with nice illustrations) are very helpful. Not the only possible reading guide, but a very good one!

Melinda says

I used to read Guinness and the Book of Lists, all the editions, as a kid, so you know this is the kind of book I can get totally absorbed in. This collection is a great reference and jumping-off place if you want to expand your literary horizons. There are full color, page-long write ups of great books from around the world, all conveniently separated into categories like Children's Classics, Science Fiction, Classic Fiction, Modern Fiction, and Mysteries. The articles are smart summaries written by someone who knows and loves literature in all its guises. It's cool seeing "old friends" I read for classes I'd almost forgotten about in college, like Kundera's *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, or Grass's *"The Tin Drum."* But it's also wonderful to find so many great books to add to my lifetime reading list, including things I've never heard of. I found this for less than \$10 in the remainder bin. What a deal!
