



12-22-2014

39 Social Justice Books and Movies to Keep Your Brain Warm Over Winter Break!

The Surge Team
Gettysburg College

Follow this and additional works at: <https://cupola.gettysburg.edu/surge>

 Part of the [Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Commons](#), and the [Race, Ethnicity and Post-Colonial Studies Commons](#)

Share feedback about the accessibility of this item.

The Surge Team, "39 Social Justice Books and Movies to Keep Your Brain Warm Over Winter Break!" (2014). *SURGE*. 245.
<https://cupola.gettysburg.edu/surge/245>

This is the author's version of the work. This publication appears in Gettysburg College's institutional repository by permission of the copyright owner for personal use, not for redistribution. Cupola permanent link: <https://cupola.gettysburg.edu/surge/245>

This open access blog post is brought to you by The Cupola: Scholarship at Gettysburg College. It has been accepted for inclusion by an authorized administrator of The Cupola. For more information, please contact cupola@gettysburg.edu.

39 Social Justice Books and Movies to Keep Your Brain Warm Over Winter Break!

Abstract

A hodgepodge of books and movies, some serious, some funny that engage issues of social justice in a variety of ways. If you read or watch one, let us know what you think in the comments! [*excerpt*]

Keywords

Surge, Surge Gettysburg, Gettysburg College, Center for Public Service, social justice

Disciplines

Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies | Race, Ethnicity and Post-Colonial Studies

Comments

Surge is a student blog at [Gettysburg College](#) where systemic issues of justice matter. Posts are originally published at [surgegettysburg.wordpress.com](#) Through stories and reflection, these blog entries relate personal experiences to larger issues of equity, demonstrating that –isms are structural problems, not actions defined by individual prejudice. We intend to popularize justice, helping each other to recognize our biases and unlearn the untruths.

SURGE

[VERB] : to move suddenly or powerfully forward or upward

39 SOCIAL JUSTICE BOOKS AND MOVIES TO KEEP YOUR BRAIN WARM OVER WINTER BREAK!

December 22, 2014

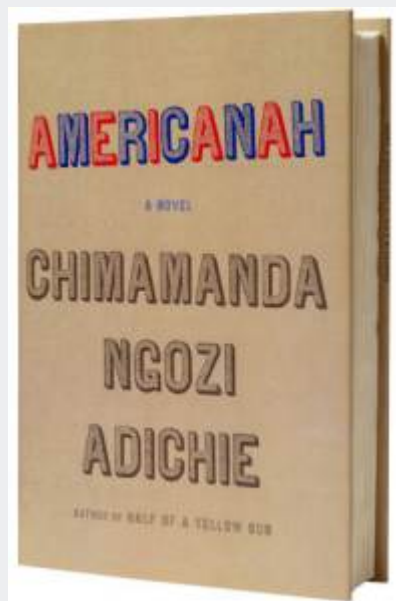
A hodgepodge of books and movies, some serious, some funny that engage issues of social justice in a variety of ways. If you read or watch one, let us know what you think in the comments!

Thank you to everyone who submitted recommendations!



Books

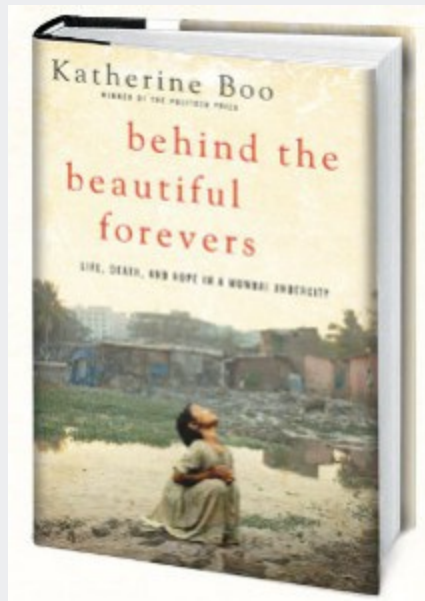
1. [Americanah](#) by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie



A coming of age novel and love story that also takes a critical look at immigration and race in the US. While all of these books are excellent and aren't ranked in any particular order, *Americanah* is first on Surge's list because it will make you want to be a social justice blogger!

~~~~~

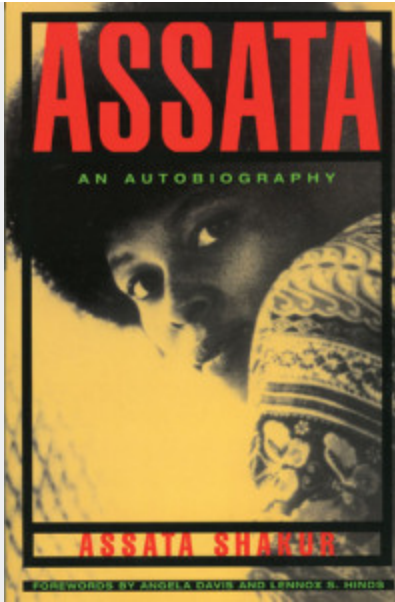
2. [\*Behind the Beautiful Forevers: Life, Death and Hope in a Mumbai Undercity\*](#) by Katherine Boo



A five-year ethnographic study that reads like a novel, *Behind the Beautiful Forevers* illustrates the impact of corruption on the lives of individuals. It will also challenge your perceptions of global development.

~~~~~

3. [*Assata: An Autobiography*](#) by Assata Shakur



Is our Justice System unjust? In this highly relevant autobiography, Assata Shakur both details her maturation as a Black Revolutionary and her controversial trial process for the alleged murder of a New Jersey State Trooper. Shakur explores a myriad of oppressive structures in society as she comes of age and ultimately escapes the country she wishes to change for the better.

~~~~~

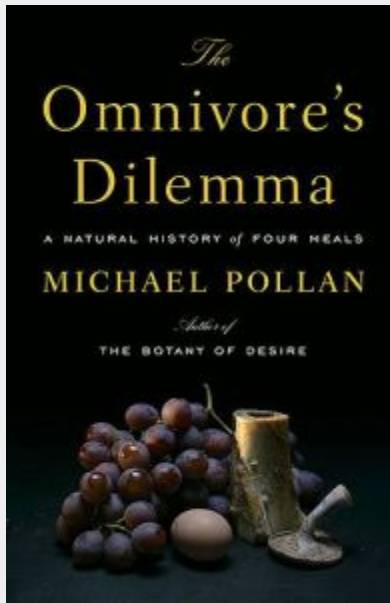
4. [\*Turn Me Loose: The Unghosting of Medgar Evers\*](#) by Frank X Walker



This poem collection by Gettysburg's 2014-15 Croll Lecturer seeks to put the spotlight on an important member of the Civil Rights Movement who was assassinated. Poems are in the voices of his wife, his killer, and his killers' wives. Another excellent piece on race relations.

~~~~~

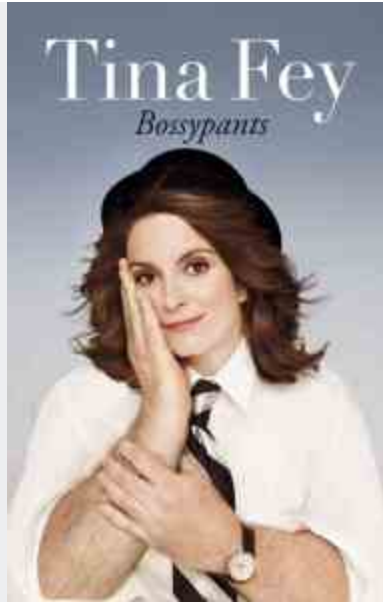
5. [*The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals*](#) by Michael Pollan



A book about food production and consumption in the US that will make you think about how your food gets from the farm to the table and the social implications of these processes.

~~~~~

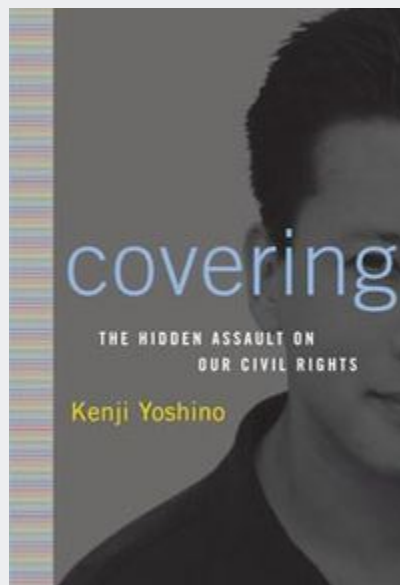
6. [\*Bossypants\*](#) by Tina Fey



While it might seem like a strange title to have on the list, this smart and funny (obviously!) autobiography provides a feminist perspective on topics such as working in the entertainment industry, managing work and family life, and being a woman in a position of power.

~~~~~

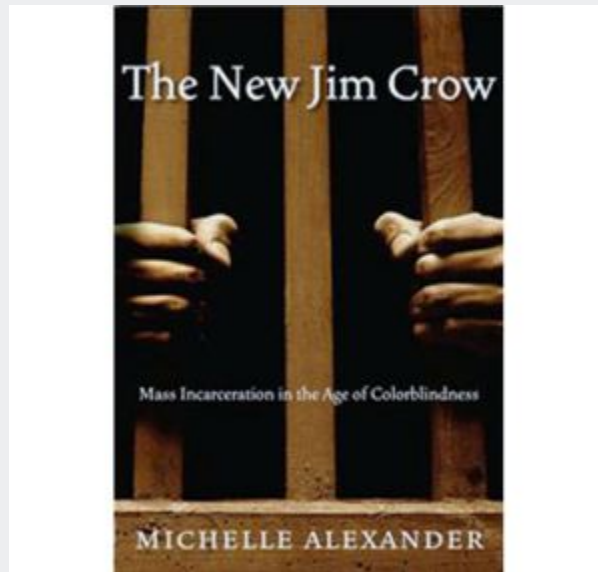
7. *Covering: The Hidden Assault on Our Civil Rights* by Kenji Yoshino



This book by a prominent gay Asian American legal scholar combines personal memoir with a call for a new kind of freedom: the right to be who we are without downplaying differences that are considered undesirable. Yoshino argues that everyone—regardless of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, disability, etc.—should have the right not to conform to the demands of the mainstream.

~~~~~

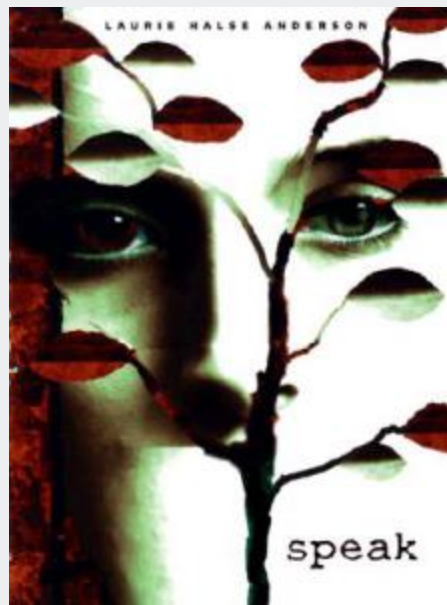
8. [The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness](#) by Michelle Alexander



An examination of mass-incarceration and the oppression of communities of color in the US that illustrates how far America still has to go in order to eliminate racism and racial inequality. This work is more relevant than ever in wake of recent protests.

~~~~~

9. [Speak](#) by Laurie Halse Anderson



A quick but powerful read about the struggle to overcome sexual assault and the challenges that survivors face in speaking about it.

~~~~~

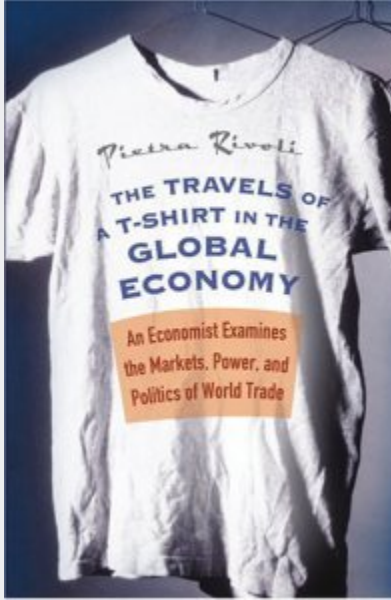
10. [\*Sister Citizen: Shame, Stereotypes, and Black Women in America\*](#) by Melissa V. Harris-Perry



The intersection of gender and racial oppression are explored in this examination of the experiences of black women in the US.

~~~~~

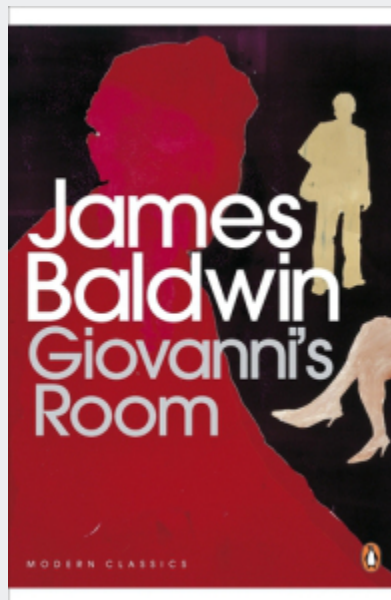
11. [*Travels of a T-Shirt in a Global Economy: An Economist Examines the Markets, Power, and Politics of World Trade*](#) by Pietra Rivoli



The author provides a controversial examination of the global economy by recounting how a tee-shirt is made and enters the free market. You may not agree with her on every point, but this book will definitely make you think.

~~~~~

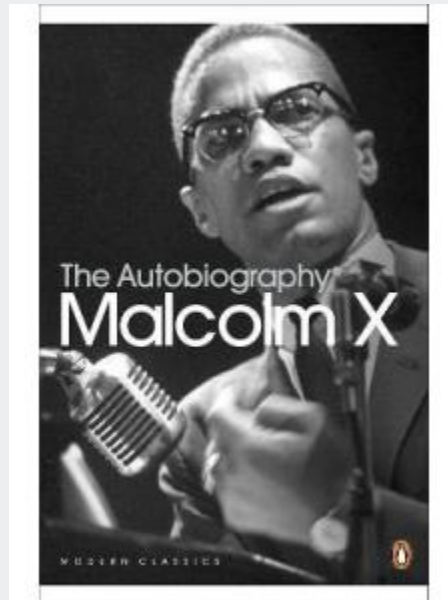
12. *Giovanni's Room* by James Baldwin



A powerful novel about a protagonist struggling to embrace his sexual identity in Paris in the 1950s.

~~~~~

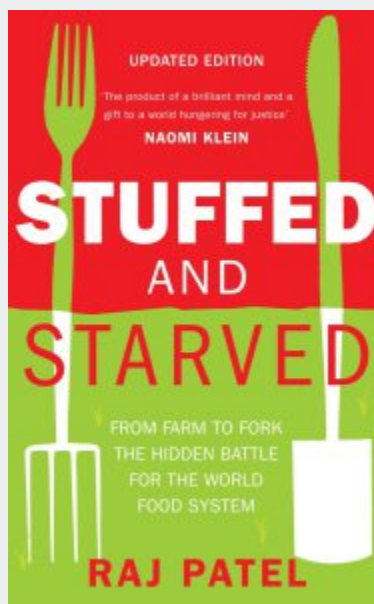
13. [*The Autobiography of Malcom X as told to Alex Haley*](#)



The work explores race relations in the US through the eyes of one of the most controversial figures in history. Malcolm X is often depicted as an overly violent opposite to Martin Luther King Jr., but his story provides another perspective on America's racial tensions.

~~~~~

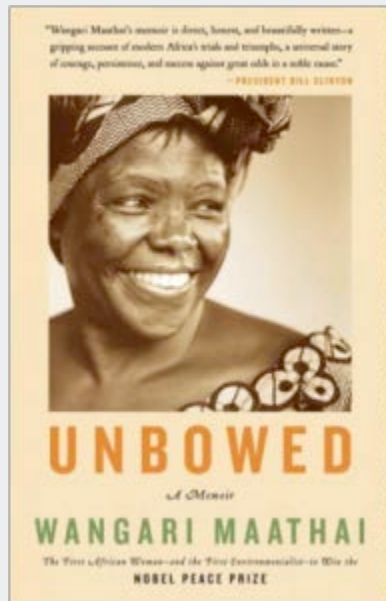
14. [\*Stuffed and Starved: Markets, Power, and the Hidden Battle for the World Food System\*](#) by Raj Patel



All in all a really happy read (not), but it gives a lot of insight into the inequalities created by global food politics and how the diets of people in one part of the world can cause an increase in suicides in another.

~~~~~

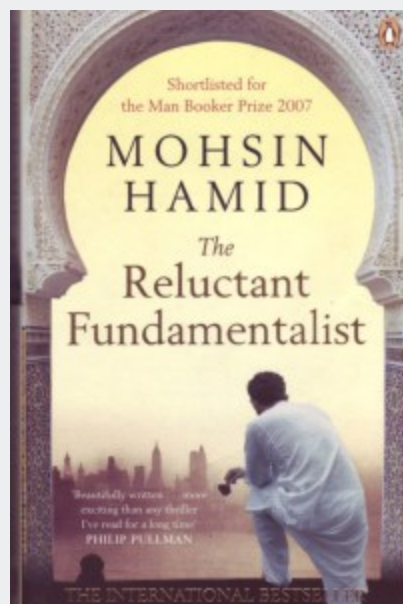
15. [*Unbowed: A Memoir*](#) by Wangari Mathaai



The unforgettable memoir of the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize winner, a Kenyan social and political activist.

~~~~~

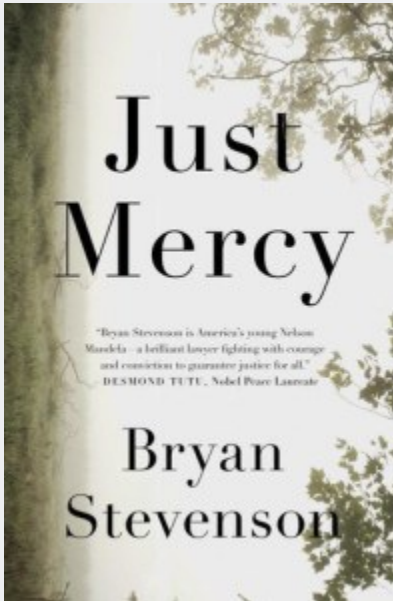
16. [\*The Reluctant Fundamentalist\*](#) by Mohsin Hamid



A creative frame narrative about a Pakistani immigrant in America whose life changes after September 11, 2001.

~~~~~

17. *Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption* by Brian Stevenson



Bryan Stevenson recounts the court case that transformed his perspective on justice and the US legal system. He later went on to found the Equal Justice Initiative, a private, nonprofit organization that provides legal representation to impoverished defendants and prisoners who have been denied fair and just treatment in the legal system.

~~~~~

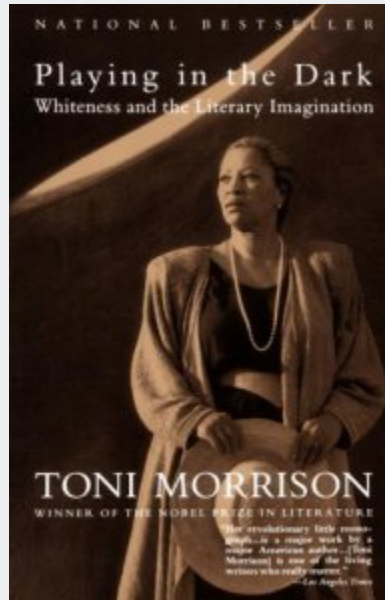
18. *The Hunger Games Series* by Suzanne Collins



With the third movie adaptation just released, now is the perfect time to read (Or reread!) these novels that provide a critical examination of government, inequality, and the power of the media. Though they are set in a fictional US in a dystopian future, what really stands out about these books is the applicability of their messages to our society in the present.

~~~~~

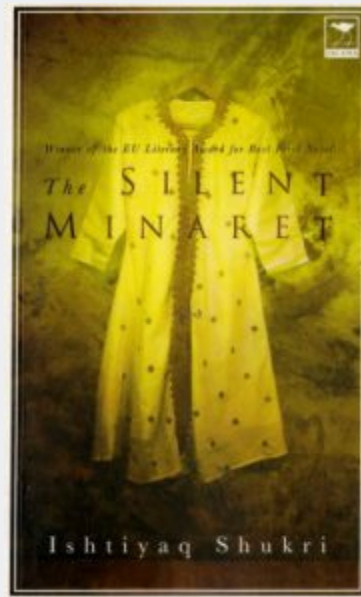
19. *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* by Toni Morrison



A critique of the representation of people of color in “classic” American literature delivered by the phenomenal Toni Morrison.

~~~~~

20. *The Silent Minaret* by Ishtiyak Shukri

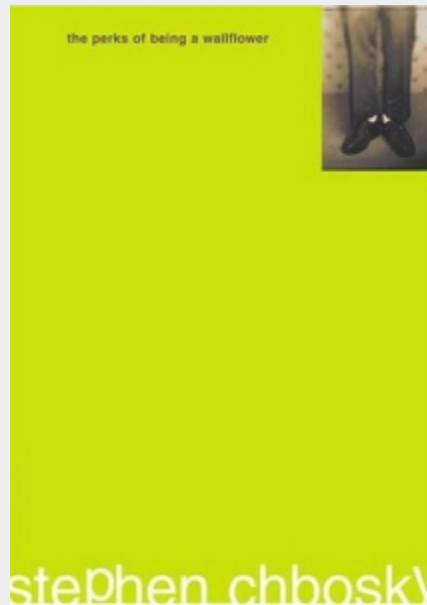


Shukri does a spectacular job of discussing issues such as race, religion, nationalism, the legacy of colonialism. The epigraph of the novel, a quote from a poem by the same author reads, “When cities crack, do stories too, their scaffolding collapsing? Then I come with upturned palms of stained – scraps

and chips of – glass, bits and – collage – pieces, mosaic pictures hobbled together from fragments. ‘I’m sorry it’s so disarranged, like ravaged cities cracking.’

~~~~~

21. [*The Perks of Being a Wallflower*](#) by Stephen Chbosky



A quick read but excellent read, *Perks* makes the list because of its powerful depiction of the dangers that members of the LGBT community can face in coming out and the difficulties of being gay in high school.

~~~~~

22. [\*The Casual Vacancy\*](#) by JK Rowling

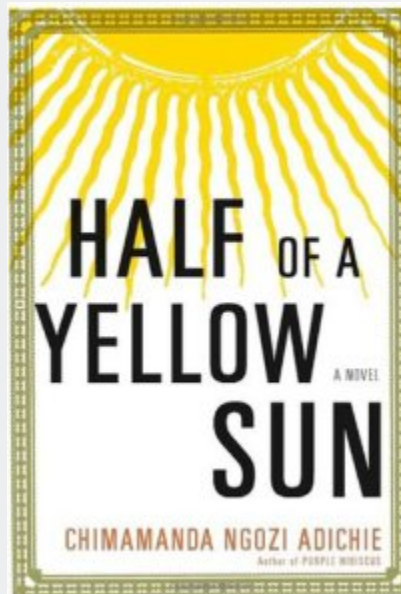




A novel about small-town politics that demonstrates the power of prejudice and the complex reality behind stereotypes of poverty and addiction. Fair warning, after you read this book, you won't be able to listen to *Umbrella* without wanting to cry.

~~~~~

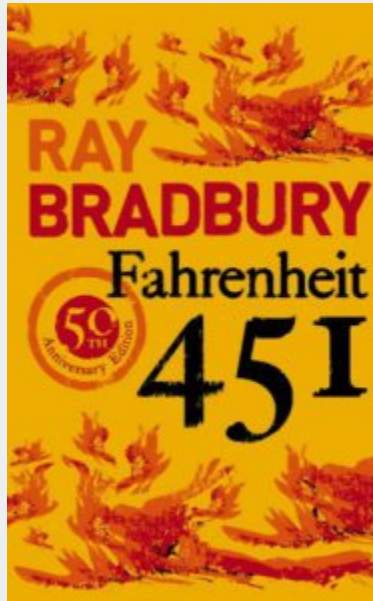
23. *Half of a Yellow Sun* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie



This novel is about the Biafran war for independence in Nigeria in the late 1960s. It illustrates the impacts of colonialism and delivers a critical examination of the international community views warfare on the African continent.


~~~~~

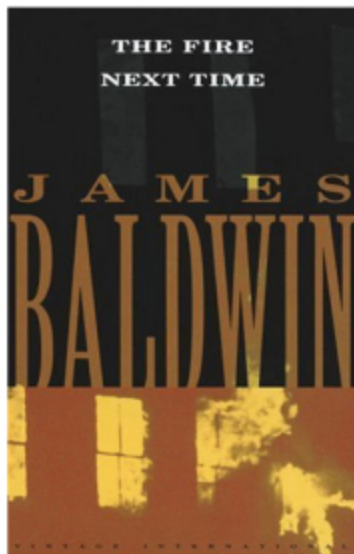
24. [\*Fahrenheit 451\*](#) by Ray Bradbury



A literary classic, this dystopian novel demonstrates the importance of education and the danger it poses to authoritarianism.

~~~~~

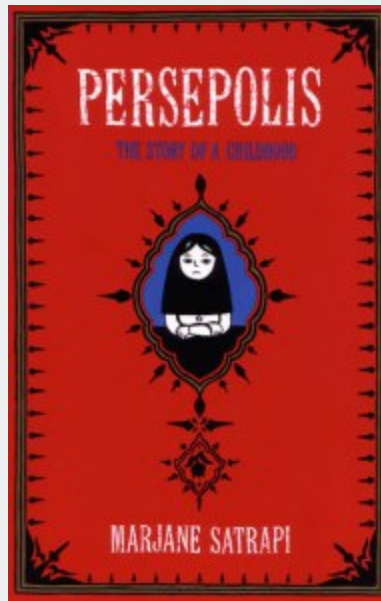
25. [*The Fire Next Time*](#) by James Baldwin



A collection of two essays by novelist and social critic James Baldwin. Both essays deal with the centrality of race in American History as well as religion and everyday society. Considered by many to be one of the most important books dealing with race relations.

~~~~~

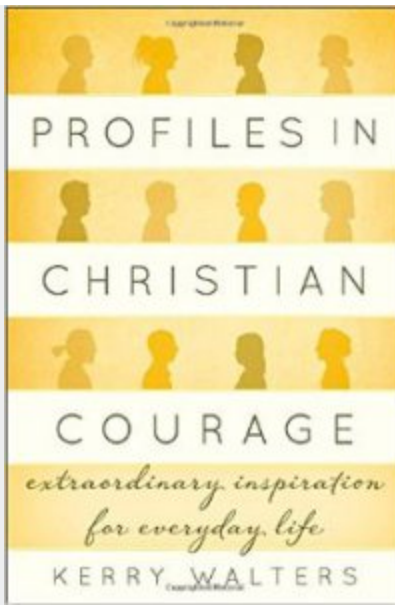
27. [\*Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood\*](#) by Marjane Satrapi



A talented visual artist, Satrapi depicts her childhood growing up in Iran after the 1979 revolution.

~~~~~

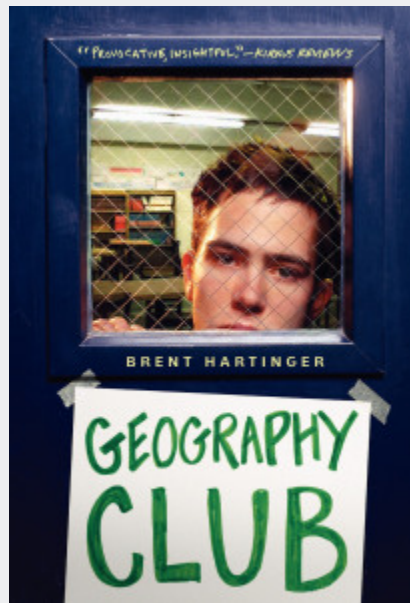
28. [*Profiles in Christian Courage: Extraordinary Inspiration for Everyday Life*](#) by Kerry Walters



Written by a Gettysburg professor, this book explores the meaning and manifestation of courage through the lens of the Christian faith. It includes stories of present-day Christians standing up to injustice.

~~~~~

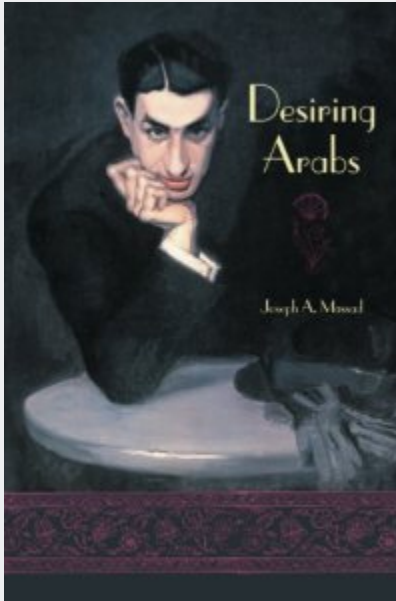
29. [The Geography Club](#) by Brent Hartinger



Another excellent book about discovering sexuality in high school and the challenges faced by members of sexual minorities.

~~~~~

30. [*Desiring Arabs*](#) by Joseph Massad



An important exploration of sexuality in the Arab world and how Western perceptions of it depending on the state of sexuality in their own societies.

~~~~~

31. [\*Israel/Palestine and the Queer International\*](#) by Sarah Schulman



An examination of queer solidarity in the context of the Israel-Palestine conflict and the Palestinian liberation struggle.

~~~~~

32. [*Brown Girl Dreaming*](#) by Jacqueline Woodson



The author's story about growing up in the 60s and 70s moving all around the border of North and South and how this experience was shaped by her race, gender, religion, and other markers of difference. Written in verse, *Brown Girl* deals with issues usually thought "too intense" for children's literature such as faith, race, sexual identity, alcoholism and sexual abuse.

~~~~~

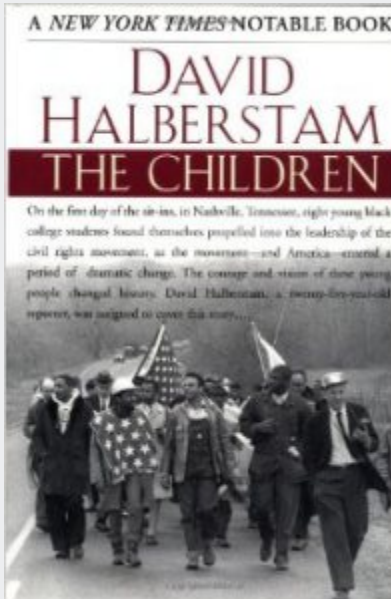
33. [\*Ash\*](#) by Malinda Lo



A beautiful retelling of the Cinderella stor, with a female protagonist who breaks all of the molds.

~~~~~

34. [The Children](#) by David Halberstam



A book about the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s that looks specifically at the stories and impacts of the children who helped to lead the charge for revolution

~~~~~

## Movies

35. [Skin](#) (2009)



Based on a book, this film tells the story of a young woman grown up in apartheid South Africa. It makes a powerful statement about how the socially constructed concept of race can have real impacts on a person's life.

~~~~~

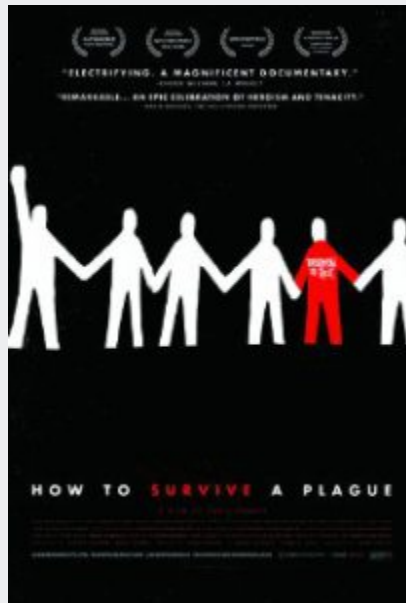
36. [Any Day Now](#) (2012)



Well-shot and even more well-written, this relatively unknown film shines a light on the real-life story of two gay men who attempted to adopt a young man with Down Syndrome, doing what they can to fight the stigma of both society and the courts's system in order to provide a safe space for Marco.


~~~~~

37. [\*How to Survive a Plague\*](#) (2012)



This absolutely fantastic, emotional documentary follows the lives of young men and women coming of age while dealing with their HIV-positive status.

~~~~~

38. [*We Were Here*](#) (2011)



Listen to the stories of five individuals who had their lives changed with the outbreak of AIDS in 1980s San Francisco.

~~~~~

39. *Advanced Style* (2014)



This fabulous documentary is one of only a few to give a voice to the older generation. Colorful, joyous, but at times heartbreaking, this documentary follows seven older New Yorkers with a passion for style, proving that fashion sense and beauty do not fade away with the years.