

One Book One Bloomington 2013 Finalists

Finalists

Voting has ended. More about the 2013 finalists:



The Handmaid's Tale

by Margaret Atwood

The story takes place in the futuristic Republic of Gilead (*the United States renamed*), which is governed by a group of religious fanatics. The story is told through the eyes of Offred, whom her society defines solely by her biological function as a child-bearer. In eloquent prose, Atwood reveals her themes of power and its manipulation, gender conflict, the place of the individual in society, and the power of language and storytelling. The novel has been banned in schools, made into a film and an opera, and has not been out of print since its publication.

Published in 1985, 324 pages

Read the book.

[Reserve a copy at the Library.](#)

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The Secret Agent

by Joseph Conrad

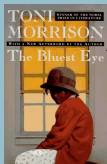
Called by *The New York Times* "the most brilliant novelistic study of terrorism," the novel is set in the London of 1886 and involves a plot to blow up the Greenwich Observatory. It deals largely with the life of Mr. Verloc, a revolutionary who becomes the tool of Russian political interests and who, in turn, exploits his autistic brother-in-law. Particularly relevant in the age of the suicide bomber, the novel treats of anarchism, espionage, and terrorism and was banned in Nazi Germany.

Published in 1907, 354 pages

Read the book.

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The Bluest Eye

by Toni Morrison

Pecola Breedlove is an 11-year-old African American living in Lorraine, Ohio in 1941. Her all-consuming dream is to have blue eyes, the one thing she feels might make her stand out and be admired. Pecola's parents are struggling with their own pasts and their ways of coping have devastating consequences for Pecola. The haunting themes of race, poverty, sexual abuse, and madness are told with the most eloquent and memorable language. Morrison's first novel is also one of her most controversial.

Published in 1970, 215 pages

Read the book.

[Reserve a copy at the Library.](#)

Visit your local bookstore.



The Jungle

by Upton Sinclair

The novel tells the powerful story of a Lithuanian immigrant and his family after they move to the outskirts of Chicago. Sinclair's novel inspired public outrage, an official investigation of the meat industry, and, eventually, the passage of the Pure Food and Drug Act and the Meat Inspection Act. One could argue that the deregulation of the food industry, the current exploitation of workers, and the loss of consumer power has come full circle since the reactions to *The Jungle*.

Published in 1906, 436 pages

Read the book.

[Reserve a copy at the Library.](#)

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The War of the Worlds

by H. G. Wells

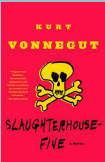
On the surface a simple science fiction tale of an invasion of Earth by malevolent Martians, the novel deeply questions social, moral, and religious beliefs and presents humans as frail, fallible, and lacking the ability to control their fate. Made especially infamous by the dramatization broadcast by Orson Welles in 1938 that panicked the nation, the novel has invited continual reinterpretations, including a number of film adaptations.

Published in 1898, 338 pages.

Read the book.

[Reserve a copy at the Library.](#)

Visit your local bookstore.



Slaughterhouse Five

by Kurt Vonnegut

The novel recounts the story of Billy Pilgrim, a former infantry scout in World War II who becomes "unstuck in time" following his abduction by aliens. The book explores the themes of time, memory, and truth, while rejecting rigid authority. The novel clearly emerges from the experiences of the author in the Second World War, but the blending of experience and invention transforms the work through a wonderful alchemy into a twentieth-century classic.

Published in 1969, 215 pages.

Read the book.

Reserve a copy at the [Library](#).

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