

Reading and Discussion Group Themes

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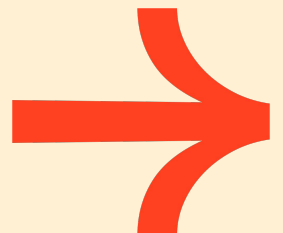
Reading & Discussion (R&D) Grants fund programs across New York State which provide an opportunity for communities to deeply consider a topic or issue of interest to them. In each program, participants read a series of thematically linked texts and engage in discussions over the course of four to six sessions facilitated by a trained local scholar. Organizations may choose to use one of the themes Humanities New York has developed or propose their own. Host sites must identify a facilitator from their own communities.

Beginning in the Fall of 2024, HNY is phasing out its lending library of books, but will continue to send texts to organizations that wish to receive copies as long as some remain. Organizations may keep any texts sent by HNY from now on. HNY encourages organizations to use R&D grant funds to purchase texts for participants, or secure texts through other means, such as local library systems. If you have any questions, please contact Programs Officer Rachel Pitkin (rpitkin@humanitiesny.org).

LAND, LIBERTY & LOSS: ECHOES OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

An exploration of our nation’s founding and how its history—or, more pointedly, misapprehensions of that history—often serves as an obstacle to full democratic and civic flourishing. *Land, Liberty, & Loss* is grounded in the historical and ongoing intersections between racial justice, especially the centuries-long deprivations endured by Native Americans, and the evolution of the American landscape. This theme prompts reflection on the human connection to both the natural and built environments, and encourages us to reconsider how the American Revolution connects to—or disrupts—Indigenous history, the history of political development and national expansion, and our use of natural resources.

Read the essay “*Land, Liberty, & Loss: Echoes of the American Revolution*” by Alan Taylor [here](#).



William Cooper's Town: Power and Persuasion on the Frontier of the Early American Republic

Alan Taylor

William Cooper rose from humble origins to become a wealthy land speculator and U.S. congressman in what was once the wilderness of upstate New York. Cooper's high-handed style of governing, though, resulted in his fall from power and political disgrace. His son, James Fenimore Cooper, became one of this country's first popular novelists with *The Pioneers*, a work with which he tried to come to terms with his father's failure and imaginatively reclaim the estate he had lost. The lives and legacies of both William Cooper and James Fenimore Cooper are explored in Alan Taylor's Pulitzer Prize-winning *William Cooper's Town*.

The Divided Ground: Indians, Settlers, and the Northern Borderland of the American Revolution

Alan Taylor

The Divided Ground tells the story of two friends, a Mohawk Indian and the son of a colonial clergyman, whose relationship helped redefine North America. As one served American expansion by promoting Indian dispossession and religious conversion, and the other struggled to defend and strengthen Indian territories, the two friends became bitter enemies. Their battle over control of the Indian borderland, that divided ground between the British Empire and the nascent United States, would come to define nationhood in North America.

Why You Can't Teach United States History Without American Indians

Edited by Susan Sleeper-Smith, Juliana Barr, Jean M. O'Brien, Nancy Shoemaker, Scott Manning Stevens

The nineteen essays gathered in this collaboratively produced volume, written by leading scholars of Native American history, reflect new directions in the field and are organized to follow the chronological arc of the standard American history survey. Contributors reassess major events, themes, groups of historical actors, and approaches—social, cultural, military, and political—consistently demonstrating how Native American people, and questions of Native American sovereignty, have animated the ways we consider the nation's past.

Conspiracy of Interests: Iroquois Dispossession and the Rise of New York State

Laurence M. Hauptman

The period between the American Revolution and the middle nineteenth century dramatically changed New York State and the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois). During this time upstate metropolises—Utica, Syracuse, Rochester, and Buffalo—were founded and experienced massive growth, making New York State one of the fastest-evolving regions in the country. This development led to the displacement of the Haudenosaunee. In *Conspiracy of Interests* Laurence M. Hauptman shows how state transportation interests, land speculating companies, and national defense policies worked to undermine the Haudenosaunee in the region.

The Pioneers

James Fenimore Cooper

In this classic novel, James Fenimore Cooper portrays life in a new settlement on New York's Lake Otsego in the closing years of the eighteenth century—a portrayal that mirrored the life of his own father, William Cooper. He writes of the conflicts within the settlement itself, focusing primarily on the contrast between the natural codes of hunters and woodsmen such as Natty Bumppo and his Mohican Indian friend John Mohegan, and the more rigid structure of law developed by the state's authorities in the wake of the Revolutionary War.

Our Beloved Kin: A New History of King Philip's War

Lisa Brooks

Lisa Brooks recovers a complex picture of war, captivity, and Native resistance during the "First Indian War" (later named King Philip's War) by relaying the stories of Weetamoo, a female Wampanoag leader, and James Printer, a Nipmuc scholar, whose stories converge in the captivity of Mary Rowlandson. Brooks' pathbreaking scholarship leads us to a new understanding of the history of colonial New England and of American origins.

THE VIETNAM WAR

With the exception of The Civil War, historians identify The Vietnam War as the most divisive military conflict to occur in American history. Recent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have reignited interest in Vietnam, and we continue to live with the war's social and political effects today. What is the cost of failing to examine the war more thoroughly, what are scholars saying about it now, and what can we gain from discussing it today? The memoirs, journalism, and fiction of the era are meant to encourage readers to consider these questions in this timely theme.

Vietnamerica: A Family's Journey

GB Tran

Vietnamerica is a visually stunning portrait of survival, escape, and reinvention—and of the gift of the American immigrants' dream, passed on to their children.

The Sorrow of War: A Novel of North Vietnam

Bao Ninh

Heart-wrenching, fragmented, raw, former North Vietnamese soldier Bao Ninh's *The Sorrow of War* provides a strikingly honest look at how the Vietnam War forever changed his life, his country, and the people who live there.

Monkey Bridge

Lan Cao

Monkey Bridge charts the unmapped territory of the Vietnamese American experience in the aftermath of war.

The Things They Carried

Tim O'Brien

A collection of linked short stories about a platoon of American soldiers fighting on the ground in the Vietnam War, *The Things They Carried* is O'Brien's third book about the war, based upon his experiences as a soldier in the 23rd Infantry Division.

A Vietcong Memoir: An Inside Account of the Vietnam War and Its Aftermath

Truong Nhu Tang

After meeting Ho Chi Minh, Truong Nhu Tang fought in the Vietnamese jungle and emerged as both a major figure in the “fight for liberation” and one of the most determined adversaries of the United States. He became the Vietcong’s Minister of Justice, but at the end of the war he fled the country in disillusionment and despair. He now lives in exile in Paris, the highest level official to have defected from Vietnam to the West. This is his candid, revealing and unforgettable autobiography.

Embers of War: The Fall of an Empire and the Making of America’s Vietnam

Frederic Logevall

In this Pulitzer Prize-winning work, historian Frederik Logevall explores how and why the United States entered the war in Vietnam following French colonization of the region. Logevall provides insight into the leaders and tragic policy decisions that led to an exchange of Western powers in Vietnam, as well as to their demise.

In Retrospect: The Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam

Robert McNamara

Written twenty years after the end of the Vietnam War, former Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara’s controversial memoir responds to lingering questions that surround this disastrous episode in American history.

PLACE AND STORY

Examine the natural world that surrounds us, from New York to the West, in this theme developed by award-winning author and environmentalist Rick Bass. Through poetry, fiction, and journalism, readers will engage with perspectives that capture the complicated relationship Americans have with the land and living things around them.

Place and Story was curated by Rick Bass. You can read his introductory essay [here](#).

An Unreasonable Woman: A True Story of Shrimpers, Politicos, Polluters, and the Fight for Seadrift Texas

Diane Wilson

After learning that she lives in the most polluted county in the United States, fourth-generation South Texas shrimper Diane Wilson wages a campaign against the multibillion-dollar corporation that has caused massive pollution along the Gulf Coast that she calls home. In *An Unreasonable Woman* Wilson chronicles her battle.

Grizzly Years: In Search of the American Wilderness

Doug Peacock

When Doug Peacock returned from the Vietnam War, he took to the wilderness of Montana and Wyoming, observing the grizzly bears that lived there and eventually becoming one of the world's foremost experts on the majestic animals.

The Ninemile Wolves

Rick Bass

This work of natural history follows a pack of wolves as they attempt to settle outside of protected parklands, and how their renewed presence forces us to examine our ideas about wolves and the relationship between human beings and wildlife more broadly.

Winter in the Blood

James Welch

This enduring novel by James Welch features a young Native American man living on the Fort Belknap Reservation in Montana, who seeks to connect to his lost heritage in the wake of personal tragedy.

Red-Tails in Love: Pale Male's Story—A True Wildlife Drama in Central Park

Marie Winn

In the midst of New York's Central Park, a group of nature lovers bond over watching, and eventually, protecting a pair of red-tailed hawks who have chosen a Fifth Avenue apartment building as a nesting site.

The Big Sky

A.B. Guthrie Jr.

Guthrie's Pulitzer Prize-winning Western novel follows mountain man Boone Caudill on his adventures down the Missouri River during the 19th century.

Angle of Repose

Wallace Stegner

Stegner's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel tells the story of a retired historian who plans to write about his grandparents' quintessential American life on the western frontier, only to discover things he might rather not have known.

SERVING: STANDING DOWN

Serving: Standing Down is a reading and discussion theme geared towards veterans, providing a space for them to reflect on their service as well as the challenges and opportunities of transitioning from active duty to civilian life. While *Serving* speaks to the experiences of veterans, non-military members of the public such as family members and friends of veterans can benefit from exploring their experiences and the ways in which the realities of forces such as war and active duty impact former soldier's present lives.

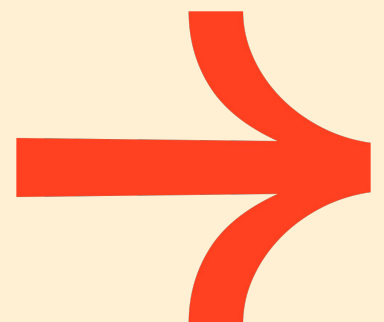
Standing Down: From Warrior to Civilian

Edited by Don Whitfield

This anthology includes 44 selections, from Homer's *Iliad* to personal accounts of members of the service who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan. The volume includes fiction, nonfiction, poetry, essays, and memoirs that speak to past and experiences, concerns, and aspirations of those who have served in the military and made the often difficult transition back into civilian life.

YOUR SILENCE WILL NOT PROTECT YOU: THE WRITING OF AUDRE LORDE

Lorde's powerful voice, documented in her poems, essays, speeches, biomythography and *Cancer Journals*, remains vital and instructive. Not only worth reading for its own sake, her work continues to provide keen insight into the differences that strengthen American society. This theme provides participants throughout New York state an opportunity to discuss Lorde's writings as they explore issues of race, class, gender, and sexuality.



Warrior Poet: A Biography of Audre Lorde

Audre Lorde

Alexis de Veaux's biography of Lorde is impressively researched and provides readers a fuller picture in which to contextualize her writings.

The Collected Poems of Audre Lorde

Audre Lorde

This definitive collection of Lorde's poetry—with poems from her early and late careers—features work both well-known and waiting-to-be-discovered by new and old readers alike.

Sister Outsider

Audre Lorde

This collection of essays by Lorde constitutes her most explicit challenge to the oppression she experienced and observed in the lives of others, including racism, sexism, and homophobia.

Zami: A New Spelling of My Name

Audre Lorde

Lorde's "biomythography" not only tells the story of her own life, but that of the other women who played an important role in it, and the symbols that structure our lived experiences.

The Cancer Journals

Audre Lorde

In this collection of essays, Lorde describes her experiences with breast cancer, and how medical treatment and recovery relate to issues of gender and race.

THE SERIOUS SIDE OF FOOD

With texts selected by noted restaurant critic Mimi Sheraton, this theme explores an aspect of our culture that often gets taken for granted: food. Food provides both nourishment and pleasure, of course, but under the surface of each meal lies a series of complex interactions and entanglements. Working with histories, novels, and journalism, these works present us with surprising issues, often found directly on our plates.

Read an introductory essay by scholar Mimi Sheraton that contextualizes the topics and themes of the series [here](#).

The Third Plate: Field Notes on the Future of Food

Dan Barber

Chef Dan Barber takes the reader on a series of journeys to where our food is sourced, and in the process creates new insight into ways we can eat better and create more sustainable food systems.

Diet Cults: The Surprising Fallacy at the Core of Nutrition Fads and a Guide to Healthy Eating for the Rest of Us

Matt Fitzgerald

This critique of various “diet fads” examines the rhetoric and faults of each, ascribing “cult” status to them—for they all claim to be the “one true way” to eat healthy.

The Road to Wellville

T. C. Boyle

Boyle’s comic novel satirizes the health craze of the early 20th century, poking fun at such practitioners as John Harvey Kellogg, founder of the famous cereal company. But Boyle forces us to ask: how different are we from these characters of a century ago?

In Defense of Food: An Eater’s Manifesto

Michael Pollan

Michael Pollan is concerned that the focus on nutrition and food science has replaced old-fashioned healthy eating, leading to his mantra: “Eat food. Not too much. Mostly plants.”

Diet for A Small Planet

Frances Moore Lappé

Diet for a Small Planet was at the forefront of the movement in the 1970s that led to a rethinking—both in terms of health and environmental impact—of our diets and relationship to food.

Food Politics: How the Food Industry Influences Nutrition and Health

Marion Nestle

Marion Nestle's contemporary classic exposes how corporations and food companies influence politics in order to improve their bottom lines—no matter what the cost to the health of ordinary Americans.

The Jungle

Upton Sinclair

Sinclair's classic novel of turn of the century Chicago focuses on the exploitation of immigrant workers and the unsanitary conditions they experienced while laboring in the city's famous stockyards and slaughterhouses.

VOTES FOR WOMEN!

2017 marked the Centennial of Women's Suffrage in New York State, and in 2020 the nation celebrated 100 years of the 19th Amendment. The history of the women's suffrage movement in our state and nation spanned seventy years, from the 1848 meeting convened by Elizabeth Cady Stanton in Seneca Falls to the tactics wielded by Alice Paul and overlooked African American suffragists such as Ida B. Wells and Mary Church Terrell. Book selections within this theme, which include history, biography, and fiction, provide a window into this chapter of social progress for American women and serve as a springboard into ongoing discussions about our past, present, and future.

Votes for Women! was curated by Laura Free, Associate Professor of History at Hobart and William Smith Colleges.

A Woman's Crusade: Alice Paul and the Battle for the Ballot

Mary Walton

Alice Paul's controversial and militant tactics in support of the women's vote were instrumental in forcing the hand of public opinion and politicians in the years leading to the passage of the 19th Amendment.

Votes for Women: The Struggle for Suffrage Revisited

Jean H. Baker

This collection of essays asks us to re-examine—in the light of new historical evidence—dimensions of the women's suffrage movement, thereby improving our view of this significant historical moment.

African American Women in the Struggle for the Vote, 1850–1920

Rosalyn Terborg-Penn

This book adds an important dimension to our understanding of the suffrage movement by focusing on the often overlooked efforts of African American women to secure voting rights.

Sex Wars: A Novel of Gilded Age New York

Marge Piercy

Marge Piercy's novel takes place in the last decades of the 19th century, as men and women from myriad walks of life struggle with the newfound prominence of women in society.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton: An American Life

Lori D. Ginzberg

This biography of Elizabeth Cady Stanton—one of the heroines of the suffrage movement—depicts her lifetime of activism while grappling with her more troublesome opinions.

Seneca Falls and the Origins of the Women's Rights Movement

Sally McMillen

Historian Sally McMillen examines the significance of the early decades of the women's suffrage movement, demonstrating just how important the years leading up to and following the Seneca Falls convention of 1848 were to women's rights in the United States.

OUR WORLD REMADE: WORLD WAR I

This series, organized to commemorate the centennial of World War I in 2018, invites participants to delve into the history, literature, and poetry of "the war to end all wars." Texts range from historical accounts and government documents to novels and poetry, which represent diverse perspectives from individuals such as soldiers, nurses, pacifists and other eyewitnesses to the tragic and transformative events of The Great War.

The introductory essay by project scholar Wendy Galgan lays out the scope of the series and will help facilitators formulate a syllabus and questions of their own. Read it [here](#).

The Penguin Book of First World War Poetry

Edited by George Walter

Unrivaled in its range and intensity, the poetry of World War I continues to have a powerful effect on readers today. This newly edited anthology reflects the diverse experiences of those who lived through the war, bringing together the words of everyday individuals impacted by the conflict. Within this anthology are famous verses by Rupert Brooke, Siegfried Sassoon, and Wilfred Owen; poetry by women writing from the home front; and the anonymous lyrics of soldiers' songs. Arranged thematically, the selections take the reader through the war's stages, from conscription to its aftermath, and offer a blend of voices that is both unique and profoundly moving.

A Very Long Engagement

Sébastien Japrisot

After a court martial in January 1917, five Frenchmen convicted of self-mutilation (in order to avoid combat) are dragged along the network of zigzagging trenches to the improbably named frontline trench, "Bingo Crepuscule." What exactly happened in Bingo is as labyrinthine as the trenches themselves, but Mathilde Donnay, the fiancée of one of the soldiers, is a determined young woman whose wheelchair is unable to contain her fiercely independent and willful spirit. Aided by an indulgent, well-to-do father, a generous private investigator, soldiers who survived the conflict and the families of those who didn't, Mathilde begins the long and spotty process of re-creating events out of the chaos of war.

Verdun: The Longest Battle of the Great War

Paul Jankowski

It is said that Verdun made France, but what did France make of Verdun? Like many battles, Verdun was bloody and indecisive, a symbol of the war's mechanization and horror. Historian Paul Jankowski reexamines the longest battle of the Great War, drawing on both French and German sources, to share both the military history and the social and cultural perspectives of those involved.

The Penguin Book of First World War Stories

Edited by Barbara Korte

This new collection of short stories about World War I features works by such famous British authors as Joseph Conrad, W. Somerset Maugham, Arthur Conan Doyle, John Buchan, Rudyard Kipling, D. H. Lawrence, John Galsworthy, Radclyffe Hall, Katherine Mansfield, Robert Graves, Muriel Spark, and Julian Barnes. Written during the war and after, these stories illustrate the impact of the Great War on British society and culture, as well as the many ways in which short fiction contributed to the literature of that time period.

The First World War: A Brief History with Documents

Susan R. Grayzel

Ferocious and all encompassing, the First World War touched countless lives in Europe and far beyond. Historian Susan R. Grayzel explores the unprecedented nature of modern “Total War,” and outlines the origins, experiences, and legacies of the war through—and beyond—Europe and the West. A wide array of documents that range from nationalist propaganda and diplomatic agreements to poetry and intimate letters and journals come together in this history to reveal the far-reaching causes and consequences of this total war.

All Quiet on the Western Front

Erich Maria Remarque

Remarque’s 1929 classic has been called the greatest book about war ever written. Follow German soldier Paul Baumer, who enlists with his classmates in the opening days of the war. Youthful, enthusiastic, they become soldiers. But despite what they have learned, they break into pieces under the first bombardment in the trenches. Whether any will survive—and in what condition, physical and emotional—holds readers until the end.

SERVING: A REFLECTION ON CIVIC ACTIVITY

Why and how do we choose to serve others? What is the nature of the relationship between those who serve and those who are served? If we do serve, what sustains and renews us? And how does our service impact our communities? The readings in this theme—drawn from literature, philosophy, and religion—invite reflection on these and other questions.

The Civically Engaged Reader: A Diverse Collection of Short Provocative Readings on Civic Activity

Edited by Adam Davis and Elizabeth Lynn

This anthology includes more than forty short readings and invites readers to reflect on civically engaged activity. Authors range from Aristotle to Kafka, Langston Hughes to Jane Addams, Andrew Carnegie to Pablo Neruda.

GROWING & AGING

How does our perception of ourselves transform as we grow older? In what ways does aging change how we view others? How has the concept of “age” changed over time? The texts in this theme explore these and other questions about entering middle age, growing older, caring for aged loved ones, and finding satisfaction in later stages of life. This series has been developed in part to help communities talk about our aging population.

Tinkers

Paul Harding

An old man lies dying. Propped up in his living room and surrounded by his children and grandchildren, George Washington Crosby drifts in and out of consciousness, back to the wonder and pain of his impoverished childhood in Maine. As the clock repairer's time winds down, his memories intertwine with those of his father, an epileptic, itinerant peddler, and his grandfather, a Methodist preacher beset by madness. Harding's novel won the Pulitzer Prize and was named an American Library Association Notable Book.

A History of Old Age

Edited by Pat Thane

The concept of old age has not been static throughout time. In this beautifully illustrated book, six authors explore how the best thinkers and artists of each historical epoch in the West have treated old age. They examine, too, the myths that have grown up around it and the images, both visual and verbal, that have been created to encapsulate that thing which we all shall become.

Literature & Aging: An Anthology

Edited by Martin Kohn, Carol C. Donley, and Delese Wear

This rich anthology gathers poetry, short stories, and more. Authors include Anne Sexton, Kurt Vonnegut, Harold Pinter, Anton Chekhov, William Carlos Williams, Alice Walker, Philip Roth and more. Selections explore themes of identity, love, family, community and how aging changes our perceptions of each.

In Our Prime: The Invention of Middle Age

Patricia Cohen

The middle-aged make up the biggest, richest, and most influential segment of the country, yet the history of middle age has remained largely untold. This book delightfully explores the history of the idea of “middle age,” including how its biological, psychological, and social definitions have shifted from one generation to the next.

REACHING FOR THE AMERICAN DREAM: PULITZER PRIZE–WINNING NOVELS

Through five Pulitzer Prize-winning novels, this theme looks at how authors have depicted the drive to better oneself and achieve the American dream—and how, despite our efforts, we often end up unfulfilled or clashing with other elements of society.

Read the essay "Reaching for the American Dream: The Pulitzer Prizes and America" by Evan Hughes [here](#).

A Visit from the Goon Squad

Jennifer Egan

Egan's series of linked short stories—featuring overlapping characters and events—follow a group of musicians and music executives as life sends them in directions none could have anticipated.

Humboldt's Gift

Saul Bellow

Two writers and friends experience very different personal pathways in the 20th century, reflecting America's changing relationship to art, commerce, and life in general.

American Pastoral

Philip Roth

Roth's protagonist Swede Levov lives a blessed existence in postwar New Jersey, reflecting all the prosperity of the period. Until, that is, his family has to contend with the changing social and political landscape of the 1960s.

Interpreter of Maladies

Jhumpa Lahiri

These short stories look at the experiences of Indian-Americans grappling with both the challenges of adapting to life in America while staying true to the culture and traditions of previous generations.

The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao

Junot Diaz

Dominican American Oscar Wao's nerdy fantasies provide a springboard for Diaz to interrogate the multigenerational experiences of one immigrant family.

AMERICAN POLITICS & COMMUNITY TODAY

What does it mean to be an American in the 21st century? What does a model American do, and what responsibilities do Americans have to their communities and each other? How have the answers to these questions changed throughout the history of the United States? *American Politics and Community Today* encourages readers to engage with these and other questions regarding politics and the current state of civic thought, feeling, and participation.

This series, part of the NEH funded “Democracy in Dialogue,” was created by The University of Chicago’s Ken Warren.

Indecision

Benjamin Kunkel

After transforming his life with a seemingly magical pill, Dwight finds himself in South America, where he just might find himself—as well as discover his place in the world and his responsibilities towards it.

The Collected Essays of Ralph Ellison

Edited by John F. Callahan; Preface by Saul Bellow

These essays by the author of *Invisible Man* reflect on race, literature, music, and the experience and contradictions of living in America during the 20th century.

Talking to Strangers: Anxieties of Citizenship Since Brown v. Board of Education

Danielle Allen

Danielle Allen looks at the current condition of civic distrust in America, tracing it back to school integration in the 1950s, and suggests practical ways that Americans can begin to overcome the issues that divide them.

Between Past and Future

Hannah Arendt

This collection of essays by celebrated philosopher Hannah Arendt investigates a series of concepts—authority, freedom, education, and more—and explains their significance to our political life.

The Book of Daniel

E.L. Doctorow

Loosely based on the Rosenberg espionage case, this novel follows Daniel Isaacson as he looks into his parents' conviction and execution while participating in the 1960s student movement.

MUSLIM JOURNEYS

The eight books included in the *Muslim Journeys* theme tell provocative and gripping stories about the experiences of Muslims around the world and in the United States.

Selected from the National Endowment for the Humanities' Muslim Journeys Bookshelf, these memoirs and novels provide insight into a diverse array of contemporary Muslim lives. Each powerfully illustrates how the humanities promote understanding of and mutual respect for people with diverse stories, cultures, and perspectives within the U.S. and abroad.

Snow

Orhan Pamuk

Nobel Prize-winning author Orhan Pamuk tells the story of a poet seeking his lost love in a remote Turkish town riven by religious conflict and cut off from the world by a blizzard. Returning to Turkey from exile in the West, Ka is driven by curiosity to investigate a surprising wave of suicides among religious girls forbidden to wear their head scarves in school. But the epicenter of the suicides, the eastern border city of Kars, is also home to the radiant and newly divorced Ypek, a friend of Ka's youth whom he has never forgotten and whose spirited younger sister is a leader of the rebellious schoolgirls. As a fierce snowstorm descends on Kars, violence between the military and local Islamic radicals begins to explode, and Ka finds his sympathies drawn in unexpected and dramatic directions.

Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood

Marjane Satrapi

Wise, funny, and heartbreaking, Satrapi's acclaimed graphic tells the story of her life in Tehran from ages six to fourteen, years that saw the overthrow of the Shah's regime, the triumph of the Islamic Revolution, and the devastating effects of war with Iraq. *Persepolis* paints an unforgettable portrait of daily life in Iran and of the bewildering contradictions between home life and public life. Marjane's child's-eye view of dethroned emperors, state-sanctioned whippings, and heroes of the revolution allows us to learn as she does the history of this fascinating country and of her own extraordinary family.

Minaret

Leila Aboulela

Leila Aboulela's American debut is a provocative, timely, and engaging novel about a young Muslim woman—once privileged and secular in her native Sudan and now impoverished in London—gradually embracing her orthodox faith. With her Muslim hijab and down-turned gaze, Najwa is invisible to most eyes, especially to the rich families whose houses she cleans in London. After a coup forces her wealthy family to flee Khartoum, Najwa eventually finds solace and love in the Muslim community of her adopted country.

In the Country of Men

Hisham Matar

In Libya in 1979, nine-year-old Suleiman's days are circumscribed by the narrow rituals of childhood: outings to the ruins surrounding Tripoli, games with friends played under the burning sun, exotic gifts from his father's constant business trips abroad. But his nights have come to revolve around his mother's increasingly disturbing bedside stories full of old family bitterness. When his father is suddenly arrested by the Revolutionary Guard, Suleiman is caught up in a world he cannot begin to understand. Matar's gripping novel was short-listed for the Man Booker Prize.

How Does It Feel to Be a Problem?: Being Young and Arab in America

Moustafa Bayoumi

Just over a century ago, W.E.B. Du Bois posed a probing question in his classic work, *The Souls of Black Folk*: How does it feel to be a problem? Now, Moustafa Bayoumi asks the same about America's new "problem": Arab and Muslim Americans. Bayoumi takes readers into the lives of seven twenty-somethings living in Brooklyn—home to the largest Arab American population in the United States—in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.

House of Stone: A Memoir of Home, Family, and a Lost Middle East

Anthony Shadid

During the Arab Uprising of 2011, *New York Times* reporter Shadid was captured and beaten in Libya. Rather than returning to Oklahoma City to rejoin his Lebanese-American family upon his release, he traveled to Lebanon to rebuild his great-grandfather's estate. In this moving memoir, Shadid recounts both the story of the lost world of his forefathers' generation and reveals the shifting, volatile Middle East of today.

Broken Verses: A Novel

Kamila Shamsie

Two years before famous Pakistani activist Samina Akram disappeared her lover, Pakistan's greatest poet, was beaten to death by government thugs. Years later, in present-day Karachi, her daughter Aasmaani has just discovered a letter in the couple's private code—a letter that could only have been written recently. Merging the personal with the political, Shamsie's novel is both a sharp, thrilling journey through modern day Pakistan, a carefully coded mystery, and an intimate mother-daughter story that asks how we forgive a mother who leaves.

Acts of Faith: The Story of an American Muslim, in the Struggle for the Soul of a Generation

Eboo Patel

Patel, who grew up in Chicago as the son of Indian immigrants, tells the remarkable account of growing up Muslim in America and coming to believe in religious pluralism. He recounts moving from a desire to assimilate to an embrace of angry identity politics in college to finally resolving to be fully American and fully Muslim at the same time.

JAMES BALDWIN'S AMERICA

"As is the inevitable result of things unsaid, we find ourselves until today oppressed with a dangerous and reverberating silence." James Baldwin wrote these profound words that continue to resonate in our society today in the essay "Many Thousands Gone." The essay was part of Baldwin's first, most powerful collection *Notes of a Native Son*, first published over 60 years ago. To commemorate this anniversary in 2015, Humanities New York created a special Reading & Discussion program for adults based on Baldwin's writings.

Read the introductory essay "James Baldwin's Democracy...and Ours" by Lawrie Balfour [here](#).

This series is co-sponsored by [Library of America](#).

The Early Novels and Stories of James Baldwin

James Baldwin

This volume includes Baldwin's novels, including *Go Tell It on the Mountain*, *Giovanni's Room*, and *Another Country*, as well as the story collection *Going to Meet the Man*.

The Collected Essays of James Baldwin

James Baldwin

This volume includes all of Baldwin's major essays, including "Notes of A Native Son," "Nobody Knows My Name," and "The Fire Next Time", as well as much of his previously uncollected nonfiction.



MAKING SENSE OF THE CIVIL WAR

This theme explores different facets of the Civil War experience, informed by powerful voices from the past and present. Texts encourage readers to deeply consider national dilemmas such as regionalism, the secession crisis, and how outbreak of war impacted everyday Americans. Readers will reflect on the nature of democratic participation, how leading politicians such as President Abraham Lincoln navigated the turbulent partisanship of the era, and many of the enduring meanings the nation's bloodiest conflict holds for us today.

Read the introductory essay "Making Sense of the Civil War" by Edward L. Ayers, which overviews many of the themes and texts in the series, [here](#).

America's War: Talking about the Civil War and Emancipation on their 150th Anniversaries

Edited by Edward L. Ayers

America's War is an anthology of Civil War writing originally published between 1852 and 2008. The selections in *America's War* include works of historical fiction and interpretation, speeches, diaries, memoirs, biographies, and short stories. Together, these readings provide a glimpse of the vast sweep and profound breadth of Americans' war among and against themselves, adding crucial voices to our understanding of the war and its meaning.

Crossroads of Freedom: Antietam

James McPherson

Noted Civil War historian McPherson tells the story of the bloodiest day in American history: the events leading up to it, the battle itself, and its aftermath. This critical victory for the Union shored up Lincoln's political strength and freed him to issue the Emancipation Proclamation.

Lincoln on the Civil War: Selected Speeches

Abraham Lincoln

This volume includes nine of the sixteenth president's most stirring addresses on issues of freedom, civic duty, slavery and the Constitution. They include his early 1838 speech "Address to the Young Men's Lyceum of Springfield, Illinois," more well known House Divided and Cooper Union speeches, as well as signal wartime addresses.

March

Geraldine Brooks

In Brooks' Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, the author richly imagines the wartime experiences of March, the absent father in *Little Women*. A chaplain in the Union Army, his experiences during the Civil War and Reconstruction test March's most deeply held beliefs and change his marriage. Drawing on the journals and letters of Louisa May Alcott's father Bronson, a friend and contemporary of Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau, Brooks paints a vivid picture of March's life through the perspectives of those who experienced the era firsthand.

IN COLD BLOOD: TRUE CRIME, AN AMERICAN GENRE

The theme *In Cold Blood: True Crime, an American Genre* was developed in 2016 for the 50th anniversary of the publication of Truman Capote's pioneering work of new journalism and true crime writing *In Cold Blood*, published in 1966. Taking Capote's pivotal book as a starting point, this theme invites participants to delve into the history and literature of American crime.

Read the introductory essay by Harold Schechter, professor of American culture at Queens College CUNY, [here](#).

Blind Eye: The Terrifying Story of a Doctor who Got Away with Murder

James B. Stewart

Pulitzer Prize-winner James B. Stewart looks at the case of serial killer Dr. Michael Swango and the medical community that enabled his crimes.

Compulsion

Meyer Levin

Inspired by the famous Leopold & Loeb case, Levin's novel was the stylistic inspiration for *In Cold Blood* and one of the first classics of the true crime genre.

The Poisoner's Handbook: Murder and the Birth of Forensic Medicine in Jazz Age New York

Deborah Blum

A novelistic account of the efforts of Charles Norris and Alexander Gettler to use chemistry and medical science in investigating crime in 1920s New York.

Kitty Genovese: The Murder, the Bystanders, the Crime that Changed America

Kevin Cook

Kevin Cook re-examines one of the most infamous murders in New York history, depicting how it resonated against the backdrop of change in the 1960s, and how the dark picture of human nature it seemed to illuminate needs re-evaluation.

True Crime: An American Anthology

Harold Schechter

Edited by Harold Schechter, our project scholar, this volume offers the first comprehensive overview of American writing on crime. True Crime ranges from Cotton Mather to James Ellroy.

In Cold Blood

Truman Capote

By most accounts, this is Capote's masterwork, and a foundational text in the history of American journalism. Initially published as a series of pieces in *The New Yorker*, this book delivers a nuanced tale of class, desperation, and crime. By turns ghastly and sensitive, *In Cold Blood* is a classic of the genre.